

UGC-SAP (DRS-II)

**COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS,
LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

Mid- Term Report



**TEZPUR UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**


Head
Deptt. of Business Administration
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

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1.Introduction

The Department of Business Administration, Tezpur University is currently executing a Research Project on “Community Based Organizations, Livelihood Development and Tourism” under the Special Assistance Programme (SAP-DRS) scheme of the University Grants Commission (UGC). The University does not have any commercial interest and this project is solely for the purpose of community welfare.

2.Aim

The main aim of the work is to evolve a model that works in building capacity of the community enabling them to overcome poverty and live with dignity. A key challenge is to design and develop sustainable, scalable and replicable models for strengthening the fragile livelihoods of the poor, reduce their vulnerability and empower and enable communities in a manner that will allow development impacts to align with economic growth.

3.Objective

The proposed work aims to arrive at a practical model of sustainable livelihood in rural areas which is based on resources and skill those are available to the community. The resultant model shall be able to be replicated in other such areas, especially in the other parts of the north eastern region of the country.

4.Expected outcome of the Project

- Dependence on tourism based-livelihood which is primarily based on, but not limited to the natural resources available around them. The whole process will move the locals away from dependency on forest resources.
- Increase in the flow of certain segments of tourists to those clusters.
- Community is associated with development and management of tourism resources.
- Equitable distribution of income in the community.

5.Study Area

The study area for the Project was chosen based on three criteria.

1. Nearness to a Natural Area/ Protected Area which continuously faces threats from the fringe communities.
2. Communities living near those areas are marginalized.


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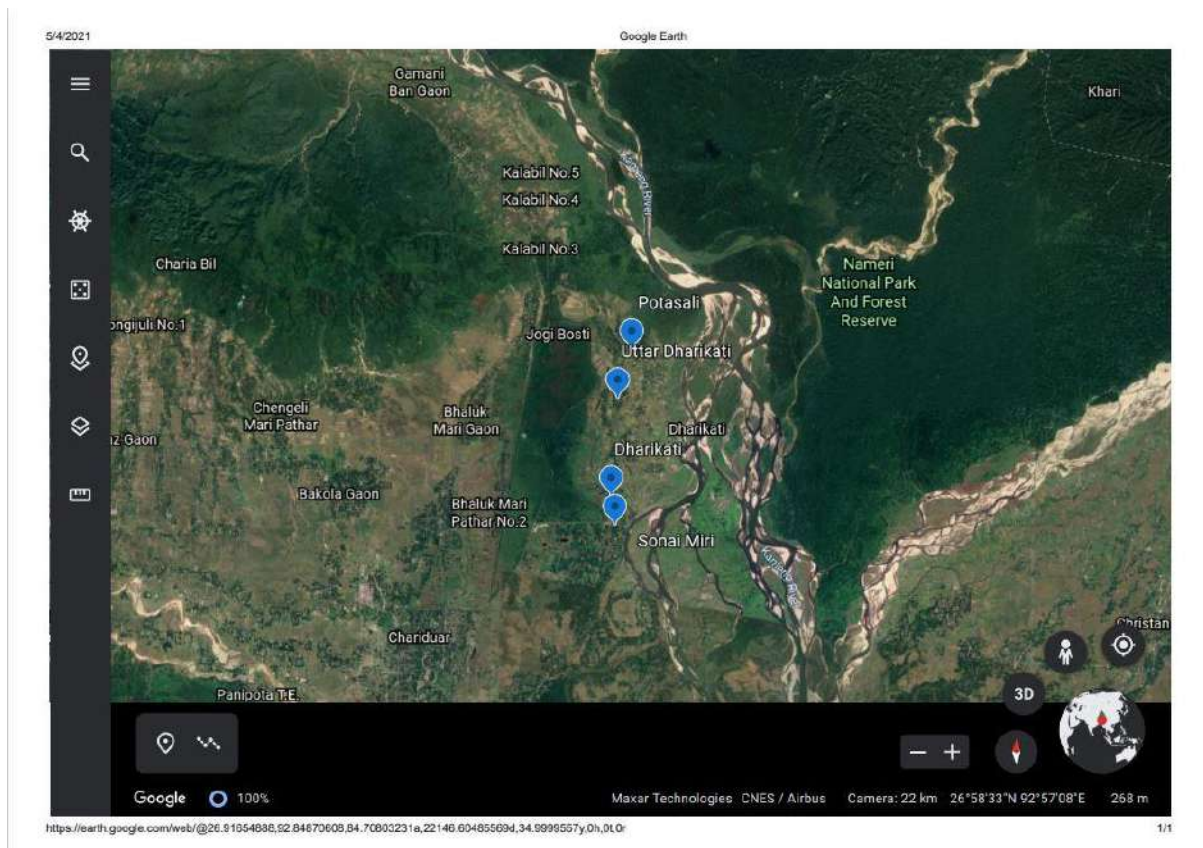
3. Unorganized tourism activities should be prevalent in the study area.

5.1. Brief about the study area

Nameri National Park & Tiger Reserve (NNP) is located in the northern part of Sonitpur District of Assam, along the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas. The National Park which is spread over an area of 200 sq. km. is bounded by river Jia Bhoreli in west and Bor- Dikorai in the east. Towards north lies Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh. Nameri is one of an important Protected Area of the North Bank Landscape of river Brahmaputra. Parts of the area were declared as Naduar Reserve Forest in 1876 and Nameri Wildlife Sanctuary in 1985. The present Nameri National Park was formed in 1988. Considering its conservation values, NNP has also been included in the Sonitpur Elephant Reserve.

We chose 4 fringe villages of Nameri National Park for this Project and divided them into

	Villages	
Cluster 1	Dharikati	Sonai Miri
Cluster 2	Potasali/ Torajan	Uttar Dharikati



two clusters.

For detailed view click on

https://earth.google.com/earth/d/1FrwE_w4QBeENPzbVXIJKkRXrkvn07VHh?usp=sharing

5.2. Rationale for choosing the study areas

The villages under the study area fall under Chariduar sub-district of Sonitpur district, Assam. The total population of the sub-district is 3,43,749 individuals of which 3,25,356 is rural population (Census of India, 2011). The villages considered for field work are all forest villages and lies immediately on the southern boundary of the core area of Nameri National Park. Being forest villages, these people have limited choices to make. They don't have land patta, this means they cannot take loans from financial institutions against it nor they can sale, lease or mortgage it during financial crisis. The choices of livelihood also remain limited with agriculture being the prime source of income.

Nameri National Park is one of the major wildlife attractions of Assam. It is just 120 km north of Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Natural) which harbours the largest population of One Horned Rhino. Nameri is known for its bird diversity, it is the only National Park in Assam that allows trekking inside its core area. Tourists come here for birdwatching. In addition to its own bird diversity, it also falls on a major birdwatching tourist circuit of Northeast India. It lies on the Guwahati- Kaziranga- Pakke- Eaglenest circuit. In addition to this Nameri also lies at a strategic location on the highly sought Guwahati- Kaziranga- Dirang- Tawang tourist circuit.

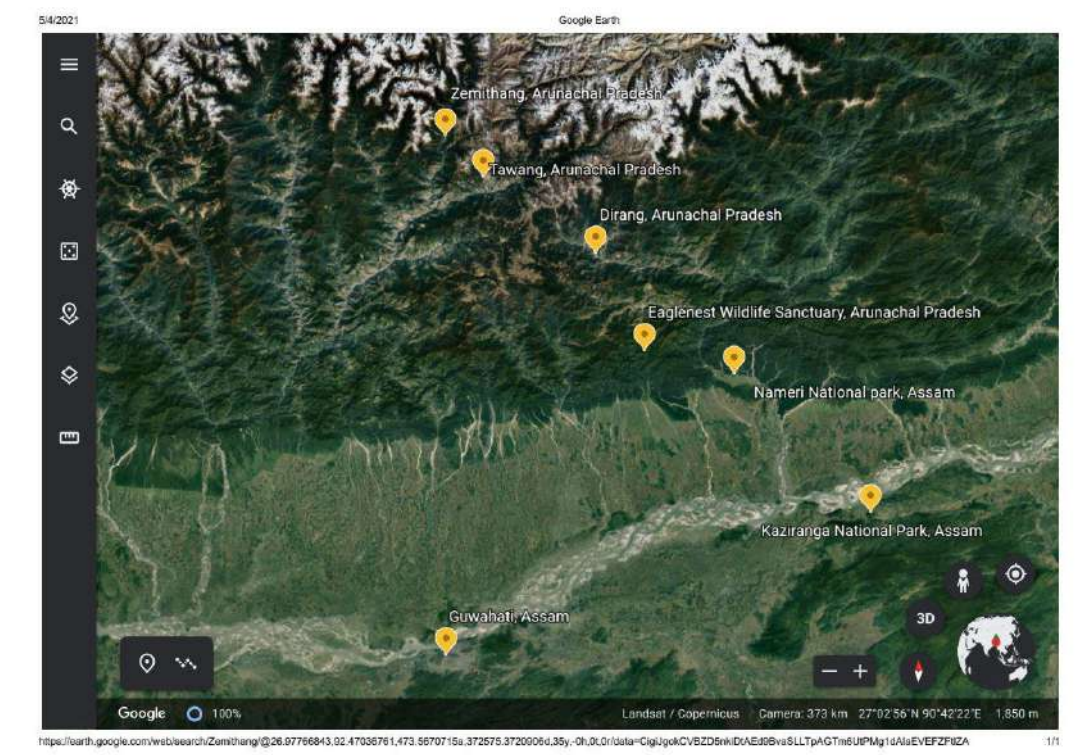


Fig 1. Guwahati- Kaziranga- Dirang- Tawang tourist circuit Source- Google Earth

Many tourist camps have come up along the southern boundary of Nameri National Park in recent years (discussed in detail later on). These tourist camps employ locals and some of them have taken it up as their regular/ main source of income. As mentioned earlier, people here have limited livelihood options, it is important to expand their option to safeguard Nameri National Park. Time and again there are instances from the National Park when few have notoriously become poachers, had clashes with forest officials, lost livelihood due to conflicts, and pose continuous threat to exploit natural resources if not given alternative livelihood. It is to be noted that since these villages are the frontiers of the National Park, hence a harmonious relationship between them and their natural environment will reduce external threats to wildlife emerging outside this area.

6. Timeline of events

Date	Event
20 April 2018	Date of first approval with level at inception
18 June 2018	Date of first sanction of Rs. 5,32,000 (Recurring Rs. 3,82,000 + Project Fellow Grant Rs. 1,50,000)
05 October 2018	Received the first instalment of Rs. 5,32,000
16 January 2019	Mr. Paridhi Brahma was appointed as the Project Fellow
19 January 2019	The Project Coordinator and Project Fellow were invited for a panel discussion in the 5 th Pakke Paga Festival 2020, the state festival of Arunachal Pradesh. The topic of discussion was “Relevance of Pakke Paga Festival in Promotion of Tourism and Conservation”. Pakke Tiger Reserve forms the north-eastern contiguous landscape of Nameri National Park.
27 February 2019	First field visit was made to the potential project site. Selection of villages and formation of clusters were done post this visit.
11 March 2019	1 st Advisory Committee Meeting was organized.
04 April 2019	All the homestays in Nameri were visited. Post this more visits were made to Nameri as well as nearby Kaziranga.
20 July, 2019	Project Fellow took admission under the PhD programme as a part-time Research Scholar candidate.
27 September 2020	First outreach program was conducted. This was in the form of a workshop on Community-Based Tourism where speakers were invited from 5 Community-Based Tourism projects of Northeast India.
27 November 2020	First annual advisory meeting report, annual report (FY 2018-19, April to November, 2019), Utilization Certificate (FY 2018-19, April to November, 2019), Project Fellow month-wise salary statement, Progress Report of expenditure (FY 2018-19, April to November, 2019) was submitted to the University and sent to UGC in the month of December with a request for fresh funds. However, the courier partner returned the document sighting wrong address. This was later sent back to UGC after rectifying the error as per the Commission’s direction.
08 December 2020	Unprecedented mass protests erupted in Assam prior and post passing of CAA bill in Lok Sabha on 9 th December 2019 and 11 th December 2019. The entire tourism sector in the region took a hit during this period leading to humanitarian crisis. This continued till January 2020. Our communication letter further got delayed in reaching its destination due to this.
04 March 2020	We received a communication letter dated 21 February 2020 from UGC. UGC sighted that no fresh funds in the year 2019-20 would be

	released since huge amount of unspent balance was available. However, these were under heads that were not supposed to be used in the initial years of this Project. Or under heads which were required but remained insignificant after partial utilization. The COVID-19 situation further hampered full utilization of funds under certain heads.
04 March 2020	We received a separate communication letter dated 21 February 2020 from UGC. Here, they released Rs. 73,547/- of fresh funds against the Project Fellow head only.
16 March 2020	We sent the first proposal to the finance department for utilizing funds to buy books under the Books and Journal head of the Project.
23 March 2020	A nation-wide lockdown was implemented that paused any further work under this Project.
15 April 2020	We prepared and sent a proposal for a book chapter on Sustainable Tourism in a peer reviewed book on Sustainable Luxury Tourism to be published by Emerald Publishing. This was accepted at a later stage and by August 2020 we submitted the full chapter which too got accepted for publication. The case study was on sustainable tourism practices in Kaziranga National Park which can be adopted in Nameri as well.
02 June 2020	The Project Fellow resumed his work amidst Covid-19 by maintaining all the COVID-19 protocols since he is a resident Tezpur.
04 June 2020	After receiving advance for purchase of books, we attempted to buy all the books given in the proposal list. However, due to the pandemic most of it also remained unavailable and we could only spend Rs. 16,484/-. Whatever we ordered also was delivered very late and all of them only arrived by September, 2020.
27 July 2020	Pertaining to the COVID-19 situation, another outreach program in the form of a workshop on “Community-Based Tourism post COVID-19” was organized. This was an online workshop where 5 industry experts and stakeholders who dealt with Community-Based Tourism were invited to speak on various related topics.
27 September 2020	We celebrated World Tourism Day 2021 amidst COVID-19 by inviting Prof. Nimit Chowdhary, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Jamia Millia Islamia (Central University). He spoke on the UNWTO theme for 2020 “Tourism and Rural Development”.
21 January 2021	A talk on Sustainable Tourism over the internet was organized on 29.01.2021. The guest speakers for the event were Mr. Ankit Rastogi, Senior Vice President, MakeMyTrip, and Mr. Pradeep Vijayan, Associate Director, Cleartrip.com. They are also the founders of Surwahi Social, Kanha.
25 January 2021	Mr. Paridhi Brahma successfully submitted his Plan of Research on his PhD topic “Motivations and Prospects of Avitourism: A Case

	Study of Assam, India”.
05 February 2021	Another transect walk was done by the Project Fellow and Dr. Niranjana Das from the department to identify intervention areas under the Project. During this visit we learned about the potentiality of Bhut Jolokia (Spice) and black pepper in the region. We also came to know regarding training gaps for birdwatching guides in the area. We also visited the tourism infrastructures available in Sonai Miri village.
20 February 2021	We met Mrs. Leena Saikia, Founder, Frontech Agritech Private Limited, Jorhat, Assam. The firm deals in Bhut Jolokia products and exports it to international markets. The meeting was to discuss ways to enhance profitability of the Bhut Jolokia growers. During the same field visit, we met Mr. Firoz Hussain, Proprietor, Oriental Birding Tours. He was very helpful and agreed to become trainer in future training programs on birding guide training programs for both students of the University and locals at Nameri.
25 February 2021	Looking at the huge areca nut plantations in the study area, an initial contact with Arindam Dasgupta, CEO, Tamul Plates Marketing Pvt. Ltd. was made. The marketing firm makes Dinnerware using areca nut tree sheaths and exports it outside India. We discussed regarding the potentiality to extend their activities in Nameri. To this they advised us to do a survey on the total area of areca nut trees in our study area.
26 February 2021	The Project Fellow along with Mr. Ashif Saikia, Research Scholar from the Department of Business Administration visited the Krishi Vigyan Kendra to know the prospects of Tezpur Litchi in Nameri. The field visit ended on a positive note when we met Mr. Subhash Singh from Tezpur who grows Tezpur Litchi varieties. He informed us regarding its potential and possibility to grow it in Nameri.
28 February 2021	Participatory Rural Appraisal was organized in Okum Guest House, Dharikati.
08 March 2021	A week-long areca nut plantation census was conducted in the clusters. The data gathered was then compiled and sent to Tamul Plates Marketing Pvt. Ltd.
10 March 2021	Dr. Runumi Das from the Department of Business Administration visited Nameri to look into the handicraft resources available in Nameri and suggested ways in how we can add value to it. We also visited the Muga Food Plantation Centre, Chariduar.
16 March 2021	Tamul Plates Marketing Pvt. Ltd. acknowledged our findings and our Project Proposal. They will be sending a team of experts to gather additional information.

7. Tourism in Nameri

Field visits were undertaken since February 2019 in the clusters selected for this study. We travelled the length and breadth of potential study areas. We were accompanied by street smart locals, faculty members from the Department and Research Scholars who had previously done their research in those areas or had expertise in certain subjects. We had conversations with the village level stakeholders of Nameri. The success of tourism enterprises in Nameri is due to the availability of skilled yet limited workforce in the fringe villages. Since these are forest villages, the forest department administers any development work in those villages.

The fringe villages of Nameri are a potpourri of different indigenous communities of Assam residing there since ages. This includes the Mishings, Bodos, Assamese, Garo, Nepali, and Nyishi communities. The villagers still exhibit their indigenous lifestyle. The houses they stay in still exhibit traditional architecture, women in the households still weave, their main occupation remains agriculture, they still done traditional attire, celebrate their festivals and speak their language. The clusters we chose for this Project are mainly inhabited by the Mishings and Assamese.

7.1. Accommodation

At present there are 5 homestays near Nameri, however none of those falls under the clusters selected for the study.

1. Nyishi Homestay, Phuluguri Nishi Gaon
2. Mishing Homestay, Bali Gaon Miri
3. Garo Homestay, Bakola Gaon
4. Bodo Homestay, Khari Dimapur
5. Nepali Homestay, Sonai Nepali





Fig 2. Nyishi Homestay, Phuluguri, Assam

These homestays receive less numbers of guests as compared to the tourist camps running near Nameri. At present there are 9 tourist camps near Nameri National Park. The first 8 camps fall under our study area.

S. No.	Name of the Camp	Capacity	Number of persons employed	Location
1.	Nameri Eco- Camp	42	33 regular & 5 seasonal	Potasali
2.	N-Palky Camp	30-35	3 Regular & 2 cooks	Torajan
3.	Baligora Eco Camp	53	6	Torajan
4.	Lalimou Camp	18	12	Uttar Dharikati
5.	Nameri Jungle Camp	33	8	Torajan
6.	Whistling Bamboo Eco-Stay Camp	N/A	N/A	Torajan
7.	White Winged Camp	18	N/A	Potasali
8.	Prashanti Tourist Lodge (Govt. owned)	56	11	Uttar Dharikati
9.	Nameri Kanyaka Resort	18	3	Gamani

The Nameri Eco- Camp is managed by Assam Bhoreli Angling and Conservation Association (ABACA). ABACA was formed some 60 years ago. This was started by a group of wildlife enthusiasts belonging from the British planter's community and few gentlemen. It started as North Bank Shooting and Fishing Association in pursuit of Golden Mahseer. Now the same organization is working towards its and many other fish species found in and around river Jia Bhoroli.

The association organized the first angling competition in the year 1981. After that the angling activity became an annual event for quite some time. Seeing its success, the Eco Camp was constructed in the early 90s with support from North Eastern Council (NEC). Since then, the camp has been training local youths in culinary and hospitality, and employing them in their camps.

The apparent popularity of wildlife attractions of Nameri National Park drew nature-based tourists from around the globe. The footfall of tourists turned tourism into a lucrative business in the area. New camps on similar models by individual owners came up. Apart from Prashanti Tourist Lodge and Nameri Eco-Camp, all others are owned by individuals.

Further south from Potasali (the main epicentre of all tourism activities) towards Balipara a purely community managed small property exists in the form of Okum Guest House in Dharikati Village. The guest house was an initiative of North East Network (NEN). NEN is an NGO founded by Monisha Behal in 1995. The organization works in the North East India to address issues relating to gender justice, equality and respect for human rights.

The Guest House now is run by DASK, its grassroot level NGO partner. The Guest House belongs to the NGO and is run by its members. Villagers are employed in an hourly basis when tourist arrive in the camp.

It is to be noted that all the tourist camps showcase local art and craftsmanship as these units were designed and constructed by local bamboo and wood craftsmen. Even the tents are not readymade and are woven by Rahman, an expert stitcher from Sootea village in Assam.



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7.2. Tourism activities

7.2.1. Trekking

Trekking activities are conducted inside Nameri National Park and inside Balipara Reserve Forest near Gamani. Bird-watchers prefer to work on these trails. The Park boasts of having more than 300 species of birds. Occasional sighting of wildlife also occurs during such trails. These tracks are accompanied by armed forest rangers. Nameri has very few expert bird guides from the nearby villages.

Charges for entry inside Nameri National Park

	Domestic Tourist	Inbound Tourist
Entry charges	50/-	200/-
	500/-	2000/-
Camera charges	50/-	Still camera
	500/-	Video camera
	5000/-	Movie camera

Other charges	300/-	per boat/ raft
	40/-	per boatman
	100/-	Per guard

These charges are levied by the Forest Department on every tourist who go out for river rafting on Jia Bhorali river and trekking inside Nameri National Park. Additional bird guide charges range from Rs. 500- 1000 on a per trip/ per day basis.

7.2.2. River rafting

River rafting is conducted on the river Jia Bhorali starting from 13 Mile area till Nameri Potasali ghat. River rafting partially employs around 60 boatmen. Each raft carries two rowers and rest are the tourists as per the carrying capacity of the raft. It takes approximately 2 hours to finish the roughly 13 km journey. The presence of avifaunal species on the banks of the river provides ample scope for birdwatching.



Fig 3. Rafting on the Jia Bhorali river

Rates for river rafting (Nameri Eco-Camp)

Capacity	Rates
6 (4 guests, 2 boatman)	3,200/-
4 (2 guests, 2 boatman)	2,300/-
Inclusions	
National Park entry fees (Inbound)	500/-
National Park entry fees (Domestic)	50/-
Govt. toll	300/-

Other attractions of Nameri

- Assam Bhoreli Angling Conservation Association (ABACA) Golden Mahseer Brood Tank
- Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme breeding centre, Potasali
- Tourist Interpretation Centre



Fig 4. ABACA Golden Mahseer Brood Tank and Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme Breeding Centre, Potasali

7.2.3. Village tours and cycling

Ethnic village tour programmes are organized by the accommodation units on demand. This includes display of cultural performances by local troupes, tours of weaving villages, local beer tasting, local food, story-telling sessions etc.

Village tours are sometimes conducted along with cycling activity in the countryside.



Fig 5. Small scale tea farm in Sonai Miri village

7.2.4. Souvenir shops

There are three souvenir shops in Nameri. All of these are located near the Potasali range office. Out of these, one is located in the premises of Nameri eco-camp and is run by Dony Polo Mahila Samiti (a women self-help group) and other two includes Xunaru Vastralaya and Xunaru.

Mrs. Santi Bania, in-charge of Xunaru informed that training programmes in the nearby villages of Nameri started in the year 2003 by Mrs. Oli Agarwala of Nameri eco camp. Since then, annual programmes have been organized every year where a new batch of girls are trained.

Xunaru procures and sells handicraft products of 8 SHGs which includes bags, mekhela chador, scarfs, mufflers, shawls, stole, gamusa. Xunaru also sells pickles.

8.Old Handicrafts

8.1.Weaving

Mishing is the dominant community residing in the clusters chosen for this study. Mishings are known to weave bright and colourful designs. Traditionally weaving was a mandatory practice for Mishings womenfolk. Mishings of Nameri have successfully retained this practice and are weaving stories on fabrics. Motif designs currently visible on the fabrics include plants, animals, flowers, structures and geometrical structures. Some fabrics that are woven on loom by them includes the mekhela chador, gamusa, muffler, bag, waist coat, cushion cover, ribi-garang, handkerchief, mobile bag, elephant pants and dupatta.



Fig 6. Mishing women weaving waist wears on waist looms

Different kinds of products that can be made using hand woven textiles:

Category	Product Description
Fabrics	Sarees
	Handkerchiefs
	Dhoti
	Casement fabric
	Sheeting
	Lungis
	Terry towel

	Traditional attires
Floor coverings	Carpets, rugs and mats
	Cotton dhurrie
Clothing accessories	Scarves
	Gloves
Madeups	Bed linen
	Table linen
	Toilet linen
	Floor cloth
	Bed sheets
	Counterpanes
	Pillow cases and pillow slips
	Cushion covers
	Other furnishing articles



8.2. Bamboo crafts

Anyone visiting Nameri will come across bamboo structures intrinsically woven into artistic infrastructure. These were made by Mr. Pratap Das, a self-learned bamboo craftsman from Tarajan village. He has expertise in making bamboo structures including hut, furniture, souvenir, and utensils. As per him, he employs 3-4 daily wage labourers from the village along with him when he has to construct huts for the tourist camps. On an average it takes around 4-5 months to construct camps with a capacity of 30-50 guests at a time.

Das apart from Nameri has also worked in the resorts of Kaziranga. He also receives orders from time to time from other intermediaries. For Das, his art is an incentive; farming still remains the main source of livelihood. Unfortunately, Das is also a victim of man- animal conflict. In the year 2002, he survived an elephant attack near his paddy field. The injury to his right leg remained as a testimony.



Fig 7. Tourist tree house cottage built by Mr. Pratap Das in Nameri

Das is now training his son, who has already started to help his father with the business. Ranjit Das, another youth from Gamani village who was taught by Das is now independently taking orders for furniture and is also working at different tourist camps, resorts and dhabas for constructing bamboo structures in Assam.

9. Agri- based livelihood

We came to know that there is a fear to lose land rights among the communities living in the forest villages. Plantation drives are passively discouraged in these villages because they fear that re-emergence of forest areas will jeopardize their land rights in future. However, the soil here is highly fertile, different commercial crops grown in sizeable area here are paddy, areca nut, tea, black pepper, betel leaf, lemon, bhut jolokia, and litchi. Even Tezpur Litchi varieties with G.I patent were successfully cultivated in the area under the area expansion plan of the Department of Agriculture, Government of Assam.

The area also has huge potentiality for practicing sericulture. Som trees that are the host trees for the silkworms that produce eri-muga silk grows easily in the region. The Department of Sericulture, Government of Assam also has a Muga Food Plantation Centre in Chariduar which is merely 11 kms from Nameri. In fact, the Centre is distributing free saplings to potential growers since past many years. Villagers of Uttar Dharikati presently are rearing silk-worms, however they don't plant som trees which they say dies during rainy season.



Fig 8. Litchi farms in Dharikati village

10. Problem inventory of the villages using the NSL chart

During the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), a problem inventory was prepared to prioritize the interventions required using the NSL chart. Questions were also asked to them regarding how as a facilitator we can get involved for solving those problems.

Prioritization using NSL Chart (Which are the urgent ones to address)

Now- N	Soon- S	Later- L
<p>1. Lack of high school (Nearest high school is at Chengelimari which is 4km away from Dharikati).</p> <p>2. Lack of medical facility (Nearest Community Health Center is at Chariduar which is 7km away from Dharikati).</p>	<p>1. Irrigation problem in the dry months.</p> <p>2. Lack of cold storage/ housing facility for agri-products.</p> <p>3. Market linkage of agri-products.</p> <p>4. Advertisement/ publicity of tourism infrastructures and resources of the village.</p> <p>5. Awareness among local people towards tourism.</p>	<p>1. Mild flood due to rainy season.</p> <p>2. Public transportation facility.</p> <p>3. Condition of road</p>

The Now (N) and Later (L) activities fell completely out of the purview of our Project objectives. However, in the Soon (S) column the following problems aligned with our aim.

- Lack of market linkage of agri- products.
- Lack of advertisement/ publicity of tourism infrastructures and resources of the village.
- Lack of awareness among local people towards tourism.



Head
Dept. of Business Administration
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Keeping in mind the Project objectives we decided to go ahead with one initiative and three intervening activities.

11.Interventions

11.1.Areca nut dinnerware production

Areca nut palm is considered as one of the important commercial crops of Assam. However only the betel nut is used widely, on the other hand the leaf of the tree is discarded.

The Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Assam has highlighted the following properties of areca nut leaf:

- Eco-friendly, biodegradable and hygienic
- Sturdy, not easily crushable yet light
- Microwave usable
- Can be moulded into different shapes and sizes
- Can hold liquid for 4-6 hours
- Attractive in appearance
- Raw material is easily available (70,000 hectares of plantation in Assam and 10 sheaths fall from each plant every year)



Fig 9. Areca nut plantation in Uttar Dharikati village

During our successive visits to the villages, we could observe that there were many areca nut plantations in those villages. We came to know about ‘Tambul Plate Marketing Company (TPMC)’ through the internet. Our work is very much inclined towards achieving a similar

goal. For this reason, we approached the firm for a collaborative work. Based on their suggestions, we did a census on the present status of areca nut plantation in the clusters.

Name of the village	Area under plantation (in bighas)			
	<7 Years	7-14 Years	>14 Years	Total area of the village
Dharikati	35.00	15.50	42.50	93.00
Sonai Miri	21.00	9.50	58.50	89.00
Uttar Dharikati	26.00	26.75	88.00	140.75
Torajan/ Potasali	1.00	17.00	29.50	47.50
Total area	83.00	68.75	218.50	370.25

Methodology: Initially, we visited few households having visible areca nut plantations in their homes. The villagers were unable to provide correct estimates regarding their plantation. This was mainly due to the absence of head of the household (mostly male members) and reluctance to provide accurate information. During those visits, a general understanding was arrived for estimating the age of the trees through visual inspection. Once this was done, every lane of those villages were identified, and visual inspection of the areca nut plantation was carried out by travelling through those lanes. Two additional enumerators accompanied the Project Fellow for assistance during the survey. They worked jointly to avoid any calculation errors.



Fig 10. Areca nut sheaths used as partitions in Sonai Miri village

Observations: It was observed that the plants are usually grown 4-6 feet apart in the area and the villagers only gain profit by selling the areca nut at the rate of Rs 30-35 in the local

market. They also showed a willingness to collect and sell the sheaths if there is demand for it in the market. It is worth mentioning that being forest villages, the farmers are reluctant to grow any other crop apart from areca nut. One reason is they are scared that the re-emergence of forest habitat could jeopardize their land rights and the other is areca nut grows easily in the area. The survey was carried out in the clusters considered for this Research Project. There are many adjoining villages that also have similar areca nut plantations. It is estimated that the tally of areca nut plantation in all the villages (within 20km from the cluster) will go beyond 1000 bighas.

The emergence of a biodegradable industry in the fringe area can itself become an additional attraction of the National Park. A micro- market also will be formed from the demand emerging in local ecosystem or from nearby Tezpur town having many premiere institutions. There is also future scope for making packaging materials with sheaths to be sold to tourists. Moreover, this initiative will shift the pressure on tourism-based livelihood thus preventing overdependence on it.

We are considering this intervention as one of our priority areas to work on. It is important to generate livelihood for the marginalized communities of these villages to safeguard Nameri National Park. Time and again there are instances from the National Park when these people have turned into poachers, had clashes with forest officials, lost livelihood due to conflicts, and pose continuous threat to exploit natural resources if not given alternative livelihood.

Increased awareness towards environmental issues and plastic usage has led to surge in demand for the product in the international market as well as the domestic market. And the demand is such that TPMC provides 100% buy back guarantee of products to all producers.

The entire production process can be executed by women workforce. The collection of sheaths can also be done from the nearby villages. In the early stages, these products can be supplied to nearby towns to keep the price competitive. The products and glassware can be made mandatory in the tourist camps nearby Nameri National Park to eliminate single use plastics from the region. The best part however is the intervention is expected to benefit the community within a short time-period with limited investment of both time and effort.

TPMC is happy with the findings of the survey. They have seen the potentiality in Nameri and therefore will be sending members from their team for a feasibility study from their part.

11.2.Souvenirs

There is lack of value-added souvenirs in Nameri. Souvenirs should be small in size, easy to carry, and light weight. Proposed easy to make souvenirs which can be made using the Mishing weaves include

- Embroidered guitar straps
- Passport sleeve
- Coasters
- Wine bags
- Car seat cushion cover

The value- added souvenirs are aimed to have practical use for tourists who don't belong to the Mishing community. The products are supposed to be feasible for the mass tourist (general tourists) to buy. The pricing will be kept competitive with other mass market substitutes by selling it directly to tourists near tourist attractions of Nameri. Weavers can manufacture the products during the lean tourism months and sell it during the tourist seasons.

We are trying to identify the right fabric for the value-added products, traditional clothes, and motif designs. The sample woven fabric will be pictured. The colour combination, motif designs and design pattern will be considered as standard. The meaning of different colours and motifs will be identified and recorded. If there is a story expressed through the design then that too will be documented. All this information will go in the tag or the packaging material that will go along with these products.





Fig 11. Mishing woman showing the festive wear *Ege* (waist wear) woven at home



Fig 12. A closeup of motif designs of the *Ege*

Multiple standard designs will be finalized using the same technique. This is expected to give the tourist a sense of confidence while buying these products regarding its authenticity. However, weavers will be encouraged to experiment for continuously evolving new designs. The motif designs or patterns may have or may not have a concept behind it. The same will be communicated to the buyers.

The value- added products will not compete with the traditional clothes since it will solely target the mass tourist who would like to take back something from Nameri. On the other

hand, the traditional clothes will fulfill the demand of niche consumers who want pure traditional artifacts.

11.3.Destination Marketing Organization

The Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) promotes the destination as an attractive travel destination. A recent mushrooming of tourist camps has occurred in the buffer areas of Nameri. Most of these camps are owned by individuals. Conflict lies between the proprietors in retaining tourists by giving similar type of services. The infrastructures built also don't have much variations. These camps are also preferred by weekend tourists and travellers. The main activities offered by these camps are river rafting and jungle trekking. Community-Based Tourism resources that can help local communities earn are shadowed. To reduce this bias and to help more locals earn, we want to highlight all the community- based tourism resources of the region along with the accommodation units through a single platform over the internet. The proposed DMO will be registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. To execute this model, we will largely adopt the DMO model of Ecotourism Management Committee, Khonoma, Nagaland.

Tentative provision under this program

1. Information regarding all the accommodation facilities along with different room rates.
2. Information regarding all the activities and their fixed rates.
3. Information regarding tour guides/ birding guides
4. All the dos and don'ts for tourists

5. Marking of properties on google map
6. Promotion through Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest
7. Promotion of handicraft products
8. Selling of locally made products
9. Tie-ups with tour operators to execute tours
10. Promotion of Community-Based Tourism circuit
11. Maintenance of eBird accounts of birding guides till a specific tenure.
12. Registration of products under certain

Standard Operating Procedure

1. To join this program, the stakeholders should pay an annual fee. The annual fee is to run the website and promotional campaigns. Annual fee once paid will be non-refundable.
2. To join this program the stakeholders should fulfill certain requirements
 - 2.1. Minimum basic pay for employees.
 - 2.2. Criminal cases, cases registered under POCSO Act, 2012, and cases registered under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 against any stakeholder will immediately lead to temporary suspension which may lead to permanent suspension of his/her membership from the Society in due course of time.
 - 2.3. Maintenance of minimum standards of service. Any repeated grievance that arises and comes to the notice of the Department will lead to cancellation of engagement with the property, tour operator or the service provider.
 - 2.4. In case the Covid-19 situation continues to prevail. The SOP recommended by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, and World Health Organization will become mandatory in tourism facilities.
3. The website and social media platform contents will be solely curated by the Department of Business Administration, Tezpur University. The Department will only act as a facilitator. Any grievance arising will be handled by the stakeholder. We however, will keep in touch with the guest for reviews which will be published in the website.
4. Any tour that arises from the designed tour program will be executed by a registered tour operator from Assam.

5. Product and service rates will remain in-line with prevailing market rates. We will give the option to tour operators to decide their own tour rates. This is to ensure that the tour operators, property owners and service providers earn their share of profit. However, the minimum products and services mentioned in the itinerary needs to be offered to the tourist.
6. Master of Tourism and Travel Management students can run this website post the tenure of UGC-SAP (DRS-II). Every content curated needs to go through the Head of the Department or the Course Coordinator for approval before uploading in the website. Any urgent and time-bound content needs to be communicated via WhatsApp to the aforementioned before uploading.
7. Students can exercise their creativity for content creation. Assignments can be given to the students to visit Nameri or any other community-based tourism sites of Northeast India and share their experiences with proper travel instructions or recommendations as blog posts. Any post with a simple caption or tag needs to be avoided. Product description or a story should go along with every post.
8. In-case inhouse students don't show interest in the topic, short term internship programs may be offered to outsiders.
9. The accommodation units of Nameri will be encouraged to develop innovative products and local solutions to make their services Divyangan friendly and LGBTQ+ friendly as per GoI and UNWTO recommendations.



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11.4.Awareness Programs

During the Participatory Rural Appraisal lack of awareness regarding tourism was highlighted by the stakeholders who participated in the meeting. This was mainly regarding small scale micro tourism community enterprises such as the concept of Homestay. The situation in Nameri also becomes volatile against the friendly atmosphere in the region. The Department of Business Administration, Tezpur University has all the resources to impart basic awareness program regarding tourism. We, therefore, plan to organize awareness programs targeting two different audience group.

A.Can't read, can understand

This awareness program is for the youths and adults. They are the hosts, who will play a crucial part in delivering quality experience to tourists. Friendly, at- home destination is the desired quality of tourist destination. This can only happen if there is a harmonic relationship between the tourist and host. These awareness programs will give the stakeholders a basic concept of tourism in layman language. It will highlight its pros as well as cons. The pros include Foreign Exchange Earnings, income generation, employment generation, reduction of economic and social imbalances, multiplier effect, better understanding between people coming from different social groups and communities, and conservation of natural and cultural heritage. The cons that need to be highlighted during the awareness programs are

economic leakage, social unrest, commodification of culture, environmental degradation, and the following social impact of tourism.

1. Euphoria stage- Tourist are welcomed, with little control and no planning.
2. Apathy stage- Tourists are taken for granted, relationship is more formal and commercialized, planning is limited to marketing only.
3. Annoyance stage- Saturation in industry, local people are misgiving, plan to enhance infrastructure rather than limit growth.
4. Antagonism stage- Irritations openly displayed by people, planning is remedial only, growth eased.

(Adopted from TM 501 paper on Fundamentals of Tourism course content of Masters of Tourism and Travel Management prepared by Prof. Mrinmoy K. Sarma)

We will be mostly dealing with illiterate people here. The subject matters need to be explained in the simplest way possible. Therefore, the presentations should be in the form of audio-visual presentations or creative art to keep the audience engaged and engrossed to enhance its impact for a long time. The whole awareness program can be made more intriguing if we can voice the familiar faces of the village in spreading a uniform message.

B.School Awareness Program

“Today’s children are going to be tomorrow’s leaders”, school awareness programs will be made an integral part of this Project. The awareness will again address the target audience through audio- visual presentations or creative arts. This is to create awareness regarding the importance of natural resources of the region and its potentiality to become a driver of sustainable development. The students will be encouraged to not get involved in any anti-conservation activities and spread the word regarding what they learnt during the program with their family members keeping with “conservation starts at home” motto.

11.5. Training Programmes

During the PRA, we tried to identify people who have knowledge regarding birds and butterflies. We prepared a list of such potential trainees using the *what, where, when, how, why* helper questions to gauge accuracy of data in terms of fake, rumour or hearsay. The respondent was asked to mention the important bird species that he could identify from the region, where he saw it, how he saw it, when he saw it and why he thought those species were important.

Jiban Phukan from Uttar Dharikati who was the respondent here could identify Great thick knee, Ibisbill, Common Merganser, White winged wood duck, Mallard, Pied kingfisher, Crested kingfisher, and Pallas fish eagle. He also correctly identified all the related questions.

During the conversation we came to know that mainly the boatmen who row rafts on the Jia Bhorali river can identify the birds. They are the perfect subject for avitourism guide programmes since bird sightings run parallel with river rafting on Jia Bhoroli. River bed is one major habitat for birdwatching in Nameri.

Potential trainees

1. Jiban Phukan



2. Suresh Mili
3. Ranga Ngate
4. Milan Mili
5. Bonod Mili
6. Haresh Mili
7. Khukleshwar Kar
8. Khorukung Payeng
9. Debashi Mili
10. Chetua Mili
11. Debakan Mili

In this regard we met Mr. Firoz Hussain, Proprietor, Oriental Birding Tours, Jorhat, Assam. He informed us that Local guides are usually uneducated, they get Rs. 1,500-2,500 for every trip. This is a meagre amount in comparison to 320 USD per day which is charged by tour operators and asked us to find a solution to this. He assured us all support in organizing training programs for both local youths of Nameri as well as for the students of the Department of Business Administration.

For conducting training programs, we prepared the seasonal map of the villages.

Apart from these interventions, we are continuously trying to develop market linkages for the small scale agro- based product manufacturers such as pickle makers of Nameri.



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Seasonal activities that keep villagers engaged

Activities	Months												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Rice farming					Sowing					Harvesting			
Potato/ mustard oil cultivation	Harvesting						Sowing						
Yam cultivation		Sowing							Harvesting				
Ginger		Sowing							Harvesting				
Chilli		Sowing					Harvesting						
Areca nut	Throughout the year sowing, growing and harvesting. Takes 6 years for a plant to mature.												
Tea			Planting						Harvesting				
Litchi				Harvesting					Sowing				
Black Pepper		Harvesting											
	Can be sown throughout the year												
Man- animal conflict									Erection of <i>tangi</i> (tree platforms) structures, whole night guarding of farms				
Health hazards				Cold and fever									
Wet and dry season	Dry season				Wet season					Dry season			
Animal sighting	Peak											Peak	
Important festivals	Magh Bihu	Ali I Ligang		Bohag Bihu									
School			Final Exam	Beginning of academic session									
Best time to give training													
Tourism seasonality (Domestic)	Peak											Peak	
Tourism seasonality (Foreigners)	Steady footfall									Steady footfall			

12. Outreach programs

To expediate the progress of the Project, we organized several outreach programmes on Community-Based Tourism (CBT).

Workshop on Community-Based Tourism, 27th September 2019

Academicians have limited knowledge about the ground realities of CBT projects of NER. The practitioners of CBT projects are apparently isolated from each other. Management committees of different CBT projects during previous interactions have shown interest for a participatory approach for finding solutions to various issues of CBT in NER collectively.

Therefore, the Department of Business Administration, Tezpur University decided to organize a day-long workshop on **27th September 2019 (World Tourism Day)** to bring in members of the management committees of different CBT projects of NER to take their insights for carrying out CBT to bridge the industry-academia resource and skill gap. The workshop proposed to identify the best management practices from existing CBT projects, issues related to CBT and insights on probable solutions apart from providing a platform for interaction between CBT practitioners of NER.

For this, on the basis of persistent work and online presence, we chose **five CBT Management Committee** and invited their executive members to talk on their tourism model, prospects and issues.

Resource persons

1. Organization- Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society, Baksa, Assam

Topic- Interdependence of Tourism and Conservation

Resource persons- Mr. Kalicharan Basumatary, President and Mr. Chandra Kanta Basumatary, Chief Advisor & Brand Ambassador of MoEF, Govt. of Assam

2. Organization- Ecotourism Management Committee, Khonoma, Nagaland

Topic- Green Initiatives and Consumer Behaviour

Resource persons- Mr. Neikedolie Hiekha, Chairman and Mr. Peleviso Viyie, Property Secretary

3.Organization- Guu'min Rvgoon Kw'laaju, Basar, Arunachal Pradesh

Topic- Community festival as a Tourism Product: Socio- economic implications on the host community

Resource persons- Shri. Kargo Bam, Secretary General and Shri. Karyom Basar, Secretary, IPR GRK & BasCon

4.Organization- Thembang Bapu Community Conserved Area Management Committee, Thembang, Arunachal Pradesh

Topic- Heritage and Tourism

Resource persons- Mr. Bapu Pema Wange, Senior Project Officer, WWF WAL- Landscape

5.Organization- Garung- Thuk, Shergaon, Arunachal Pradesh

Topic- Overcoming hurdles: A practical approach

Resource persons- Shri. Dorjee Khandu Thungon, Dy. Chairman
Shri. Lobsang Tashi Thungon, Member

Major takeaways from the event

- Destination Management Organization model of Ecotourism Management Committee, Khonoma, Nagaland.
- Community involvement model in Community Festivals.
- Practical CBT model implementing strategy from Garung-Thuk and Guu'min Rvgoon Kw'laaju by involving local community and the Government Servants.
- Market rates of CBT activities and the needed reforms from Thembang Bapu Community Conserved Area Management Committee.
- CBT model of Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society.

Workshop on Community- Based Tourism post COVID-19

COVID-19 situation had crippled various Community- Based Tourism (CBT) projects of Northeast India. The management body and property owners were facing challenges to survive this situation.

Pertaining to this, the Department of Business Administration, Tezpur University under the aegis of UGC-SAP (DRS-II) had called in a group of experts, travellers, tourism department representatives, CBT practitioners, tour operators, and academicians for a digital workshop at 10:15 am on 27th July 2020.

This workshop was meant to benefit CBT practitioners (such as homestay owners) and Research Scholars working on Community-based Tourism. We wanted to connect with remote and distant CBT practitioners of Northeast India to extend our help to them during emergency.

Speakers

1. Mr. Raj Basu, Founder, Help Tourism, and Advisor, Rural Tourism at Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim

Topic- Future of sustainable Community- Based Tourism in Northeast India post COVID-19 with insights from former trends in tourist footfalls in the lesser-known destinations of the sister states post hostile business environments

2. Mr. Sugata Goswami, Proprietor, Pizzaz and an Avid Traveller

Topic- Expectations of a tourist from the accommodation units regarding matters relating to health and hygiene with special reference to Community- Based Tourism accommodation units such as Homestays

3. Mr. Debasish Gope, Sneha Bhawan Homestay proprietor, Kaziranga

Topic- Strategies to implement for mitigating health and safety hazards in homestays and the challenges he foresees for implementing it

4. Dr. Pronami Bhattacharyya, Executive member, A(B)ACA (management body of Nameri- Eco Camp)

Topic- Steps that Community- Based Tourism accommodation unit management bodies can take to mitigate health and hygiene issues

6. Mr. Manoj Jalan, Proprietor, Purvi Discovery

Topic- Post COVID-19 issues to be tackled by the tourism industry and changes the academia should bring in the syllabi for courses on tourism

Participants from the following organizations participated in the event

1. Nguno Ziro, Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh
2. Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society (MMES), Assam, India
3. Agaratoli Jeep Safari Association
4. Sita India
5. Gumin Rego Kilaju
6. Majuli Music Festival Foundation
7. Siro Resort
8. Tea Association of India
9. State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam
10. Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati
11. Pragjyotish College, Guwahati, Assam
12. Koliabor College, Koliabor, Assam
13. Govt. Degree College, Dharmanagar, North Tripura
14. BMBB Commerce College, Guwahati, Assam
15. Tezpur College
16. Tezpur University
17. Banaras Hindu University
18. IHM Guwahati
19. Royal Global University

Major takeaways from the event

- Strategies to adopt by CBT practitioners during COVID-19 pandemic
- Advantages Northeast has upon other rural destinations of India
- Future footfall trends that Northeast will see
- Subjects that academia should address while training tourism students
- The event itself connected us with many CBT stakeholders and CBT DMOs from Northeast India

Talk on “Tourism and Rural Development”, 27 September 2020

A talk on the occasion of World Tourism Day, 2020 was given by Prof. Nimit Chaudhury, Jamia Milia Islamia University. He spoke on UNWTO theme for the year “Tourism and Rural Development” and “Rural Tourism post COVID-19”.



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This event was basically for the students of Masters of Tourism and Travel Management, Tezpur University. However, it was kept open for others to join as well and 35+ individuals participated in the event.

Major takeaways from the event

- The event discussed about future tourist trends that destinations will see across India and how rural enterprises can benefit from such developments.
- Here, the speaker also talked about the different roles that tourism management students have to play in future for promoting such destinations.

Talk on Sustainable Tourism

A talk on Sustainable Tourism over the internet was organized on 29.01.2021. The guest speakers for the event were Mr. Ankit Rastogi, Senior Vice President, MakeMyTrip, and Mr. Pradeep Vijayan, Associate Director, Cleartrip.com. They are also the founders of Surwahi Social, Kanha.

Participants from the following organizations participated in the event

1. Tezpur University
2. St. Xavier's College, Mumbai
3. Royal Global University
4. Pragjyotish College
5. Ecotourism Society of North East
6. Travel Tribes by Naseema
7. NEHU
8. Kaliabor College
9. Gauhati University
10. IHM, Guwahati
11. IIIT Guwahati
12. Govt. Degree College, Dharmanagar, North Tripura
13. Gauhati Commerce College

Major takeaways from the event

- The event discussed about different ways in which indigenous knowledge can be applied in building sustainable tourism infrastructures.

- Here, the speakers talked about different ways in which tourism entrepreneurs can generate livelihood for the local community.
- New avenues for internships were opened up for the students of the Department during the event.



Dr. H. S. Jadhav
Dept. of Business Administration
VJES UNIVERSITY

Coordinator
UGC-SAP (DRS-II)