

RAFTING IN THE TRANSBOUNDARY MAHAKALI RIVER



2078 BS

Supported by OXFAM Nepal



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जिल्ला समन्वय समिति बैतडी

सुदूरपश्चिम प्रदेश, नेपाल

प.सं.: ०७८।७९

कृतज्ञता ज्ञापन



प्रचुर सम्भावना बोकेको सुदूर पश्चिम प्रदेशमा अवस्थित महाकाली नदी जल यात्रा (राफ्टिङ) का लागि उपयुक्त सुरक्षित नदी हो। यो नदी नेपाल-भारतको सीमा भएर बग्ने अन्तर्देशीय नदी हो। यस नदीमा जलयात्रा मार्फत पर्यटन प्रबर्द्धन गरि रोजगारीका लागि कोसे ढुङ्गा नै सावित हुन जाने भएको छ। तटीय क्षेत्रमा विद्यमान सवाल तथा समस्याहरूका बारेमा महिला शसक्तिकरण केन्द्र मार्फत नदी जन्य श्रोतहरूको अधिकतम उपयोग गरि जिविकोपार्जनमा सुधार ल्याउने लक्ष्यका साथ अक्सफाम नेपालको सहयोगमा ग्रामीण विकास एवं वातावरण व्यवस्थापन समाज (रुडेस) बैतडीले TROSA परियोजना मार्फत विश्व पानी दिवसको अवसरमा २२ मार्च २०२१ का दिन बैतडी जिल्लाको दशरथ चन्द नगरपालिका वडा नं. ६ शेरा स्थित दार्चुला र बैतडीको सीमाना बाट पहिलो पटक नेपाल तर्फ बाट राफ्टिङ शुरु गरेको हो। यसै गरि डडेल्धुरा र कन्चनपुर जिल्लाका स्थानीय तहहरू र स्थानीय सभेदार संस्थाहरू रुकुम डडेल्धुरा र निडस् कन्चनपुरको समन्वय सहकार्यमा पहिलो पटक ऐतिहासिक रुपमा डडेल्धुरा जिल्लाको परशुरामधाममा सन् २०१९ मा र कन्चनपुर जिल्लाको खल्ला मसेट्टीमा सन् २०२० मा नेपाल तर्फ बाट जलयात्रा शुभारम्भ गरिएपछि महाकाली तटीय समुदायमा विद्यमान सवालहरू समाधानका लागि स्थानीय समुदाय, निजी क्षेत्र, स्थानीय सरकार लगायत सरोकारवालाहरूको जलयात्रा प्रति निकै चासो बढेको पाईएको छ। जलयात्रालाई निरन्ता दिँदा महाकाली तटीय क्षेत्रमा आन्तरिक तथा बाह्य पर्यटकहरूको संख्यामा उल्लेखनीय बृद्धि भई स्थानीय स्तरमा रोजगारीका अवसरहरू श्रृजना भई गरिवी न्यूनीकरणमा टेवा पुग्ने देखिन्छ।

स्थानीय तहहरूको समेत प्रत्यक्ष रुपमा सहभागीता भई जलयात्रालाई अगाडी वढाउन हौसला प्रदान गर्नुहुने दशरथचन्द नगरपालिका बैतडीका नगर प्रमुख नरेन्द्र सिंह थापा, परशुराम नगरपालिकाका नगर प्रमुख भीम बहादुर साउद र भीम दत्त नगरपालिकाका नगर प्रमुख सुरेन्द्र विष्टलाई हार्दिक धन्यवाद दिन चाहन्छु। यसै गरि रुडेस बैतडीका कार्यकारी निर्देशक गोविन्द राज जोशीलाई समेत हार्दिक धन्यवाद दिन चाहन्छु। विशेष गरि महाकाली तटीय क्षेत्रमा विद्यमान श्रोत साधनहरूको पहिचान परिचालनका माध्यमबाट जलयात्रा संचालन गरि समुदायलाई उचित दिशा निर्देश दिनु हुने अक्सफाम नेपालका रिभर बेसिन मेनेजर राजन सुवेदी ज्युलाई हार्दिक आभार प्रकट गर्दछु। भविष्यमा समेत यसको निरन्तरताका साथै कार्यक्रम मार्फत थप सहयोग हुने छ भन्ने आशा गरेको छु र स्थानीय निकायका तर्फ बाट गर्न सकिने सहयोगका लागि प्रतिबद्धता व्यक्त गर्दछु। यो “महाकाली नदीमा जलयात्रा” नामक पुस्तकले जलयात्रालाई निरन्तरता दिनका लागि कोशे ढुङ्गा सावित हुनेछ। यसरी यो पुस्तक मार्फत व्यवसाय प्रबर्द्धन र पारखीहरूलाई सूचना दिनेछ भन्ने विश्वास लिएको छु।

धन्यवाद।


सिद्धराज भट्ट
प्रमुख



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सुदूरपश्चिम प्रदेश, नेपाल

प.स.०७८।७९



कृतज्ञता ज्ञापन

महाकाली नदी नेपाल-भारतको सीमा स्थित अन्तर्देशीय साझा नदी हो । महाकाली नदीको तटीय क्षेत्रमा नदीको पानी तथा नदी जन्य श्रोतहरूको अधिकतम उपयोग गरि जिविकोपार्जनमा सुधार ल्याउने लक्ष्यका साथ अक्सफाम नेपालको सहयोगमा ग्रामीण विकास एवं वातावरण व्यवस्थापन समाज (रुडेस) तथा धनगढी घोषणा पत्र अनुसार दशरथ चन्द नगरपालिकाले सहयोग गर्दै आईरहेको छ । यसै क्रममा २२ मार्च २०२१ का दिन विश्व पानी दिवसको अवसर पारेर बैतडी जिल्लामा पहिलो पटक ऐतिहासिक रुपमा गरिएको जलयात्रा पछि स्थानीय समुदाय, निजी क्षेत्र, स्थानीय सरकार लगायत सरोकारवालाहरूको जलयात्रा प्रति निकै चासो बढेको पाईएको छ । महाकाली नदी जलयात्राका लागि उपयुक्त र सुरक्षित नदी हो । भविष्यमा जलयात्रा गर्न सकिने प्रबल संभावना भएको यस नदीमा जलयात्रा मार्फत नदी तटीय क्षेत्रमा पर्यटन प्रवर्द्धन गरि रोजगारी सिर्जना हुने यो नदी मुख्य श्रोतको रुपमा रहेको छ । ट्रोसा कार्यक्रम मार्फत विभिन्न अध्ययन र छलफलका माध्यमबाट जलयात्रा व्यवसाय गर्दा लगानी भन्दा प्रतिफल अत्यधिक देखिन गएको छ, जसका कारण अर्थतन्त्रमा टेवा पुग्नुका साथै स्थानीय स्तरमा रोजगारी सिर्जना भई गरिबी न्यूनिकरणमा सहयोग पुग्ने देखिन्छ । यो कार्यमा सहयोग गर्नुहुने अक्सफाम नेपालका रिभर बेशीन मेनजर राजन सुवेदीलाई तथा रुडेस संस्थाका कार्यकारी निर्देशक गोविन्द राज जोशीलाई हार्दिक धन्यवाद दिन चाहन्छु । यो महान कार्यमा सिर्जनात्मक कार्य गर्नुपर्छ भनी जलयात्रा शुरु गरौं न भनी सकारात्मक सोचका साथ सहयोग गर्नुहुने परशुराम नगरपालिकाका मेयर भीम बहादुर साउद र भीम दत्त नगरपालिकाका मेयर सुरेन्द्र विष्टलाई समेत हार्दिक धन्यवाद दिन चाहन्छु । भविष्यमा समेत सहयोगको आशा लिएको छु र दशरथ चन्द नगरपालिकाको तर्फ बाट अझै यो कार्यक्रमका लागि आवश्यक क्रियाकलापहरूमा सहयोग हुनेछ भनी दशरथचन्द नगरपालिकाको तर्फबाट प्रतिवद्धता व्यक्त गर्दै यो कार्यमा सहयोग गर्नु हुने रुडेस बैतडी र अक्सफाम नेपाल प्रति पुनः हार्दिक आभार प्रकट गर्दछु ।

नरेन्द्र सिंह थापा

नरेन्द्र सिंह थापा
नगर प्रमुख



दर्ता नं. २८२-०५८/५९

फोन नं. ०९५-५२०९४८

ग्रामीण विकास एवं वातावरण व्यवस्थापन समाज(रुडेस)

बैतडी



मिति :- २०७८/०९/१

प.सं. :- ०७८/०७९



सुदूर पश्चिम प्रदेश अन्तर्गत नेपाल र भारतको सीमानामा रहेको महाकाली नदीको तटीय समुदायमा अक्सफाम नेपालको सहयोगमा रुडेस संस्थाले TROSA परियोजना मार्फत समुदाय देखि समुदाय सम्म पूर्व सूचना प्रणाली, नागरिक विज्ञान, नदीको पानी प्रयोग गरि जिविकोपार्जन, महाशीर संरक्षण, महिला शसक्तिकरण, जलयात्रा आदिका बारेमा जो एक दुर्गम

बेसिन हो मा ट्रोसा परियोजना मार्फत कार्यक्रम संचालन गर्ने अवसर प्राप्त

भयो र यो एक मेरो आफ्नो जिवनकालमा विभिन्न कार्यक्रम संचालन गर्दा गर्दै मात्र पैरवि गरि जनवकालत मार्फत यस परियोजनाका सबै क्षेत्रमा सबै कम्पोनेन्टमा उपलब्धिमूलक नतीजा ल्याउन सफल भएकोमा आफु गौरवान्वित भएको छु । यी सबै कम्पोनेन्ट मध्ये स्थानीय स्तरमा पर्यापर्यटन मार्फत रोजगारी सिर्जना गरि पारखीहरुलाई गुणस्तरीय सेवा दिन सकिने क्षेत्र जलयात्रा (न्याफिटड) एक महत्वपूर्ण र उत्तम व्यवसाय हो । डडेल्धुरा र कन्चनपुर जिल्लाका स्थानीय तहहरु र स्थानीय साभेदार संस्थाहरु रुडुक डडेल्धुरा र निड्स कन्चनपुरको समन्वय सहकार्यमा पहिलो पटक ऐतिहासिक रुपमा डडेल्धुरा जिल्लाको परशुरामधाममा सन् २०१९ मा र कन्चनपुर जिल्लाको खल्ला मसेट्टीमा सन् २०२० मा नेपाल तर्फ बाट जलयात्रा शुभारम्भ गरिएपछि महाकाली तटीय समुदायमा विद्यमान सवालहरु समाधानका लागि स्थानीय समुदाय, निजी क्षेत्र, स्थानीय सरकार लगायत सरोकारवालाहरुको जलयात्रा प्रति निकै चासो बढेको पाईएको छ । यसले महाकाली तटीय क्षेत्रमा आन्तरिक तथा बाह्य प्रर्यटकहरुको संख्यामा उल्लेखनीय बृद्धि हुने स्थानीय स्तरमा रोजगारीका अवसरहरु श्रृजना भई गरिवी न्यूकरणमा टेवा पुग्ने देखिन्छ ।

यस्तो ऐतिहासिक कार्यलाई उजागर गरि यस ट्रोसा कार्यक्रम मार्फत जलयात्रा संचालनको अथक प्रयास बाट समुदायको जिविकोपार्जन अवस्थामा सुधार गर्न जलयात्राका लागी सहयोग गर्नुहुने अक्सफाम नेपालका रिभर बेसिन मेनेजर राजन सुवेदी, स्थानीय तहहरुको तर्फबाट जलयात्रालाई अगाडी बढाउन साभेदारी गरि सहयोग गर्नुहुने दशरथचन्द नगरपालिका बैतडीका नगर प्रमुख नरेन्द्र सिंह थापा र उप प्रमुख मीना चन्द, यसै गरि ऐतिहासिक कार्यको थालनीमा सहयोग गर्नुहुने परशुराम नगरपालिकाका नगर प्रमुख भीम बहादुर साउद र भीम दत्त नगरपालिकाका नगर प्रमुख सुरेन्द्र विष्ट, रुडुकका राष्ट्रिय निर्देशक कृष्ण कुमार श्रेष्ठ, निड्स कन्चनपुरका किसन खड्का, सिआरडीएस दार्चुलाका मान सिंह धामी, रुडुक डडेल्धुराका अमर साउदलाई हार्दिक हार्दिक धन्यवाद एवं आभार प्रकट गर्दछु । यो "महाकाली नदीमा जलयात्रा" नामक पुस्तकले जलयात्रालाई निरन्तरता दिनका लागी कोशे दुज्जा सावित गर्नमा सहयोग गर्नुहुने साभेदार संस्था अक्सफाम नेपाललाई समेत हार्दिक धन्यवाद दिन चाहन्छु । यो पुस्तकले पारखीहरु तथा व्यवसाय प्रबर्द्धन गर्ने व्यासीहरु लगायत सरोकारवाहरुलाई महत्वपूर्ण सूचना प्राप्त हुने विश्वास लिएको छु ।

धन्यवाद ।

गोविन्द राज जोशी
कार्यकारी निर्देशक

PREFACE

Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSAs) is a five-year (2017-2021) program funded by the Government of Sweden and implemented by Oxfam and its partners in Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Nepal. It works across administrative and political borders focusing on poor and marginalized river basin communities to reduce poverty through increased access to and control over riverine water resources in three major transboundary river basins of Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Salween in Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Nepal. The Swedish Development Assistance SIDA supports TROSA.

TROSA works with the local governments, private sector, women's network groups, and other stakeholders in the Mahakali basin to enable river communities to engage meaningfully in water governance and increase their participation to influence and shape transboundary water policies and water governance processes. In Nepal, the program is active in Darchula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, and Kanchanpur districts in the Sudurpaschim 'Far Western' Province.

There is much potential for economic opportunities in the Mahakali river region through eco-tourism-related activities. Water

and river-based adventure and extreme sports like white water rafting and canoeing present promising potential for local businesses. These, if managed well, can boost the local and national economies.

Following the river rafting program organized on World Water Day, 22 March 2021, a notable upsurge of interest in river tours is seen among the local people, government, private sector, and other stakeholders. Many studies, inquiries, and consultations at the local level have indicated a promising outlook for the water-based activities and businesses on the transboundary Mahakali river. This can contribute to better employment opportunities and assist in poverty reduction.

In this regard, the solidarity and commitments for support and collaboration shown by relevant stakeholder organizations are exceptionally encouraging. If river travel in the Mahakali becomes a reality, it will be a milestone in Nepal's tourism sector including Mahakali riverine communities of Nepal and India.

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Section A

Rationale, importance, and potential of white water rafting

Project Justification

Transboundary rivers of Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) in South Asia and the Salween in Southeast Asia are the lifelines of millions of communities. Flowing across political boundaries, these vital natural ecosystems provide many ecosystem services such as fisheries, agriculture, navigation and ensure livelihood and water security among riparian communities. For centuries, these shared waters and river basins have been vital for the region; their ecosystem services and natural resources provide sustenance and drive the economy.

Yet, for the millions living in these transboundary basins, their rights to water and other natural resources are often marginalized due to socio-political, economic challenges of infrastructure development, industrialization, and urbanization – and the vulnerabilities due to climate change impact.

At the frontline of these impacts are the riverine communities—who continuously struggle to improve their lives, protect their livelihoods and build their resilience. Their rights are mainly affected by the ways shared water resources are governed. The benefits are shared across borders and among different stakeholder groups. It is critical to support and strengthen informed participation of the riverine communities in governing these river basin systems equitably and sustainably and ensure that their livelihoods and resilience are improved.

Project Goal

To support and strengthen informed participation of riverine communities, address poverty and increase their access to riverine resources to play constructive roles in the governance of the Mahakali river.

Objectives

- To support the improvement of stakeholder policies and practices to ensure the rights of riverine communities are protected.
- To support the improvement of policies and practices of the private sector stakeholders while recognizing and respecting the rights of the riverine communities over water resources.
- To support the capacity development of riverine communities and civil society in transboundary water resources governance.
- Emphasizing inclusive river governance by supporting and empowering local women and enabling them to uphold their rights to participate and play meaningful roles in water governance decision-making processes.

Introduction to Rafting

Rafting is the recreational activity of 'pastime of traveling down a river on a raft'. The practice of rafting and its techniques have evolved with modern technology. Hence, its traditional definition has changed from leisurely to adventure and extreme sports. Although possible in deep waters, these days, rafting is mainly enjoyed as an adventure sport in fast-flowing rivers that flow through hilly areas, called rapids. Special skills, equipment, and fast-flowing rivers are essential for modern rafting. Likewise, basic infrastructures and institutional setups are required for rafting to thrive as a tourism-based activity.¹

The history of Rafting

The history of rafting dates back to 1810 in the Snake River, Wyoming, in the United States. In 1940, Clyde Smith used a raft on the river,

starting modern-day rafting. In the decades that followed the scientific expeditions on the Green River and the Colorado Rivers in 1969, rafting gained popularity. After World War II ended, rafting gained worldwide popularity and was included as an Olympic sport in 1972. After that, rafting developed as an adventure sport and as a professional and business activity. In 1998, the International Rafting Federation (IRF) organized the first World Rafting Championship in the Reventazon and Pacuare rivers in Costa Rica. Likewise, the event was held in Gauley River in the United States and Vrbas and Tara Rivers in Bosnia & Herzegovina (2009). After that, the event has been regularly organized.²

The beginnings of rafting in Nepal

The history of rafting in Nepal dates back to 1972, when Col. John, a British citizen, and his team rafted in the Trishuli River for the first time. The Himalayan River Expedition started the first commercial rafting in 1975. The Trishuli River is one of the most important rivers for tourism in Nepal and is seen by almost 80 percent of tourists. It links various tourist destinations like Pokhara, Chitwan, Lumbini, and the Nepal-India border region. Hailed as the backbone of Rafting in Nepal, ongoing efforts are led by the Nepal Association of Rafting Agencies (NARA) to conserve the river as a living river.

Nepal's longest river section for rafting lies in the Sunkoshi River, spanning 187 kilometers. If joined with the Upper Sunkoshi, this distance may further increase. A more extended river section is being prepared in the Karnali River in western Nepal, where work is underway to link Lower Dhungeshwor to Chisapani and up to Tikapur in Bardia and Kailali districts. In 2020, the preparations to operationalize the 242 km-long rafting river section as part of the Visit Nepal 2020 were foiled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The longest in Nepal, a river rafting section has been planned for the Rakam-Karnali in Dailekh to Tikapur, Kailali stretch. Worldwide, the longest river rafting distance lies in Brazil's Amazon river, spanning 180 kilometers.³

Value of Rafting for the Tourism sector

Rafting is an excellent choice for those who seek thrill and adventure tourism. Nepal is considered one of the premier rafting destinations globally, ranking 10th in National Geographic's Top Ten White-water Rafting destinations. It is also the most outstanding and well equipped in terms of available resources and means. Hence, it is hailed as the birthplace of rafting in Asia.

Of the 6000 rivers and rivulets running across Nepal, the government has issued permissions for rafting in 16 famous rivers. The Trishuli, Bhotekoshi, Sunkoshi, Kaligandaki rivers offer packages between 1-12 days. Rivers like the Seti, Marsyandi, Arun, Tamor, Mahakali, and Karnali are other important rafting destinations. But Trishuli remains the most accessible, with Bhotekoshi a close second, while Karnali is the most remote requiring a ten-day trip.⁴

According to the Nepal Association of Rafting Agencies (NARA), there are 72 registered companies operating rafting businesses. With about 40 thousand tourists enjoying white-water rafting every year, rafting comes second to hiking and trekking activities. Despite holding huge tourism potential, the rafting sector suffers from a lack of efforts and commitments towards its expansion. Rafting is mainly popular during the summer seasons in Nepal and provides an attractive getaway option for adventure tourists. If promoted well with attractive product packages, the future holds much promise for rafting and its untapped potential.

Many countries that do not have fast-flowing rapids suitable for rafting have in recent times invested in artificial rivers for commercial rafting. Examples include those in Dubai and the UK for the 2012 London Olympics. In adverse, Nepal has huge potential for the natural rafting.



Rafting in the Sudurpaschim 'far-western' province and Mahakali river

The Karnali river is among the top-five rafting rivers globally. At the same time, the Bhotekoshi is ranked as the top seventh in the National Geographic. Sunkoshi is also highly regarded as an excellent river for rafting during September and October. These facts show the importance and status of Nepal as a premier rafting destination in the world. There are ongoing efforts to open rafting activities in the Seti and Mahakali rivers in the far-western province. Compared to Seti, there are more occurrences of commercial rafting the Karnali river, which presents a market from Chisapani to the Tikapur stretch. Likewise, the testing phase of river-rafting is currently ongoing in the Seti and Mahakali rivers. Successful test runs have already taken place in the Mahakali river from Jhulaghat to Kanchanpur stretch via Dadeldhura. Several potential sites for rafting have been identified in the Mahakali river viz. Khalanga, Darchula, Dashrathchand municipality-6 in Baitadi, Shera to Jhulaghat-Pancheswor to Parshuramdham, Dadeldhura, and Khallamuseti, Kanchanpur to Bramhadev regions.

Local efforts in Rafting in the Mahakali river

On 22 March 2021, tourism business owners from Nepal and India came together to organize a joint river rafting event on the Mahakali river. Jointly organized by Mahakali Rafting and Resort Pvt. Ltd and Champawat Tiger Adventure Tour Expeditions, India, resulted in the signing of a memorandum of agreement. The event was attended by RUDWUC Kathmandu, NEEDS Nepal, RUDES, Baitadi, Oxfam in Nepal and India. During the event, riparian communities of both countries expressed their solidarity and commitment to conserve the environment, biodiversity, riverine forests, and water resources. Likewise, they expressed their readiness and commitment to expanding economic opportunities through eco-tourism, preserving local culture on both sides of the river, and deepening friend ties between riverine communities of the Mahakali basin in Nepal and India.

Two months before the event, an MOU was signed between the three municipalities viz. Bhimdutta (Kanchanpur), Parshuram (Dadeldhura), and DashrathChand (Baitadi) with Karnali Rafting and Adventure Pvt. Ltd to

promote river rafting in the Mahakali river.

The event was attended and signed by Heads and Chief Administrative Officers of all three municipalities and the Director of Karnali Rafting and Adventure Pvt. Ltd, Secretary of RUDWUC, Ms. Jyotsana Saud, Chairman of NEEDS Kanchanpur Ms. Manju Joshi Bhatta. Likewise, the event was attended by Dr. Ranabahadur Rawal, MP Far-western Province, Coordinator for River Basins (Oxfam Nepal), Mr. Rajan Subedi, National Director for RUDWUC Dr. Krishna Kumar Shrestha, and Mr. Govinda Raj Joshi, Executive Director, RUDES.

The MOU details the commitments to promote and improve the religious and cultural ties and pool in resources and means to improve the livelihoods by joint rafting activities in the Mahakali river. The following activities were agreed upon.

Before the MOU, on 14 Jan 2019, the rafting was first started in Mahakali river of Nepal side during Pashuramdham Mela in coordination with District Magistrate of Uttarkhand, India. It was coordinated by team members of Indo Nepal Joint Action Forum, and RUWDUC with the support of Pashuram Municipality.

Preparations for Rafting and Tourism.

A district-level workshop was jointly organized with the private sector stakeholders to assess the potential for tourism-related activities in the banks of the Mahakali river in the Baitadi, Dadeldhura, and Kanchanpur districts. Attended by representative participants from various sectors, the workshop discussed the opportunities and challenges and drafted a 'prototype package' for tourism activities in the Mahakali river. The following topics were discussed in the workshop.

Participants List

1. Representative of Hotel Professional Federation of Nepal
2. Representative of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry
3. Representative of All Nepal Transport Entrepreneurs Association
4. Representative Federation of Nepali Journalists
5. Tourism Advocates
6. Representative of Non-Government Organizations
7. Tourism Personnel



WEC members from ward no 5 Parashuram municipality rafting down the Mahakali river.

Section B

1. Outcomes/ conclusion of meetings and discussions with the private sector in Dadeldhura district.

Topics of Discussion

1. Tourism potential, challenges, and solutions
2. What is a 'package'? Why? And How to create a 'package.'
3. Working group

Tourism potential

1. Religious Tourism
2. Educational Tourism
3. Cultural Tourism
4. Adventure River Tourism
5. Historical Tourism
6. Nature Tourism

Challenges

- Absence of network among tourism sector stakeholders
- Lack of 'Packages' for tourism destinations
- Traditional ways of tourism promotion
- Absence of effective branding of tourism destinations
- Lack of tourism environment
- Lack of transport facilities
- Lack of tourism-friendly infrastructure
- Lack of tourism-oriented workforce

Solutions

- Joint work plan between tourism stakeholders
- Building networks among stakeholders
- Building critical infrastructure at tourism destinations
- Regular discussions and consultations at

various levels

- Effectively implementing the policies based on the Public-Private Partnership Act 2072
- Branding of tourism destinations
- Preparation of destination 'packages' and lobbying to formulate tourism-friendly laws
- Increase hospitality and tourism promotion activities among stakeholders from the border areas to tourism destinations.
- Develop the capacity of Local Tourism Committees
- Building workforce and exposure of tourist and rafting guides
- Organize various tourism-related festivals

Sample/ Prototype Package

Weekly religious trip from Dhangadi – Dadeldhura – Baitadi (3 days)

- Friday 3 PM travel from Dhangadi to Dadeldhura
- Dadeldhura dinner and night stay

Saturday

- Post-breakfast trip to Tripurasundari, Jagannath Baba
- Post-lunch trip to Ningalashaini, Patal Bhumeshowr, Udaydev and Ugratara
- Dinner and night stay at Dadeldhura

Sunday morning

- Ghatal Darshan trip and Amaragadhi Fort
- Return to Dhangadi after breakfast

Facilities

- Choice of vegetarian and Non-vegetarian food
- Private car (5-seaters)
- Stop-over at Sahukharka Baje's Kheer shop (for Kheer)
- Sharing room (Twin-bed)
- Tea and snacks (morning and afternoon)
- Three bottles of water per day per person
- Mask and sanitizers as needed

**Package pricing: NPR 8500 per person.
Minimum five persons needed.**

“

There is a great potential for adventure river-rafting at Parshuramdham. River rafting activities in the Mahakali river will boost the local tourism sector in this region. Rafting in the Mahakali should begin at the earliest."

- Manbahadur Saud
Former Chairman,
Federation of Journalists, Dadeldhura.

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Outcomes/ conclusion of meetings and discussions with the private sector in Kanchanpur district.

Kanchanpur District – An Introduction

- Gateway and closest transit point to major cities in India
- Closest planned city to big cities in India
- Rich in religious and cultural heritage, natural beauty

Strengths

- Largest herd of the Barasingha "Twelve-horned" Swamp deer in Shuklaphanta National Park
- Longest suspension bridge in Asia
- The Mahakali River
- Road network and easy access to Dhangadhi domestic airport
- Planned city infrastructure
- Necessary infrastructure for tourism viz. Hotels, restaurants, etc.
- Boundary city closest to major cities in India, and Nepal's western Gateway city
- Cultural diversity, Tharu culture

Weaknesses and necessary improvements

- Inability to brand it as a tourism destination
- Environment for tourism lacking, e.g., Hospitality
- Transport and road travel bottlenecks (Mahakali bridge, Border entry point, Customs, and Traffic congestion)
- Lack of tourism-friendly infrastructure (Quality roads, parking spaces, public toilets, refreshment centers)
- Lack of tourism-centric workforce (tourist guides, cooks and chefs, rafting guides, etc.)

Opportunities

- Shuklaphanta National Park, Barasingha "Twelve-horned" Swamp deer, grasslands
- Potential for religious tourism, especially religious landmarks in the Chure region
- Potential for cycling races in the religious tourism track and Shuklaphanta tracks
- Rafting in the Mahakali river
- Beach Sports and other tourism activities in the Mahakali river sandy beaches
- Touristic spots near the four-lane bridge in the Mahakali river
- Suitable areas for 'night market' near the four-lane bridge in the Mahakali river
- Can act as a transit hub to network with tourist areas in Nepal and India

Challenges

- Absence of tourism-friendly laws and regulations
- Mahakali bridge and gates are not open 24-hours
- Harassment faced by travelers at the border checkpoints
- Lack of sustainable physical infrastructure for rafting activities
- Lack of skilled workforce
- Lack of political will, political instability, and political prejudice and interference
- COVID-19 related challenges
- Increasing pollution in the Mahakali river

Solutions and Recommendations

- Informal meetings and discussions to promote tourism
- Reconnaissance and historical study of touristic areas
- Branding of touristic areas and destinations
- Preparation of destination 'packages' and lobbying to formulate tourism-friendly laws
- Tourism and hospitality promotion activities in the areas ranging from the border to tourist areas
- Develop the capacity of Local Tourism Committees
- Developing skilled workforce e.g., Rafting and Tourist guides and exposure
- Organizing Shuklaphanta Tourism Festival and Rafting Festival on World Water Day
- Infrastructure development of rafting and tourism destinations at local, provincial, and federal government levels

“

We have passed policies to promote and operationalize rafting.

Sushila Chand Singh,
Deputy Chief Bhimdutta municipality.

"Bhimdutta municipality has started operations for river tours with multi-purpose objectives on the Mahakali river," says Deputy Chief Chand, " We have trained 24 persons as rafting guides and have requested the ministry of tourism to coordinate with the Indian government to give continuity to the river tours," she adds.

”

Outcomes/ conclusion of meetings and discussions with the private sector in Baitadi district.

Tourism potential:

- Patal Bhumeswor, the Biggest Cave in Asia
- Birthplace of the first female minister of Asia, Ms. Dwarika Devi
- The temple of Ningshaini Bhagwati in Dehimandu
- Jagannath temple in Khalanga gadhi
- Ishwari Ganga Dham (8,848 footpath starting point of the construction site)
- Tripurasundari Bhagwati temple
- Melauli Bhagwati temple
- Dilasaini Bhagwati temple
- Panchadewal
- Birthplace of Martyr Dashrath Chand (historical significance)
- Gwallekh Protected Forest
- Sigas Protected Forest
- Agro-tourism in Bagwali
- Ongoing research investigations for minerals like Uranium, Phosphorous, Iron
- Homestays
- Motorable bridges, cycling tracks, and

- paragliding
- Rafting and river tours in the Mahakali river View points (Api Saipal)
- Local cultural heritage (Bhada, Hudke dance, Chhaliya dance, Aina watai)
- Religious tourism
- Agro-tourism potential (dry fruits development promotion center in 29 hectares, income generation through lift irrigation from Mahakali river, apiary for honey production, and Chiuri honey production)
- Water-based tourism
- Sports tourism
- Herbs (Harro, Barro, Amla Gooseberry, and Silphode)
- Conservation of Mahasheer fish

Working Methods

- Building networks of stakeholders among local communities from the rafting zone, hotel businesses, local governments, local administration authorities, police, youth clubs, and transport entrepreneurs committees and the media)
- Coordinating with travel agencies and local bodies.
- Coordination for river tours and rafting activities.
- Preparing 'packages' for river tours and rafting.

Tour of religious shrines from district headquarters:

Two night one-day rafting package includes:

- Dinner & Lodging
- Breakfast at District headquarters
- Trip to Jagannath temple
- Trip to Tripurasundari temple
- Trip to Sera Lunch (local variety)
- Rafting sera
- Jhulaghat
- Snacks
- Dinner at Lodge

One-day rafting package includes:

* breakfast, travel, rafting, guide, lunch, snack

Two-day rafting package includes:

- Night stay at Baitadi
- Breakfast
- Travel, guide
- Trip to Jagannath temple
- Trip to Ninglashaini Mandir

Lunch at

- Dehimandu
- Trip to Patal Bhumeswor
- Back to District Headquarters lodge at Melauli
- Breakfast at Melauli and back to Baitadi Headquarters

Taskforce :

Coordinator -Chairperson Hotel Association.
Member -Chairperson Travel Association.
Member -Chairperson Chamber of Commerce.
Member -Representative Journalist.

“

We are ready to give boats as grants.

Mr. Narendra Singh Thapa
Mayor, Dashrath Chand Municipality

”

The mayor of Dashrathchand municipality, Baitadi, has expressed his commitments to grant boats to promote river tours in the Mahakali. " We are excited to announce our preparation and readiness to grant boats to women's groups, or private businesses from the riverine communities willing to operate river tours," said the mayor."River rafting on

the Mahakali can attract the religious tourists from India who come to Baitadi to visit the temples. This, will contribute to the local and national economy," he adds.

Voices of women from local riverine communities

Local women's groups have shown interest in the prospects of rafting on the Mahakali river. They showed a rapid increase in interest especially following the river rafting event conducted on 22 March 2021 from Shera,

Dashrathchand municipality to Jhulaghat.

Tara Karki, Coordinator, Navajyoti Women's Empowerment recalls, "Many people attended the rafting trip organized on the occasion of the World Water Day. We had a good earning by selling lunches that day". "If given proper support, local women are ready to operate the boats on the Mahakali themselves."



Inauguration of Joint Rafting from Parshuramdham by Mayor Bhim Bahadur Saud on the occasion of World Water Day, 2021.

Outcomes/ conclusion of meetings and discussions with the private sector in Darchula district.

Participation

- Representative of Hotel Professional Federation of Nepal
- Representative of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry
- Representative of All Nepal Transport Entrepreneurs Association
- Representative of Non-Government Organizations
- Tourism Personnel
- Tourism areas
- Religious tourism
- Cultural tourism
- Adventure river tourism
- Historical tourism
- Nature tourism

Tourism Potential

- Pilgrimage tour to Malikarjun-Dham, the seventh 'Dham' in Nepal.
- View of Api Himal peak.
- Pilgrimage tour of Tapoban.
- River tours and rafting on the Mahakali
- - Information regarding different herbs, including 'Yarsagumba' in the Api Nampa conservation area.

Malikarjun Temple Visit (Worship) Package

- Welcome and breakfast (veg) in Darchula.
- Travel (by Jeep) to UkuDarbar
- Trip to Malikarjun Temple
- Lunch at Milkhet (homestay)
- Return trip to Darchula (Khalanga)
- One person cost (IC) 5000.00
- One person cost (NC). 8000.00

Tapoban Visit Package

- Breakfast in Darchula (Khalanga)
- Trip to Tapowan tracking (3 km foot track)
- Tapowan to Bangabagad: Rafting
- Lunch at Bangabagad and Observation of Mahakali Tatbandhan and fishing
- Rest at playground
- Visit Namaskar Temple
- Back to Hotel (Khalanga)

Committee:

Coordinator:

Surendra Bahadur Pal 9848821731

Member:

Chetanmani Thagunna 9848738006

Member:

Dev Singh Mahar 9848549228

“

Number of tourists will increase if rafting is started in the Mahakali river.

Dev Singh Mahara

Chairman Hotel Entrepreneurs Federation, Darchula.

We are excited to learn of the efforts underway to operationalize rafting in the Mahakali. He adds that the local government, private sector, and the people must all come together to make this a reality.

”

Section C

An analysis of business plans

Probability/ likelihood for the development of Rafting in Mahakali river based on meetings and discussions.

1. Possibilities

The Mahakali is a transboundary river. Tourists from both Nepal and India come to the river for rafting. Tourist numbers can increase if the rafting activities are properly coordinated with tour operators and businesses on the Indian side. Rafting businesses and operators can be found 35 km away from Jhulaghat in Pithoragarh. If properly coordinated, entrepreneurs from riverine communities in the Baitadi district can benefit from the skills and knowledge transfer from experienced rafting business owners in Pithoragarh.

If grants are made available from Dashrathchand municipality, or any other government agency, the costs of operationalizing rafting businesses can be minimized, which will result in lower rafting fares for the tourists than on the Indian side. This is an attractive prospect to boost tourism in the area.

Additional possibilities

Municipality grants or grants from other government agencies will enable profits for up to Rs. 12,47,221 as per the business plan point number 11.2.1. Lower operational costs could increase tourist numbers due to lower fares.

In a self-investment modality, bank loans are possible per business plan point number 12. However, the fare will be slightly increased. This can result in a net profit of up to Rs. 12,50,000 per annum.

Additionally, the provincial government has been investing in the promotion and development of the tourism sector through

grants, which rafting entrepreneurs and operators can avail. Such grants can be highly encouraging for aspiring operators.

There was much public interest in the rafting event on the Mahakali river on 22 March 2021. Due to time constraints, not everyone could experience rafting. However, there is substantial public interest and demand to operationalize the rafting events.

An additional prospect for the Mahakali corridor is the increase in summer tourists in the Mahakali river due to its easy accessibility.

Risks

Since the Mahakali is a transboundary river, any commercial activity would require the consent and appraisal of both countries. The use of river resources, including water resources, requires the agreement of the administrations of both countries. Rafting activities on the Mahakali may require due processes for agreements. Nepal has not obstructed any rafting activities from the Indian side in recent years. However, fears exist that the Indian side may obstruct rafting from Nepal. Likewise, dams and spillways constructed in the area for hydropower projects pose a potential risk for flooding should a breach occur or the waters are released without prior and proper warning. This is especially true for infrastructures related to Dhauliganga in comparison to the Chameliya dam.

Infrastructure and managerial preparations

River-rafting is comparable to other adventure sports activities like paragliding, zipline, and

bungee jumping. It presents a challenge posed by the elements. Suppose essential basic services meant for tourists are mainstreamed and made mandatory. In that case, the quality and a high standard can be maintained. In the case of rafting, basic essential facilities like changing rooms at the start and end of the trip, restrooms, showers, and waste management must be mandatory. Due to the lack of public toilets, tourists are forced to defecate out in the open.

Additionally, extractive industries like sand-mining, aggregates, and stones/ rock extraction need to be minimized and managed properly.

Name of business: Rafting in the Mahakali river

Introduction:

This report has been prepared based on several research, investigations, and viability studies that suggest the possibility of rafting activities on the Mahakali river. Agriculture is the mainstay for the livelihoods of the riverine communities of the Mahakali river. Hence, proper management and just governance of its water resources remains critical for tourism-related activities and presents great potential to improve the livelihoods of the communities. It presents good opportunities for Nepal's domestic tourists and tourists from India who will spend one to three days visiting religious shrines (shaktipeeth) and appreciate the region's cultural heritage. This section of the report focuses on analyzing the business plan and the potential returns of operationalizing rafting businesses in the Mahakali river.

Marketing plan

1. Goods and services

The yearly projection of the number of tourists in the Mahakali river including rafting and religious and cultural tourists are as follows.

Details	Numbers
From Kartik - Magh	1,000.00
From Falgun – Jestha	2,500.00
Average number per district	2,500.00
Average number of districts adjoining Mahakali river	14,000.00

1. Possible sites for rafting

The private sector or other owners can run the rafting business.

The reasons for choosing the Mahakali river are as follows:

- Mahakali river banks and the climatic conditions are considered safe for rafting.
- Home-stay facilities with proper food facilities present
- Fifty-seven varieties of local foods and cuisine, including fresh fish from the Mahakali
- Transportation and communication services are available
- Different religious and natural sites in close vicinity of rafting areas, including Purnagiri (Kanchanpur), ParshuramDham (Dadeldhura), Devtal (Baitadi), Tripurasundari, Patal Bhumeswor cave, Ninglashaini temple, MallikarjunDham, and Tapoban
- Views of Api Shaipal and Panchchuli Himal (India)



Local Youth Ward Chairpersons from ward 5 and 5, Parshuram municipality try rafting from Parashuramdham to Silent River, Kanchanpur.

2. Demand and supply

The novelty of rafting and river-based tours as a commercial venture presents an opportunity to analyze demand and supply based on the number of tourists and the promotional activities and essential facilities like home-stay, etc. It is also possible that the initial stages may see an influx of surplus tourists. Due to a lack of competition at the local level, the introductory pricing for tour packages is expected to reduce with time as businesses mature. Around 14,000 tourists per year are expected to be served with current resources and means.

Work Schedule

Possible time for rafting	Months											
	Shrawan	Bhadra	Asoj	Kartik	Mangsir	Poush	Magh	Falgun	Chaitra	Baishak	Jestha	Asar
Not possible in Monsoon												
Possible times												
Peak tourist numbers during												

2. Required fixed assets

S.N.	Details of fixed assets	Unit	Required quantity	Rate	Amount
1	Boat purchase	number	2	1,400,000.00	2,800,000.00
2	Transport vehicles rental	number	2	400,000.00	800,000.00
3	Waiting rooms and changing rooms for tourists	number	2	55,000.00	110,000.00
	Total				3,710,000.00

3. Depreciation of fixed assets

S.N	Details of fixed assets	price	Life of asset (years)	Depreciation
1	Boat purchase	2,800,000.00	8	350,000.00
2	Transport vehicles	800,000.00	3	266,666.67
3	Waiting rooms and changing rooms	110,000.00	10	11,000.00
	Total	3,710,000.00		627,666.67

6. Expenditure plan

*Average cost per district per year

S.N	Raw materials	Unit	Number of tourists	Rate	Amount Rs
1	Breakfast	pax	3,500	300	1,050,000.00
2	Lunch	pax	3,500	200	700,000.00
3	Dinner	pax	3,500	300	1,050,000.00
	Total				2,800,000.00

7. Manpower requirement and cost per year

SN	Manpower type	Number	Salary/Wages	Amount Rs
1	Direct workers			
1.1	Main driver	12	30000	360,000.00
1.2	Assistant driver	12	25000	300,000.00
1.3	Helper	12	15000	180,000.00
	Total			840,000.00
2	Indirect workers			
2.1	Manager. 8 months at 8000/month	12	30000	360,000.00
	Total			1,200,000.00
	Estimated number of tourists per year			3,500

8. Miscellaneous overhead costs per year

SN	Costs Type	Unit	Number	Rate	Amount
1	Land rental	Ropani	8	2000	16,000.00
2	Mobile Recharge	Monthly	8	200	1,600.00
3	Electricity	Monthly	8	500	4,000.00
4	Telephone	Monthly	8	300	2,400.00
5	Transporation	Monthly	8	1000	8,000.00
6	Misc. and Promotion	Monthly	8	10000	80,000.00
7	Training costs	One time	1	75000	75,000.00
	Total				187,000.00

Cost per unit

Cost for No 6.	3,710,000.00
Cost for No 8.	2,800,000.00
Cost of worker for No 9.	1,200,000.00
Other costs for No. 10	187,000.00
Total cost	7,897,000.00
Total no of passengers	3,500
Cost per person	2,256

9. Income through service sales

Sales Income	Pax	Rate per person	Amount
Income from passengers (pax)	3500	1,000.00	3,500,000.00
Income from home-stay	3500	300.00	1,050,000.00
Income from Breakfast	3500	300.00	1,050,000.00
Income from Lunch	3500	350.00	1,225,000.00
Income from snacks	3500	150.00	525,000.00
Typical food at homestay and Chhaliya dance	3500	500.00	1,750,000.00
Other income (tips)	1	12,000.00	12,000.00
Total income	0	0	9,112,000.00
Income per person	0	0	2603
Total income	0	0	9,112,000.00
Total cost	0	0	7,897,000.00
Net profit	0	0	1,215,000.00

10. Income through service sales

Break Even Point

Investment Cost-analysis including boat purchase

Income through sales	Pax	Rate per person	Amount
Income from passengers (pax)	3037	1,000.00	3,037,000.00
Income from home-stay	3037	300.00	911,100.00
Income from Breakfast	3037	300.00	911,100.00
Income from Lunch	3037	350.00	1,062,950.00
Income from snacks	3037	150.00	455,550.00
Typical food at homestay and Chhaliya dance	3037	500.00	1,518,500.00
Other income (tips)	0	-	-
Total income	0	0	7,896,200.00
Income per person	0	0	2600
Total income	0	0	7,896,200.00
Total cost	0	0	7,897,000.00
Net profit	0	0	(800.00)

The break-even point is estimated to be at a number less than 3037 tourists per year.

11. Income through service sales

Cost analysis of subsidized rates package for passengers through grants from the local government

Income through sales	Pax	Rate per person	Amount
Income from passengers (pax)	3500	1,000.00	3,500,000.00
Income from home-stay	3500	200.00	700,000.00
Income from Breakfast	3500	250.00	875,000.00
Income from Lunch	3500	250.00	875,000.00
Income from snacks	3500	150.00	525,000.00
Typical food at homestay and Chhaliya dance	3500	300.00	1,050,000.00
Other income (tips)	3500	50.00	175,000.00
			2,200.00
Total income	0	0	7,700,000.00
Income per person	0	0	2200
Total income	0	0	7,700,000.00
Total cost	0	0	4,917,000.00
Net profit	0	0	2,783,000.00
Bank loan interest Rs			758,112.00
Cost before operations			150,000.00
Depreciation			627,666.67
Total cost:			1,535,778.67
Net profit			1,247,221.33

Source of capital

	Percentage	Amount
Total required capital	100%	7,897,000.00
Self-investment	20%	1,579,400.00
Bank loan	80%	6,317,600.00
Interest	12%	758,112.00

Business plan

Rafting in the Mahakali river

A snapshot of the business

1.	Name of entrepreneur	Rafting company A,B,C
2.	Name/Type of business	Rafting in Mahakali river
3.	Address	Mahakali river bank area
4.	Place of operation/service delivery	Mahakali river bank area
5.	Clientele	Nepali and international tourists
6.	Total capital	7,897,000.00
7.	Fixed capital	3,710,000.00
8.	Running capital	4,187,000.00
9.	Cost before operation	150,000.00
10.	Required Bank Loan	6,317,600.00
	Self-Investment	1,579,400.00
11.	Annual sales	9,112,000.00
12.	Annual costs	7,897,000.00
13.	Annual Net Profit	1,215,000.00
14.	Break-even point	3037 tourists per year
15.	Return on Investment	1 year

Conclusion

In view of the results and learnings obtained from the consultations and discussions held with the stakeholders of the TROSA programme, field visits, and consultations with the stakeholder community from Darchula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Kanchanpur observations and outcomes from the rafting event conducted from 14 Jan 2021- 22 March 2021 in Mahakali river (Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Kanchanpur), commitment in Dhangadi Declaration, the Mahakali Samvad (dialogue) and package preparations for rafting and its business plan event, it is evident that there is a high likelihood for sustainable river rafting business in the Mahakali river.



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