

# Sustainable Destination Development through Responsible Community Based Tourism Initiatives: Select Case Studies from Bali Village, Indian Sunderbans

ARNAB GANTAIT\*<sup>1</sup>, G. ANJANEYA SWAMY<sup>2</sup> AND RAVISH MATHEW<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctoral Scholar, <sup>2</sup> Professor and <sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor

<sup>1&2</sup>Department of Tourism Studies, Pondicherry University, Puducherry (U.T.) India

<sup>3</sup>Department of Management Studies, Sri Sri University, Cuttack (Odisha) India

## ABSTRACT

Responsible tourism is emerging out as a tourism strategy that focuses on the maximization of tourism benefits. It not only emphasizes on the environmental protection but also remembers the tourism stakeholders their socio-economic and environmental responsibilities to a certain place and to its people. In this background, the current paper has tried to access two Community Based Tourism (CBT) initiatives namely (1) Sundarban Jungle Camp, and (2) Tora Eco resort and Life Experience Centre in the Bali village of Indian Sunderbans –those have been emerged as two successful Responsible Tourism Models and have immense contribution towards the sustainable rural development of Bali village, Indian Sunderbans and are also inspiring others to follow their footprints. The researchers have adopted the qualitative approach for collecting the empirics of the paper. Both primary and secondary data have been collected to provide evidences to support the concluding remark that these two Community Based Tourism initiatives those are following the Responsible Tourism Guidelines have significant contribution towards achieving the economic prosperity, social equity and environmental quality - the three pillars of sustainable development in the context of Bali village. Therefore, the researchers suggest that more and more such responsible community based tourism initiatives should be carried out in the future course of time in different parts of Sunderbans also for achieving the same success in a larger scale.

**Key Words :** Community Based Tourism, Responsible Tourism, Sustainable Development. Indian Sunderbans

## INTRODUCTION

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is often considered as a community development tool that not only ensures the participation of local residents in tourism development, but also, strengthens their ability to manage the tourism resources (Jamal and Getz; 1995; Responsible Travel, 2009). The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (2014) addresses CBT as a poverty alleviation tool as it provides the host community alternative sources of income. However, Nair and Hamzah (2015) feels, though CBT initiative helps the host community people in income generation, diversification of local economy, preservation

of culture, conservation of local environment as well as provides educational opportunities; these initiatives require a long-term approach and therefore, such initiatives should aim at the maximization of the benefits for the host community and at the same time, should minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the local community and the local environmental as much as possible. Now, Responsible tourism which has been emerged as a tourism strategy, that is predominantly based on 'tourism ethics' and 'human rights' and guided by the 'Principles of Sustainable Tourism' has similar kind of approach *i.e.* maximization of tourism benefits and the minimization of cost to the destination "to create a better place for the

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people to live in and for the tourists to visit". Therefore, if CBT initiatives incorporate the Responsible Tourism Approach; not only it can sustain itself for a long time but also can be beneficial to the destination and to its people. Here in this study, the researchers have mentioned two such case studies (taken from the same village Bali, Gosaba Block, West Bengal) namely Sundarban Jungle Camp (SJC) and Tora Eco Resort and Life Experience Centre - those have been emerged as two successful Responsible Tourism Models in this part of Sunderbans and have immense contribution towards the sustainable rural development of Bali village in the Indian Sunderbans.

### **Objectives of the study:**

The current study deals with two major objectives. The first objective is to outline a theoretical relationship between Sustainable development, Community Based Tourism Initiative and Responsible Tourism Approach. The Literature Review section has dealt with this objective. Whereas, the second objective is to understand and evaluate the responsible tourism practices carried out by the two select Community Based Tourism initiatives: (1) The Sundarban Jungle Camp and (2) The Tora Eco resort and Life Experience Centre (taken from the same village Bali, Indian Sunderbans) to achieving the sustainable development in the village Bali, Indian Sunderbans.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The current study falls into the category of descriptive research and the qualitative case study approach has been adopted. The researchers primarily conducted 'Telephonic' and 'Face to Face' interviews with few of the main stakeholders of the two select Community Based Tourism Initiatives namely (1) 'Sundarban Jungle Camp', and (2) 'Tora Eco resort and Life Experience Centre' to collect the first hand data for this study and also to understand and evaluate their role and contribution in the rural development of Bali on various indicators of Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations. Then all these information collected from the interviews are crosschecked with the collective opinions taken from the local community members during the field visit. Thus the authenticity of information has been verified. Apart from the first hand data, the researchers also minutely read a good number of published documents, research papers, Books, Journals, Working Papers of EQUATIONS, and

website information to retrieve the secondary information required for this paper. Once the initial draft was prepared, the authors reviewed it twice to make it more accurate.

### **Literature review:**

#### **Sustainable development – The concept:**

The generally accepted concept for Sustainable Development was introduced for the first time in the report of WCED (World Commission on the Environment and Development), entitled, "Our Common Future", in the year of 1987. In this report, the term 'Sustainable Development' was described as a development "that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" and under this consensus, 'three-pillars of development' were taken into consideration and these are (1) Economic Development, (2) Social Development, and (3) Environmental Development.

In 2000, following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was introduced to foster the Sustainable Development. It targeted to achieve eight international development goals: (1) Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger, (2) Achieving Universal Primary Education, (3) Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women, (4) Reducing Child Mortality, (5) Improving Maternal Health, (6) Combatting Diseases, (7) Ensuring Environmental Sustainability and (8) Strengthening Partnership for overall development.

Further, in September, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly set the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - a collection of 17 Global Goals which are the part of the Resolution 70/1 of the UN General Assembly and known as "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in short, "2030 Agenda" covering different socio-economic and environmental issues. These are: (1) No Poverty, (2) Zero Hunger, (3) Good Health and community wellbeing, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality, (6) Clean Water and Sanitation (7) Affordable Clean Energy (8) Decent work and Economic growth (9) Infrastructure development (10) Reduce inequalities (11) sustainable communities (12) Responsible production and consumption (13) Educate young people on Climate change (14) Avoiding plastics to sustain the Life below the water, (15) Plantation to protect the land environment (16) Peace and Justice (17) Partnerships (source: Press release – UN General

Assembly's Open Working Group proposes sustainable development goals).

### **Community based tourism – The concept:**

Tourism is often criticized for the dominance of business by the non-residents coming from the outside whereas the host community usually get low paid jobs because of the lack of relevant skills. In this backdrop, Community Based Tourism (CBT) has been considered as an alternative way to solve this issue as according to Timothy (2002), in CBT, “*the hosts play a central role in determining the form and process of tourism development*”.

Saarinen (2006) describes the Community Based Tourism as “*a tourism based on the negotiation and participation with key stakeholders in the destination*”. Due to the tourism's rapid growth and its negative impacts, an increase interest has arisen in ‘Sustainable Tourism’ and ‘Community Based Tourism’ (Shunnaq *et al.*, 2008; Cooper 2004).

Ruiz- Ballesteros (2011) reports that by reinforcing the Community Based Tourism (CBT) approach to any destination, the social and cultural systems are guarded developed and at the same time, the ecological environment is also conserved that ensures the sustainable development in natural areas.

According to Yamashita (2011), different countries have different perceptions on Sustainable Development. The countries those are having stable economy often focus on environment protection and cultural preservation; while the countries those are struggling with poverty often consider ‘economic development’ as their top most priority. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a bottom-up approach to the sustainable development used mostly in the developing countries as it ensures the conservation of natural resources, preserve traditional culture, and generate more income at the local level. UNWTO (2008) considers Community Based Tourism as one of the subsets of the concept ‘Sustainable Development’.

According to Hall (1991) and Cole (2006), the benefits received from Community Based Tourism initiatives are Community Involvement, Local Empowerment, poverty alleviation etc. those ultimately lead towards the sustainable development.

### **Responsible tourism approach: Pathway towards sustainability:**

The Responsible tourism is comparatively a new

tourism approach that remembers the tourism stakeholders about their responsibilities towards the place and its people. According to Ashley, Roe and Goodwin (2001), the Responsible Tourism is the pathway towards the sustainability and it emphasizes more on community well-being, rather than considering tourism as a product. The characteristics of Responsible tourism are:

- It minimizes the negative economic, environmental, and social impacts of Tourism
- It generates greater economic benefits for the host community and enhances the well-being of local people
- It involves the local people in decision making process that affect their lives positively.
- It makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritages
- It provides more enjoyable experiences for the tourists through more meaningful connections with the local people and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues
- It provides access for physically disabled people
- It engenders the respect between the tourists and the host community, and builds local pride and confidence.

The Cape Town Declaration, 2003 set three Guiding Principles of Responsible Tourism and these are as follow (Table 1).

### **Link between Community Based Tourism, Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Destination Development:**

From the above review section it can be concluded that the Community Based Tourism initiatives can play more effective role in achieving the goals of sustainable development if it incorporates the Responsible tourism approach that focuses on encouraging the beneficial sides of tourism and at the same time, fosters a deep sense of responsibility among the tourism stakeholders that ultimately helps the destination and its people.

#### **Case study - 1 :**

##### ***Sunderban Jungle Camp (SJC), Bali Village:***

The Sundarban Jungle Camp is surrounded by lush green village gardens, trees, ponds overlooking the Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary on the bank of the river Gumdi. It is located in the Bali village which is the last forest village, next to the Bidya Range office of Sunderban Tiger Reserve (STR). There is a long history behind the

**Table 1 : Guiding Principles of Responsible Tourism, Cape Town Declaration, 2003**

Guiding Principles of Responsible Tourism	Responsibilities
Economic Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess economic impacts</li> <li>• Maximize local economic benefits</li> <li>• Ensure community participation</li> <li>• Ensure the benefits from tourism</li> <li>• Assist local marketing and product development</li> </ul>
Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve local community in decision making</li> <li>• Assess social impact</li> <li>• Respect social and cultural diversity</li> <li>• Improve health and education</li> </ul>
Environmental Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize negative environmental impacts</li> <li>• Use resources sustainably</li> <li>• Reduce waste and over-consumption</li> <li>• Maintain Biodiversity</li> <li>• Promote awareness for sustainable development</li> </ul>

Source: <https://responsibletourismpartnership.org/cape-town-declaration-on-responsible-tourism/>

initiation of this project. It was a time, when the rural people of Bali Island were not at all aware of the prospect and economic benefit of tourism and therefore, were engaged in farming and fishery mainly for their livelihoods. But the soil was not that much fertile in these river side forest fringe villages. In addition, high level of salinity of both underground and river water was also disturbing these villagers, as the agriculture was yielding only one crop a year. This situation was forcing a huge percentage of the rural people to be dependent more on the forest resources of the nearby Sajnekhali Forest area that comes under the jurisdiction of Sundarban Tiger Reserve (STR). As a result, very soon, this heavy biotic pressure started threatening the fragile mangrove ecosystem. In the year of 2000-2001, in this part of Indian Sunderbans, the poaching incidents inside the forest area increased alarmingly and the growing number of man-animal conflicts also became a headache for the Forest Authority (EQUATIONS, 2008; cited by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India / UNDP India, 2008). Another issue which also became a concern was the sustainable use of the rivers and creeks passing through the forest areas and its adjacent villages as these water bodies are nothing but the breeding ground of various kinds of fish species and therefore, considered as the major food stock for the Eastern India. Therefore, “to reduce the threats to the ecosystem due to human pressure in the worst case even the extinction of species, and to safeguard the regulations of the National Park” (Beauer, 2006), the Forest department had to find out some alternative livelihood opportunities

for the local people. The STR authority also found that the local young generation were facing a dearth of job scope even after the completion of their studies and the lack of employment was actually enforcing them to start poaching inside the forest areas (EQUATIONS, 2008; cited by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India / UNDP India, 2008) for the purpose of earning money to solve their economic issues and challenges. After recognizing all these harmful trends, the Field Director of the Sundarban Tiger Reserve (STR) and the WWF India - West Bengal State Office started various conservation activities that could involve these local people, and at the same time, would be able to offer these needy, rural people some sort of economic support.

One of these many activities one activity was to initiate a Community Based Tourism project in this area that could ensure a continuous flow of economy in this region and the issues like poverty, over-dependency on the forest products, poaching, man-animal conflict etc. could be controlled and managed to some extent. As a result, the Help Tourism - an Indian tour operator and also a destination management consultant was invited to develop a Community Based Tourism Demonstration Project that could involve the transformed conservators of the Bali Island. In 2002, few representatives of the Help Tourism accompanied with few members of the NGO - ACT (Association for Conservation and Tourism) visited Bali Island to allocate a suitable place to start this intervention and the project was also started in the very same year.

Since then till date, the Help Tourism is running this

community based tourism project – Sundarban Jungle Camp by taking necessary support from a number of other stakeholders such as the NGO – ACT (Association for Conservation and Tourism), the Sunderban Tiger Reserve (STR), the World Wide Fund for Nature-India West Bengal State Office (WWF), the Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society (BNWCS), the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) and the Bali Eco Development Committees.

The major motivations those encouraged the Help Tourism and its partners to invest a huge amount of money and their best effort for this community centric responsible tourism project were as follow:

- (1) To reduce the over dependency of the rural people on the forest products
- (2) To provide a continuous economic support to the poachers turned protectors of the Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society (BNWCS)
- (3) To protect the wildlife especially the Royal Bengal Tiger, the flagship animal of the Sundarban Tiger Reserve, the largest Tiger Reserve of the world.
- (4) To develop a successful model of Responsible Tourism that can counter the negative impacts of mass tourism in this part of Indian Sunderbans.

#### **Sustainable development of Bali village by following RT Guidelines:**

The Sundarban Jungle Camp (SJC) – the community based tourism project is a successful responsible tourism model in the Indian Sunderbans that plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development of the Bali Island and its people by taking more responsibilities in Economic, Socio-cultural and Environmental – all three aspects.

#### **[A] Economic development of Bali village by taking more economic responsibilities:**

##### ***Creating employment for the local people:***

For this community based tourism project, The Help Tourism hired the local community members of Bali Island to the largest possible extent. More than 3,000 man-days were created for the construction work that benefited roughly 2,000 people of Bali Island (Bauer, 2006). When the Sundarban Jungle Camp was started in 2002, only 6 people were working on the payroll basis, which has

increased into 19 now. The local staffs are the direct beneficiaries of this camp and they receive regular payroll for their services. In this Community based project, the community members themselves decide the amount of their salary on the basis of the assessment of their needs and skills involved.

##### ***Restricting economic leakages by purchasing from the local producers:***

The SJC purchases 70 % of its materials from the local suppliers. The goods produced by the local Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are also partly sold in this camp. Thus SJC is offering the local producers and suppliers some sort of financial support and such practices restrict the economic leakage to some extent.

##### ***Conducting training programme to enhance the skills of the rural people:***

Sundarban Jungle Camp (SJC) offers jobs to the local youth from the Bali Island and its adjacent villages as ‘tourist guides’. SJC also hires the local young fishermen for rowing the tourists on the country boats into the nearby mangrove creeks. Once these people are hired, SJC also trains them, so that their guiding skills and presence of mind to tackle adverse situation can be improved.

##### ***Spreading the benefits of the project as wide as possible:***

When this project was initiated, the key concern was that the profits from this project had not only to be given to its employees but the benefits of this project should reach the maximum number of local people. Therefore, JC shares the Net profit in different community development programmes to improve the community life.

##### ***Developing new products and linkages:***

The Help Tourism with the collaboration of Association for Conservation and Tourism (ACT) conducts research to understand the tourists’ demand and develop tourism products according to their need and necessities based on the local resources. It has strong tie ups with different national and international partners to market its products.

#### **[B] Social development of Bali village by taking more socio-cultural responsibilities:**

### ***Supporting the Local Self Help Groups to Empower the Local Community People:***

Sundarban Jungle Camp encourages and supports 5 local Self Help Groups (SHGs). Among these 5 SHGs, 3 are having 5 members each, and these 15 people offer the laundry facility to the in-boarders of Sundarban Jungle Camp and these people get payment from the camp on a per piece basis. Rest of the 2 SHGs are having 10 members each and all these 20 SHG members are engaged in cleaning and maintenance of the complex arena. These people are paid on a monthly basis.

### ***Revival of traditional culture by Reintroducing Bono-Bibi Yatra:***

In this part of Sunderbans the local tradition of theatre play was almost vanished until the SJC reintroduced the Bono Bibi Yatra at their complex as an evening entertainment for their guests. This initiative strengthened the foot hold of a large number of local theatre actors and they started earning additional income with every booked performance. Thus, SJC makes a valuable contribution in the revival of Sunderbans' age-old culture.

### ***Supporting local education:***

As sufficient numbers of schools are not present in the Bali Island, most of the students of this island have to go to nearby towns and sometimes they have to even lodge themselves there. But as these students don't belong

from solvent families, most of the time they face difficulty to survive in these urban areas. After realizing it, SJC started 'Adopt a Poor Student' scheme that offers financial backing to a select number of meritorious pupils for their higher education. SJC also runs a Book Bank Project that provides the needy students their necessary study materials.

### ***Community empowerment and equity:***

The local stakeholder and the community representatives have equal right to take decisions on daily operations, management, and recruitment process. All the stakeholders of this community centric project always take joint decision on planning issues related to the Camp and in every stage of the implementation process.

### ***Supporting local people through diverse Community Development Programmes:***

Sundarban Jungle Camp (SJC) is also involved in a number of local community development programmes those altogether offer the local community people an improved livelihood option. The details about community development programmes are described in Table 2.

### **[C] Environmental development of Bali by taking environmental responsibilities:**

Prior to this Community Based Tourism Project, many of the male population in Bali Island were involved in poaching and other illegal activities in the Sundarban

**Table 2 : Community development programme**

Programmes	Brief Information
Medical Camp	SJC offers free health camp facility and free medicine distribution for solving the health issues of local people. From these medical camps, the patient parties are getting instant medical services and at the same time, the supporting staffs are also earning additional income for their work that helps them to fulfill their family needs.
Adopt a Transformed Poacher scheme	The main objectives of 'Sunderban Jungle Camp' are: (1) Nature Protection and Stop killing and poaching of wild animals, (2) Employment Generation to reduce the over dependency of the local people on forest, and (3) to improve the livelihood of unprivileged village people. Through the Scheme 'Adopt a Transformed Poacher', all these objectives have been fulfilled to a great extent, as now-a-days, a huge number of the former poachers have been converted into passionate conservationists.
Garments Bank Project	Through this project the Sundarban Jungle Camp donate sufficient clothes to the rural families to fulfill their needs.
Donate a Toilet Scheme	This Scheme has been adopted to improve the sanitation facilities of the community people. The SHGs are maintaining these facilities against a collection of nominal fees.
Awareness campaign	The SJC supports different Nature Club movements and conducts awareness campaigns to enhance the knowledge of the local people regarding the significance of nature and its resources.
Others	Farming Medicinal Plants, Aqua Culture, Promote Local handmade Crafts, Micro Credit Financing, etc.

Tiger Reserve forest area (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2017). But after the initiation of SJC, a large number of community people involved with this project that offered them an alternative way of earning. Even they earn relatively lower, they feel pride for being associated with tourism activities, which they consider a much more respectable job compared to their previous professions and such changed mentality of the local people in turn helps in environmental conservation of the place. Apart from that, SJC itself has carried out a good number of environmental conservation activities so far. The list is given below (Table 3).

**Case study-2:**

***Tora Eco-Resort and Life Experience Centre, Bali Village :***

In the Bali Island, Sunderbans, there is another similar kind of Community Based Tourism Project that has also significant contribution in promoting the responsible tourism in this island. The name of this Community driven initiative is Tora Eco Resort and Life Experience Centre. It has been named after a mangrove species ‘Tora’ (*Aegialitis rotundifolia*), that is very common to be found in this part of Indian Sunderbans. In Japanese language the meaning of the word ‘Tora’ is ‘Tiger’. The TORA Eco Resort and Life Experience Centre signifies 4 important aspects: the mangroves, the unforgettable rural life experience, the conservation of

the ecology of mystique Sunderbans, and most importantly the Royal Bengal Tiger - the flagship animal of Sunderban National Park and all reflect in its unique tagline that welcomes everyone to be a part of revolution where tourism will leads to the Tiger and the forest conservation. This Eco-Resort sits on the Bali Island that comes under the jurisdiction of Gosaba Block, in South 24 Parganas, one of the twenty three districts of the Indian state West Bengal. It is located opposite to the Pirkhali Block of Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary of Sundarban Tiger Reserve and is separated from the forest area by river Gomdi.

**History behind the Initiation:**

The Bali Island in the Indian Sunderbans is the home for more than thirty thousand rural villagers. As the villages located on this island are far from the man-made world, survival in these villages is not so easy. Moreover, the existing resources in these forest fringe villages are not sufficient enough to fulfil the requirements of such a huge population. Therefore, a large chunk of villagers are directly or indirectly dependent on the nearby forest area. In these villages, life mainly revolves around the nature, forest, farming, and fishing. It was a time when the socio-economic issues like school dropout, illegal trade, constant pressure on the young generation to look for alternative job etc. became rampant in this part of Indian Sunderbans. In the year 2001, the World Wild Life Fund (WWF) – India, the Sundarban Tiger Reserve Authority along with

Table 3 : Number of environmental conservation activities	
Responsibilities	Activity Initiated
Nature Conservation	SJC spends a portion of their Net profit generated from tourism in various conservation initiatives
Natural Resource Use	SJC helps in Mangrove and Non-mangrove plantation to adjust with the changing climate in Indian Sunderbans SJC buys organic farm products and also encourages the producers. SJC restrains the local community people from over-exploitation of natural and water-based resources. Such practice actually helps in reducing their livelihood risks.
Water Management	SJC harvests rain water to avoid the water scarcity. SJC recycles sweet water resources.
Protecting Wildlife	The anti-poaching squad of SJC helps the STR forest authority in different forest and wildlife protection activities such as listing, watching, patrolling, monitoring the wild animals etc.
Eco-friendly Transport	SJC uses eco-friendly transports such as bicycles and country boats for tourism and other activities wherever possible
Nature Education	SJC conducts 'No Plastic Campaign' at a regular interval for make community people aware of the adverse effect of plastic on nature. SJC offers nature education to the host community as well as their guests through showing them different audio visual shows, and documentary films time to time. SJC also provides free news letters on different issues of nature conservation.
Energy Management	SJC uses non-conventional energy such as solar power in and around their Complex
Waste Management	Help Tourism along with STR has initiated multiple strategies to reduce waste on the islands.

the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) came in as part of their conservation attempts to wean people from their over dependency on the forest products and provided them an alternative source of income through Community Based Tourism and conservation activities. The Chief promoter of the Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society (BNWCS), Mr. Anil Mistry, a conservationist, donated a land on which 4 ethnic cottages were built initially. In 2013, the BNWCS joins hands with VIVADA Inland Waterways Ltd. - the largest inland waterways company in India, to lead this Community Based Tourism initiative a new height. The vision was to empower the local community people with their basic facilities. Mr. Anil Mistry, and Lt. Col. Shakti Ranjan Banerjee (he was the State Director of WWF-India in 2001 and presently the Honorary Director of WPSI) have an immense contribution to this community run project which won the Runner Up award of 'TOFTigers Wildlife Tourism Award' in 2018.

#### **Contribution towards the sustainable development of Bali village:**

##### **[A] Taking more economic responsibilities:**

###### ***Creating job opportunity for the local community:***

Tora Eco resort always tries to provide the village community people an alternative economy through the direct and the indirect employment. In case of direct employment Tora Eco Resort has 10 permanent male staffs. Apart from these permanent staffs this Eco resort has also hired 12 local women for the housekeeping purpose. 6 of these 12 women work for the first fifteen days of a month and the other 6 work for the next 15 days of a month. All the staffs except the Manger are hired either from the Bali village or from the adjacent villages.

###### ***Restricting economic leakage by supporting the local producers and suppliers:***

Tora Eco Resort purchases most of its products from the local market. Thus this Eco resort supports the local producers and the local suppliers and such practice helps in restricting the economic leakages in this area.

###### ***Offering the Local Community Members alternative livelihood options:***

Tora Eco resort has is continuously facilitating the

community of Bali village by different alternative livelihood programmes. Along with the Indian Council for Agricultural and Research (ICAR), it has established a fish hatchery for the benefit of the villagers. Apart from that, many other programmes such as (1) Developing fresh water aquaculture (2) animal resource development etc. are also providing an uplifting to the community economically.

##### ***Other economic responsibilities carried out by Tora Eco Resort:***

1. It has created diverse workforce in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age.
2. It provides skill training programme for the staffs.
3. It encourages the tourists to buy local products.
4. Providing visits to local place of interest, ethnic food, and local events.
5. Marketing local products websites.
6. Direct Contact with the local producers.
7. Pool skills and resources.

##### **[B] Taking more social responsibilities:**

###### ***Improving health and education in local level:***

Tora Eco resort motivates its guests to participate in its special tour programme *i.e.* 'Visit to the Village' so that the tourists can understand the lifestyle and the issues of these poverty stricken rural people. As a result of such initiative, many of the tourists are found to contribute for the development of local schools and mitigating health related issues. One tourist has also contributed adequate fund for the purchase of an ambulance which has been kept at the road head Gadkhali to transfer emergency patient to Kolkata or nearest hospitals. It is also worth mentioning that the parent company of Tora Eco Resort *i.e.* Viveda Corporation Pvt. Ltd. has helped a hospital to be set up by the Samarpan Foundation in the Bali Island.

###### ***Enhancing the skills of the rural people:***

Along with the Indian Council for Agricultural and Research (ICAR), Bali Nature and Wild Life Conservation Society (BNWCS), Wild Life Protection Society of India (WPSI); Tora Eco Resort and Life Experience Centre conducts a good number of training programmes for the local community people to learn the techniques of Fresh Water Aquaculture, Animal Resource Development and Agro-based activities.



**Revival of local traditional culture :**

Tora Eco Resort follows the ecotourism model and therefore, it encourages the local culture such as folk drama 'Banabibi Pala', and tribal dance such as 'Jhumur'. Also a 350 year old dance of Bengal 'Gaudiya Nritya' has been encouraged.

**Other social responsibilities carried out by Tora Eco Resort:**

- Identify local issues to be mitigated
- Constantly working on Cultural integrity
- Community Development projects for the improvement of localities
- Conduct different educational programmes to increase awareness regarding the significance of nature, forest and its resources

**[C] Taking more environmental responsibilities:****Nature protection by planting mangrove and by running environmental projects:**

Tora Eco Resort saves the local environment and the nature by mangrove plantation, keeps the area clean and runs a good number of environmental projects in collaboration with local NGOs and Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society (BNWCS) members. Local community people are hired for monitoring purpose.

**Raising environmental awareness both for the Host Community and the Tourists:**

Tora Eco Resort runs many Environmental Education Programmes to make the community people especially the youth aware about the importance of Nature and the protection of its resources. This Eco resort has a community hall where it conducts community meeting, shows films on nature and wildlife etc. at a regular interval. Tora Eco Resort has also a tie up with the Sundarban Tiger Reserve. Therefore, it carries out regular interactions with the forest Dept. officials. During the forest visit the tourists are accompanied by naturalists to appreciate this unique mangrove forest.

**Other environmental responsibilities carried out by Tora Eco Resort:**

- Source building materials locally.
- Use sustainably produces materials.
- Avoid clearing nearby vegetation and indigenous trees.

- Planting indigenous flora in and around its complex.
- Litter clean-up in and around the complex.
- Develop code of conduct for tourists while travelling or interacting with the host community people.

**Conclusion:**

Community Based Tourism not only empowers the host community, but also can play a pivotal role in the sustainable development of any destination; especially in the rural areas if it incorporates the Responsible Tourism Approach as it fosters a deep sense of responsibility among the stakeholders that encourages them to play their individual roles to the destination and to its people. Here in this study, both the Case Studies taken from the Bali Village, Gosaba Block in the Indian State - West Bengal are reflecting the above stated view. However, it is very unfortunate that though such Community Based Tourism Projects are having immense contribution in the rural development, such initiatives have been done on a very small scale and inconsistent basis in the Indian Sunderbans so far and therefore, the authors feels that there is an urgent need to increase the scale of planning and execution of such initiatives in different parts of Sunderbans as well for achieving the sustainability in a larger canvas.

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