

9.1 Introduction

From the preceding two chapters of this thesis, it is evident that agriculture and fishery as means of livelihood under current circumstances do not promise much in terms of attaining sustainable development goals, nor are the enabling physical conditions (chapters 4 through 6) in a state to usher in large-scale economic uplift of the people of Sundarbans. The conditions under which prospects of attaining sustainable development goals *might* be enhanced will be dealt with separately in Chapter 10. In this chapter, a small tourism initiative in the Sundarbans is examined (Section 9.4), as it provides glimpses of a possible 'win-win' situation though the values attached to the eco-region by the local community and the various actors involved are quite different, while for some it is intrinsic, for others it is instrumental.

Before describing the small-scale tourism initiative, I will provide in the following section (9.2), a brief overview of tourism in the Sundarbans in general and reflect on the State Government's views on the matter, including large-scale tourism wherein it is considered as an economic force capable of generating enough revenue and opportunity for effecting large-scale economic uplift of the people of the Sundarbans. Section 9.3, provides the case-specific (tourism-specific) frame of reference, which along with the broader framework presented in Chapter 2 helps to understand and to analyse the contrasting forces in operation in the context of tourism in the Sundarbans. In Section 9.4, I look at the two contrasting schools of thought (somewhat akin to the competing values of deep ecology and social ecology) regarding tourism's role in community and/or market development, as well as present the concepts of sustainable tourism, and tourism commons. Section 9.5 presents an analysis of the current situation in the context of tourism as a livelihood option for the communities in the Sundarbans.

9.2 Tourism in the Sundarbans

The Sundarbans eco-region offers three tourism options: wildlife tourism, beach tourism and religious tourism. Religious tourism is restricted to Sagar Island where during a particular lunar position in the month of January almost half a million Hindu pilgrims, mostly from North India, visit for a holy dip at the confluence of the Hugli River (revered as the holy Ganges) and the Bay of Bengal. For the rest of the year, Sagar Island hosts insignificant number of religious tourists (visiting the confluence and a shrine connected with the great epic behind the holy dip), as well

as the beach tourists. Bakkhali on Namkhana Island is more popular as a beach tourism destination, especially for tourists from in and around Kolkata, possibly due to better road connectivity and infrastructure¹. Bakkhali has a public sector tourist lodge and a number of budget hotels all of which have access to grid electricity. The tourism organisations and the *institutionalised* collective action organisation at the Development Block level have collaborated effectively around tourism in Bakkhali. The Namkhana Panchayat Samiti through the participation of the tourism entrepreneurs raises resources by levying user fee of Rs. 2/- from every tourist who spends a night at Bakkhali and Rs. 30/- (\$ 0.7) from every passenger vehicle crossing over to Namkhana Island. The Panchayat Samiti has also carried out a beach front development with funds from private sources.

In local tourism parlance, a visit to the Sundarbans essentially means the eastern part and is synonymous with wildlife tourism. The Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary (within the Sunderban Tiger Reserve) is the most popular destination which has a public sector tourist lodge. All the private sector establishments are close to the Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary but on inhabited islands. These range from basic sleeping arrangement for the night to modest resort with modern amenities. Since the inception of the Sundarbans Jungle Camp at Bali (details in Section 9.4) in 2002, at least three other similar attempts have been made on different islands. Over 50,000 tourists visit the Sundarbans of which just one percent is of foreign origin. Most tourists are day trippers; others spend 2-3 nights unless they are naturalists or novelists. The West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (a public sector company) provides onboard facilities from Sonakhali² (the main gateway to Sunderbans Tiger Reserve) to tourists in watercrafts but most tourists hire private launches (also from Sonakhali) for the trip and even spend the night on them. Onboard tourists practically have no interaction with the local community nor do they significantly contribute to the local economy except for hiring the launch and the services of a local guide which has been made mandatory by the Sunderban Tiger Reserve. For Indian tourists the guide fee is Rs. 150/- (about \$ 3.50) per day and for foreigners, it is Rs. 200/- (about \$ 4.00) per day.

¹ It is possible to drive down to Bakkhali directly from Kolkata. At Narayanpur, there are regular vessel services to ferry cars, buses and trucks across Hatania Doania River (see Chapter 5, Photograph 4). Similar vessel service to Kochuberia on Sagar Island is less frequent from Lot 8 (Harwood Point).

² Sonakhali can be reached by road from Kolkata (distance of about 100 km). In February 2006 a road bridge connecting Sonakhali with Basanti has been opened to traffic and now it is possible to travel by road up to Gadkhali (opposite Gosaba, see map in Figure 3.3) and tourists often bring their vehicles there but no attempt has been made to upgrade the road from Basanti to Gadkhali which is essentially an all-weather metalled inter-village road. Increased traffic has not only damaged the road but also increased the chances of road accidents due to proximity of the houses along the road. Earlier, only van-rickshaws and autos (both modes described in Chapter 5, Subsection 2.1) would ply along the Basanti-Gadkhali road. The bridge connecting Sonakhali and Basanti has taken at least seven years to build, and in the meanwhile, with some planning and foresight the Basanti-Gadkhali road could have been widened and upgraded to cater to tourists and local population alike.

As of now tourism is not a prime mover of the local economy nor does it generate significant revenue for the State; tourist visits to the Sunderban Tiger Reserve (STR) annually generate about US\$ 26,500/- through entry fee of Rs. 15/- (\$ 0.30) per head per day and boat/launch licence fee of Rs. 100/- (\$ 2.20) per day. In 2003, the Government of West Bengal received a US\$ 155 million tourism project proposal from an Indian business conglomerate which was received by it enthusiastically in the hope of earning substantial revenue. The Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the conglomerate to float a joint venture to tap Sunderbans' tourist potential in all three segments: wildlife, beach and religious. The proposed project sought 303.5 ha of land on five different islands spanning eastern and western Sunderbans to build world-class facilities including helipads/jetties and bring in watercrafts of various sizes including floatels to which the Government consented. Keeness of the Government was also apparent from the fact that it agreed to have just one director out of seven on the board of directors of the proposed joint venture company. The project in fact, was envisaged as high-end mass tourism though it was termed as an ecotourism project.

Some time between the second half of 2003 and first half of 2004, land surveys were carried out and mandatory public hearings organised. This was also the time when Jambudwip Island was cleared of fishermen settlers (see Chapter 3, Subsection 3.2) thus local public opinion was against land acquisition for the mega tourism project. Local, regional, national and international civil society organisations (CSOs)³ collaborated effectively against the proposed tourism project raising objections at public hearings and petitioning various provincial and national government offices. They also raised concerns regarding the impact of the mega project on the delicate ecosystem, extraction of groundwater, displacement of human population, waste and effluent disposal, and violation of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) stipulations. Since 2005, not much has been heard about the project and concerted collective action on the part of the various CSOs at different levels appears to have effectively stalled it; the project proposal has not been taken up for environmental clearance by the national government.

While the mega project failed to make any further headway, a small project seems to be setting an example along the lines of sustainable tourism. The following section introduces the concepts of tourism as an economic force, sustainable tourism and tourism commons.

9.3 Frame of reference

9.3.1 Tourism as an economic force

Tourism as an economic activity cuts across many sectors, levels and interests. These range from the hotel industry to National Parks authorities, from tourist boards to government departments, and from tour operators to conservation

³ Some of the CSOs that came together against the proposed mega tourism project are EQUATIONS, Bangalore; Bombay Environmental Action Group and Reef Watch, both Mumbai; Environmental Justice Initiative and Kalpavriksh, both New Delhi; Environmental Investigation Agency, London; PUBLIC and Disha, both Kolkata, and a number of local fishermen organizations along with National Fishworkers Forum as well as local units of political parties.

organisations as well as the host community. Tourism is a powerful economic force in the development of both community-based and global markets. Despite its economic significance, debate continues whether or not tourism truly benefits all entities in its system (Sautter and Leisen, 1999). According to Cater, the various interests involved can be grouped into four categories: the host population, tourist guests, tourism (entrepreneurs) organisations and the natural environment (Cater, 1995). At a most basic level, there are two schools of thought regarding tourism's role in community and/or market development, the political economy view is that of an exploitative force, while the functional view sees it as a proactive force (Lea, 1988). The political economy view posits tourism as an exploitative force under which residents of a destination can only react to its consequences on their home environment. The functional view approaches tourism as a proactive force which seeks to maximise positive returns to a community's overall growth while minimising the costs to the environment and culture. It suggests that all parties or stakeholders interested in or affected by this business within a particular market or community should collectively manage the tourism system (Keogh, 1990; Sautter and Leisen, 1999). However, the relationship between tourism development, socio-economic development and the environment is circular and cumulative. While safeguarded environment and improved infrastructure result in continued tourist arrivals resulting in relatively improved standards of living due to tourism earnings and better infrastructure, it also places additional pressure on the environmental resources upon which the entire system rests. Globally, the experience has been that initially there is snowballing in economic terms and later of degradation of the environment jeopardising future interests of tourist and host populations as well as those of tourism organisations, unless sustainably managed.

9.3.2 Sustainable tourism

In 1982, a "Joint Declaration" of the World Tourism Organization (WTO)⁴ and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) spelt out the goal of sustainable tourism as: "the protection, enhancement, and improvement of the various components of man's environment are among the fundamental conditions for the harmonious development of tourism. Similarly, rational management (from the perspective of tourism bodies, mainly public sector) of tourism may contribute to a large extent to protecting and developing the physical environment and the cultural heritage, as well as improving the quality of life" (UNEP/GRID-Arendal)⁵. But, in majority of the work published under the banner of sustainable tourism, much of the detail of sustainability remains hidden behind the rhetoric of balance, or obscured by a variety of labels, such as ecotourism or alternative tourism, which may amount

⁴ The World Tourism Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations based in Madrid. This intergovernmental organization represents public sector tourism bodies from most countries (145 countries as on December 2005) in the world. This organization is frequently confused with the Geneva-based World Trade Organization meant to set the rules for the global trading system and resolve disputes between its member states; all of whom are signatories to its approximately 30 agreements. To end this confusion, the UN General Assembly on 1 December 2005 approved to add the letters UN as prefix to the abbreviation of World Tourism Organization, thus UNWTO.

⁵ <http://www.grida.no/Newsroom.aspx?m=54&pressReleaseItemID=507> as viewed on 24 November 2006.

to little more than an attempt to give the impression of environmental stewardship (Butler, 1991; Cater 1993; Wheeler, 1993). According to Cater, therefore, to ensure true sustainability, it is vital that the local population is involved in the management of their tourism resources and that the local population benefits directly from the utilisation of these resources (Cater, 1993). Nevertheless, different interpretations of sustainable tourism might be appropriate under different circumstances. Hence, according to Hunter, sustainable tourism should not be regarded as a rigid framework or as a checklist of things to do, but rather as an adaptive paradigm which legitimizes a variety of approaches according to specific circumstances and results in mutually agreed (by the key stakeholders) desirable outcomes (Hunter, 1997).

According to the “Berlin Declaration” (1997), on Biological Diversity and Sustainable Tourism: “Tourism should be developed in a way so that it benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy, employs local workforce and wherever ecologically sustainable, uses local materials, local agricultural products and traditional skills. Mechanisms, including policies and legislation should be introduced to ensure the flow of benefits to local communities. Tourism activities should respect the ecological characteristics and capacity of the local environment in which they take place. All efforts should be made to respect traditional lifestyles and cultures” (GDRC)⁶. The criteria mentioned above, the “Berlin Declaration” and the ones outlined in Chapter 2, Section 4, will be used in critically assessing the small tourism initiative in the Sundarbans which now serves as a model for responsible tourism and other tourism entrepreneurs in the region are attempting to follow the model.

Central to sustainable tourism development then, is the issue of how to manage the natural, built, and socio-cultural resources of host communities in order to meet the fundamental criteria of promoting their economic well-being, preserving their natural and socio-cultural capital, achieving intra- and inter-generational equity in the distribution of costs and benefits, securing their self-sufficiency, and satisfying the expectations of tourists (Hunter, 1997; Briassoulis, 2002).

9.3.3 Tourism commons

The concept of tourism commons comprises the whole spectrum of resources that host areas and their surrounding regions possess. These are complex common pool resources (CPRs) because they are subject to multiple uses by diverse groups and are characterised by “multiple, overlapping, and potentially conflicting uses and user groups [a “commons situation”, see Chapter 2, Section 2]; volatility in uses and institutional arrangements; and variances between *de jure* and *de facto* property rights” (Selsky and Memon 2000: 1-2 cited in Briassoulis, 2002; p. 1068). The most salient feature of the tourism commons is that their components are under diverse property regimes – state, private, communal or open access – both before and after tourism development (Healy, 1994). Consequently, different producers and management systems are involved with different concerns as regards their use and protection. In particular, external users (tourists and tourism entrepreneurs) using

⁶ <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/berlin.html> as viewed on 24 November 2006.

local resources may interfere with existing rules of use and management and influence the status and value of the commons. Similarly, the use of the commons is mediated by different socio-cultural value systems: those of the locals, tourists, and entrepreneurs. Hence, the resources used by tourists in common with other tourists, and for tourism in common with other purposes by tourists and locals, can be visualised as tourism commons. As with other CPRs, they experience the problems of overuse and lack of incentive for individuals to invest in maintaining or improving them (Healy, 1994). “Once they [resources of host communities, the tourism commons] are overexploited, the sustainability criteria are difficult to meet; thus, sustainable tourism development is severely threatened” (Briassoulis, 2002; p. 1066).

Most often tourism commons are heterogeneous and variable, composed of natural and built material (tangible) and immaterial (intangible) elements. They comprise several types of CPRs and public goods, constituting a diversified and tightly connected resource base that is indispensable for the integrity of the tourist experience. Their elements intermingle within space and over time being used during tourist episodes simultaneously by both tourists and locals. Hence, their utilisation and valuation is more socio-culturally differentiated than in cases of simpler CPRs where fewer systems interact (such as the grazing commons). This is especially important for those elements that are controlled by non-tourism interests and poses problems where coordination of users is required for efficient resource management such as infrastructure in general, as well as roads, harbours, airports and railways. Therefore, “policies for the management of the tourism commons should aim to balance the interests of multiple uses and users; to acknowledge and accommodate the spatial and temporal variability of the commons; and to encourage wide local participation and autonomy in decision making” (Briassoulis, 2002; p. 1080).

9.4 Small tourism initiative: Sundarbans Jungle Camp

Prior to 2002, Bali Island in Gosaba Development Block opposite Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary was infamous for its poachers. In 2000, some of the young poachers renounced poaching at the insistence of a local school teacher, Sukumar Paira, and banded together to form the Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society (BNWCS), a collective action organisation of the *spontaneous* kind. The former poachers also became members of the Eco-development Committee (a collective action organisation somewhere in between the *spontaneous* and *institutionalised* kind, possibly more towards the latter) on the island promoted by the Forest Department through the Sunderban Tiger Reserve (STR), and were provided with small responsibilities and payments by the STR. Members of BNWCS through the school teacher came in touch with WWF-India and Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI). These conservation organisations encouraged the BNWCS members to work for wildlife conservation. Small payments and encouragement was not enough to keep the reformed young men engaged and gainfully employed over a prolonged period and there was every possibility that these men would again take to poaching. At the initiative of the then Field Director of STR, Pradip Shukla, and the Director of the WWF-India West Bengal State Office, the idea of a small tourism initiative was floated. Help Tourism, an Indian tour operator and consultant with 15 successful community tourism initiatives in North Bengal and Northeast India since 1991 to its credit, was invited to explore possibilities. Help Tourism came up with the idea of a community tourism

demonstration project on Bali Island involving the former poachers, thus the Sundarbans Jungle Camp.

Most tourists who are day trippers contribute only about 50 cents per head in revenue which does not generate adequate income in the local economy. With the belief that overnight tourists could contribute more to the immediate local economy, Help Tourism followed the strategy of offering exclusive accommodation in ethnic style cottages and good local food and service. It is held that small-scale, locally-owned tourism ventures probably make a greater relative contribution towards sustainability in terms of enhanced standards of living for host populations (Cater and Lowman, 1994). Help Tourism (the sole monetary investor in the project) invested over US\$ 50,000/- in Bali Island and constructed six of the eight planned cottages in two phases. In the first phase, land for the tourism project was provided by BNWCS; subsequently Help Tourism bought the adjoining land for expansion. The tour operator, apart from offering boat rides in mangrove creeks with a chance to see wildlife as tourist attractions also provides the tourists an opportunity to observe and interact with local culture. Help Tourism leverages the World Heritage Site status of the Sundarbans in its marketing strategy and the designation is of value to its clients but for a majority of the visitors to the Sundarbans it is of little or no consequence.

Since the adoption in 1972 of the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Natural and Cultural Heritage, 830 sites throughout the world have been formally designated (as of 2006) as World Heritage Sites. These sites, by reason of their special historic, scientific, aesthetic qualities, have universal value. The philosophy underlying the convention has implications for tourism. Although it is difficult to document a direct correlation between World Heritage designation and tourism, as many sites were already popular spots prior to receiving their "World Heritage" status, that designation does increase visibility through public information generated by the World Heritage Committee, the host state and the private sector (Cook, 1990).

Natural sites to be in the World Heritage List should either be "outstanding examples of major stages in the earth's evolutionary history", represent "significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution, and man's interaction with his natural environment; contain "superlative natural phenomena, formations or features", or contain "the most important and significant natural habitats where threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding value still survive" (Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1988: Articles 36 and 24). The horseshoe crab known to be a living fossil is still found in the Sundarbans, land formation in the eco-region is still underway and it supports a large human population, and is the most significant natural habitat of the Bengal tiger. Hence, some aspect or the other fits all the criteria for Sundarbans to be in the World Heritage List but the last criterion secures the World Heritage status for the eco-region most firmly.

Since the first phase of the Sundarbans Jungle Camp was constructed on the property of BNWCS, it is a partner in the project and receives 10 percent of the surplus generated as its share. BNWCS is free to decide on how to spend its share of the profit which its members claim is directed towards conservation and community

development work. There are also counterclaims and allegations of misappropriation but these appear to be more a case of jealousy and based on hearsay than facts. The Bali II Gram Panchayat and Help Tourism do not seem unduly concerned by the allegations made against certain members of BNWCS. WWF-India State Office and WPSI also appear to be solidly behind BNWCS and its members. The Bali II Gram Panchayat regularly issues the licence to conduct business within its jurisdiction and raises revenue. All the employees (10 women who look after housekeeping and maintenance of cottages and 11 young men) except for the Coordinator of the Camp are from the Bali II Gram Panchayat area. At the outset, it was decided through community meetings where the community was represented by Gram Panchayat members as well as members of the community, that the demonstration project would help the local community at the communal level in as many ways as possible though no specific commitments were made except for employing the former poachers who are members of BNWCS and Eco-development Committee (promoted by STR as a participatory management body).

The project has generated over 3,000 man-days during its construction and continues to contribute to the local economy by making 70 percent of its purchases locally. According to a conference paper presented in Greenwich, this is the maximum possible due to unavailability of items such as furnishings and beverages locally (Bauer, 2006). Apart from the direct benefits to its employees, the project has opened up avenues for the community through promotion of formal education (a book bank has been established which provides books to 100 needy but meritorious students of local schools, four scholarships have been instituted and an informal school is run at the project site for the benefit of school dropouts), skill development especially of women (training for handicrafts such as fabric printing and improvement of traditional quilt making techniques), and sale of local produce (honey, handicrafts and hand painted T-shirts) to tourists, as well as other micro enterprises such as rearing poultry and running a laundry. The tour operator has also helped revive a local *jaatra* (folk theatre) group which performs at the project site when contracted and also elsewhere, augmenting earnings of its 20 members. The revival of the group is also culturally significant as the *jaatra* depicts the story of the local presiding deity, *Bon Bibi*, which reinforces conservation messages among the performers and the local community, as well as provides the tourists with a glimpse of the traditional worldview.

Since December 2003, when the project started hosting guests, it has hosted 2401 guests (up to March 2006) of which 1242 are foreigners; since April 2004, foreign tourists have outnumbered domestic tourists by 1:0.8. Revenue generated has also risen steadily from about US\$ 13,500/- in March 2004 to about US\$ 41,000/- in March 2006. Tourist arrivals in the Sundarbans (reportedly 75,000 during the period April 2006 to March 2007) as well as at the Sundarbans Jungle Camp (figures unavailable but Help Tourism claims it has had a packed season) are on the rise.

After deduction of expenditure (at least about US\$ 6000/- is fixed expenditure on account of staff salary irrespective of occupancy), 10 percent of revenue is shared with BNWCS, 15 percent is retained by Help Tourism as its share of profit though effectively 65 percent (15 percent as profit + 20 percent for maintenance + 25 percent for marketing + 5 percent for R&D) is under its control, the remaining 25

percent goes towards community development programmes directed at the entire community (Bauer, 2006). Help Tourism believes that Sundarbans Jungle Camp will attain financial independence by March 2008, as of now the project only generates operational profit.

During the first two years of operation, the Sundarbans Jungle Camp provided surface water from a private pond in the bathrooms but guests' preference have made them switch over to groundwater. Help Tourism has constructed a tube well which villagers are free to use. Groundwater being a common pool resource is subject to depletion and degradation but is not recognised as such either by the tour operator or the Gram Panchayat. If a tube well runs dry, the usual practice in West Bengal is to construct another one near by, and there is no regulation of abstraction of groundwater as such. Help Tourism appears prepared to invest in another tube well should the present one run dry, and by co-opting the villagers in its use of groundwater, appears to have avoided a situation where a commons situation might have turned to a commons dilemma.

Four of the six cottages as well as the dining space have been constructed on common property owned and managed by the BNWCS. The dining space is open to community use in the absence of tourists on the property and such use is coordinated by the BNWCS. Not only has the tourism project added to the common property that the community can access, it has also been able to influence a state agency to provide public-good in the form of a jetty. In 2006, the SDB constructed a jetty close to the tourism project and is for use of the tourists and community alike.

9.5 Analysis

In all the cases presented in this treatise, I have attempted to highlight the contrasting forces in operation in the Sundarbans so as to achieve an understanding of these. Tourism initiatives in the Sundarbans both current and proposed present an interesting contrast. While on the one hand the State Government is supportive of mega tourism projects despite opposition from various quarters based on the political economy view wherein tourism as an economic force is deemed exploitative, on the other hand, small-scale tourism initiatives find acceptance in and active participation of the community. But these initiatives lack full-fledged support of the State Government though some of agencies/departments of the State Government do provide support, e.g. the Sunderban Tiger Reserve and the Sundarban Development Board. The outlook on or attitude towards tourism of the State Government is apparent from the keenness of the Government to facilitate and participate in the mega project but its unwillingness to make things easier for small-scale projects or facilitate their replication is evident too. While it is willing to permit land acquisition and facilitate the process, it is incapable of improving road connectivity at the gateway to the Sundarbans. There could be two reasons prompting the Government to behave in the manner that it does. One, low-impact low-visibility tourism projects are also low on revenue due to lower tourist turnover and two, bringing about transformation (that gives a sense of modernisation and makes the State an attractive destination for investment from outside) in the countryside through a large number of small-scale projects is time-consuming and possibly administratively more costly.

Mega tourism and small-scale community tourism reflect two schools of thought as distinguished in Section 9.3.1 and are at different poles of the spectrum, affecting local community differently and eliciting different responses from the community. In the Sundarbans, the proposed mega tourism project brought about *spontaneous* collective action against it but the small-scale initiative witnessed constructive collective action both *spontaneous* and *institutionalised* in its favour. In case of the larger project, the community felt threatened in terms of physical displacement and change in access regime of common pool resources as well as common property resources. Whereas in case of the small-scale initiative the community not only sensed it as a livelihood opportunity for some of its members but also better access to CPR, and augmentation of common property and public-goods, along the lines of functional view of tourism as an economic force.

Since the mega tourism project has not yet materialised it would be conjectural to analyse its impact but the small-scale initiative does provide that opportunity in terms of sustainable tourism. The fundamentals of sustainable tourism as propounded in the UNEP-UNWTO declaration, and the Berlin Declaration are quite evident in the Bali initiative. The Sundarbans Jungle Camp is small; sensitive to local environment and culture; allows space for participation of local community and collective action; benefits the local community in terms of increased employment opportunity, diversified and strengthened local economy through use of local material, agricultural products and traditional skills in congruence with the functional view of tourism. The area of concern that remains is the use of CPR in the form of extraction of groundwater though by co-opting the community in its use, the Sundarbans Jungle Camp has effectively closed the avenue for the community to demand for an alternative arrangement. The CPR in question gains significance in the light of the fact that for the community it is life sustaining since it is the only reasonably safe source of potable water but for the tourists it is a cleansing medium and surface water would do just as well provided it appears clean and causes no bodily harm.

Given the relative positive outcomes of the Sundarbans Jungle Camp, it appears that at least on the islands adjoining the Tiger Reserve and the Reserve Forests of 24-Parganas (South) Forest Division, replication of the model could make substantial contribution towards attaining sustainable development goals in the Sundarbans. But, how substantial would this be? An idea on this can be envisaged if the successes of the tourism initiative are viewed keeping in mind the demographic figures of Bali II Gram Panchayat. The Gosaba Development Block of which Bali II Gram Panchayat is a part, has a population density of over 750 persons/km² (third most densely populated Development Block among the eight in *de facto* Sundarbans) and the corresponding figure for the Gram Panchayat is even higher at 814 persons/km². The Sundarbans Jungle Camp touches the lives of at least 145 local persons directly in monetary terms through full-time as well as part-time employment and monetary contribution towards education. Even if all these persons were to be from separate families (highly unlikely since benefits tend to congregate within the same group due to kinship ties in rural settings), at least 2,300 families remain untouched directly, discounting the philanthropic act of providing services of a physician and distribution of medicines once every fortnight. The tourism project also touches the lives of people of Bali II Gram Panchayat indirectly in monetary

terms through procurement of local produce. Given, that in the 2005-06 financial year the Sundarbans Jungle Camp had a turnover of US\$ 41,000/- and assuming 70 percent of it is spent locally⁷, it amounts to about US\$ 29,000/- which spread over 2,500 households of Bali II Gram Panchayat is about US\$ 12/- through the year, a miniscule amount. Obviously, a tourism initiative with a financial outlay of about US\$ 50,000/- and community-based cannot generate significantly more.

For community-based tourism to make a substantial impact on the entire community, not only Bali II Gram Panchayat but all the Panchayats adjoining forests, need to have a number of community-based tourism projects each with greater number of tourists than what Sundarbans Jungle Camp currently hosts. Although tourist arrivals are on the rise, at this stage, catering to greater number of tourists through a number of community-based tourism projects might appear daunting but is not impossible altogether if the tourism industry and governments (national, provincial and local) work together to carefully plan and execute as in case of Kwai River tourism in Kanchanaburi province of Thailand⁸.

According to Lele (1991), sustainable development is the process of directed change that in addition to traditional objectives of meeting basic needs of the community has the objectives of sustaining the ecological and social bases of human life. At the broader level, small-scale community-based tourism does help to sustain the ecological and social bases of human life to a large extent in its own interest though there are instances of disharmony and jealousy in the community as a consequence of the tourism initiative (a breakaway rival group is emerging in Bali and unless a mechanism of engagement with it is evolved it could damage the prospects of community tourism). The positives of the process of directed change are apparent from Sundarbans Jungle Camp's contribution towards nature conservation and revival of folk theatre group, and limited contribution towards meeting community's basic needs by providing access to potable groundwater and livelihood opportunities but at the individual or household level, the tourism project has very little impact on overcoming what Holdren, Daily and Ehrlich (1995) describe as the "main ills" undermining human well-being, except for a very small proportion of the population. The *perverse conditions* in the form of poverty and wastage of human potential persist, the *driving force* in the form of excessive population growth shows no signs of letting-up, and *underlying human frailties* such as greed, selfishness and intolerance are gaining ground. This causes a threat to the potentiality under which the process that ensures choices and the continued freedom to make those choices as a manifestation of movement towards sustainable development goals.

⁷ It is reported (Bauer, 2006) and claimed by Help Tourism that 70 percent of the purchases are made locally but this figure appears high. It is possible that 70 percent of food items are procured locally.

⁸ See <http://expo.nectec.or.th/tat/stable/history.html> and www.riverkwaifloatel.com/index_jungle.htm or http://www.losthorizonsasia.com/river_kwai_rafthouse.php