Not in My Backyard!
How Governments and Industry have washed their Hands off Responsibility in Tourism: Exploring Indian Realities

EQUATIONS
23 March 2008

Does policy and practise of responsibility in tourism differ in terms of what is stated and what happens on the ground? Is responsible tourism yet another buzzword or are there paradigm shifts in the way tourism planners, policy makers and the industry understand tourism's role, and wish to position it. Going beyond the "feel good" power point presentations, it is important to face the ingredients and promises of responsible tourism and what it really hopes to deliver. The paper also questions if it is adequate to rely on celebrating individual (and no doubt laudable) initiatives or is a larger scaled-up policy and "model" level transformation the only way that tourism can be more responsible. The paper attempts to frame these questions and seek directions from experiences and realities of tourism development and impacts in India.

Making the World a Better Place by Going on a Holiday

Tourism, we all know, is the world's fastest growing industry and a significant economic force. Given this, we believe it should carry with its dizzying growth statistics, an equally staggering responsibility. We believe it is time tourism globally stopped making self-congratulatory statements and reflected more soberly and perhaps sombrely on its actual track record. The discussions on sustainability and responsibility on tourism can be traced to the late 1970's, when the World Bank and UNESCO co-organised a seminar to discuss the social and cultural impacts of tourism on developing countries and examine whether its benefits outweighed its costs. The fact that 30 years on, in this conference, we talk about the need for building awareness about responsibility in tourism probably points to lack of willingness rather than a lack of awareness among policy makers and the industry to engage with this fundamental issue. Therefore, we wonder if this "new idea" of responsible tourism is in some way a Freudian slip – an acknowledgment that tourism has been rather irresponsible thus far. A pointer perhaps is that tourism is closely linked to 5 of the Vatican's recent list of 7 more deadly sins for modern times – polluting, being obscenely rich, paedophilia, drug dealing and causing social injustice. This is indeed illuminating – either about tourism being very modern or very sinful or both!

The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), which positions itself as the flagship global institution on tourism issues, has announced its unequivocal commitment to sustainable tourism, gearing tourism towards eliminating poverty, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and now, combating climate change. All these goals have two things in common – the poor and the idea of responsibility. Various policy documents of international bodies on issues of sustainability and responsibility employ the liberal use of noble intentions with very little critical reflection or conceptualisation on the complex relationship between poverty and tourism. Organisations like the UNWTO, WTTC, DFID and ODI have made sweeping claims about tourism's contribution to women's empowerment, fostering global peace and harmony and eliminating poverty without basing these in explicit ideological frameworks and research-based empirical evidence. Unfortunately, what this has resulted in is an entrenched myth that more tourism can only be a good thing. The ODI says in the run up to the World Economic Forum Davos 2008 "You want to make the world a better place in 2008? Then fight poverty by going on a holiday in a developing country. Tourism is the fastest growing economic sector in the world accounting for 1/3rd of the world's services trade. ODI research in Africa and Asia shows that in best cases the poor capture between a fifth and one third of total tourism turnover in a destination." Pam Muckosy of the Tourism Programme of the ODI almost gushes when she claims that an enabling and equitable environment is created through tourism. "The good news is that tour operators, hoteliers, governments and tourists can take some very simple and practical steps to enhance the pro-poor tourism impact of a destination without having to cut back on the fun," she states. (http://www.odi.org.uk/odi-on/davos2008/ Pam Muckosy: Fight poverty by going on holiday in a developing country)

Situated where we are, as an organisation researching and advocating for people-centred and equitable tourism in India, we have a few simple and practical questions. Why, alongside tourism's celebrated growth has the situation of the world's poor and those in our country only worsened? Why in the last decade has there been a steep rise in the proportion of undernourished people in rural and urban India? The situation of scheduled castes and tribes is more alarming as among them extreme poverty has resulted in over three fifths moving under the lowest levels of

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nutritional intake of 1800 calories in urban areas. Why does the list of India's 100 poorest districts include Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Darjeeling and Sikkim, all popular halts on India's tourist map? This also begs the question as to why 30 years after the discussions on the tourism and development began; these "simple and practical steps" that the ODI evangelises about are still hard to come by. Our paper will attempt to unravel some dimensions of this mystery.

Situating Tourism within Today's Global Political Economy – The Social Justice Deficit in the Neoliberal World
In the discussions on tourism's responsibility, it is important to situate tourism as a global industry within the current political economy of the world. The global neoliberal economy places us as actors within the market – we are all consumers and there is little place for ethics or for regulation. Neoliberal theory takes the view that individual liberty and freedom are the high point of civilisation and then goes on to argue that these can best be protected and achieved by an institutional structure, made up of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade: a world in which individual initiative can flourish. The implication of this is that the State withdraws from economic activity and lets "market forces" operate, but instead plays the role of a facilitator i.e. it uses its power to preserve private property rights and the institutions of the market and promote them on the global stage if necessary.

For long the trickle down theory has reigned supreme - as long as the whole region gets wealthier the benefits brought by economic growth will eventually trickle down to the poor through multiple channels. Macro economic indicators, we all know, do not mean anything for the poor – unless we have measures to see how the poor really gain. If the Indian economy is anything to go by the poor are losing and are far worse off than ever before.

Tourism is a direct beneficiary of neoliberalism as it tends to flourish in an open economic environment with minimal regulation that facilitates the free movement of capital, labour and consumers. The global political economy also goes beyond the relations of trade and finance between countries and includes the drugs trade, trafficking in people, illegal arms and laundering of financial products all of which are in the scale of trillions of dollars. Tourism's links to many of these processes must also be taken into account. There is little questioning of the need to slow down or the need to redirect growth with a scaling down of our hugely consumptive lifestyles. Thus, in the face of climate change - carbon offsetting and more tourism is seen as the way forward rather than reduction in consumption, drastic shifts in lifestyles or dramatic shifts in the way tourism operates. An illustration of the selfishness with which tourism operates is the rampant fear today among global ski resort operators that climate change will melt the world's snow and put them out of business with no reflection on the role that these massive resorts have played in destroying mountain slopes and contributing to climate change in the first place!

The UNWTO has repeatedly claimed that poverty reduction is an important item on its agenda and that tourism revenues primarily benefit developing countries. This is a claim that needs to be challenged head-on. Along with the WTTC, it has long pushed for a neoliberal agenda – which it calls tourism liberalisation with a "human face". At the UNCTAD conference in Brazil in 2004, the (UN) WTO advocated for tourism expansion in the least developed countries through a "visionary focus on this win - win sector by all states as a development tool par excellence." Further, it sought the "political will at the national and institutional level to put tourism at the core of policy making". All these claims are highly questionable. Firstly, tourism can hardly be described as win-win. Secondly with very little to show for its development claims – the demand that it be at the core of policymaking is a little extreme. All forms of tourism, given its rather dubious record on environmental and socio-cultural impacts, certainly should not be given policy support. Thirdly, I'm sure we agree that there are more pressing and urgent issues of rising economic inequity, social imbalances, conflict, regional divides and an environment crisis that probably should be made the focal point of global policy-making, over tourism. Only such forms of tourism that can prove that they actually address development issues and poverty issues sustainably should be given policy priority.

The focus on poverty reduction actually received its impetus in the early 1990's when the World Bank declared poverty reduction as a primary objective in its World Development Report 1990. Culpeper (2002) notes that other agencies, notably the principle multilateral development banks and bilateral aid agencies such as DFID (and the ODI) followed suit. Tourism finds mention in an increasing number of the Bank's PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) for individual member countries – especially in the Africa, Asia and Middle East. But, even reading the Bank's own literature on the subject does not reflect tangible links between envisioned tourism strategies and poverty reduction. Hawkins and Mann in a recent paper on the role of the World Bank in tourism call for "*a serious inspection and introspection by the Bank of where its interventions in tourism are leading communities and countries. There is a pressing need for the Bank to examine the assumptions that underpin its funding in tourism -* **Are the outcomes from the expanding portfolio of tourism related work actually beneficial to the poor, and can they be**

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measured? A crowded craft market may be a visual testament, but how much money is actually being earned and how many are actually employed? Will increased tourism be a threat to the sustainability of natural and cultural protected areas or can safeguards initiated by governments mitigate the potential negative impacts?" (Hawkins and Mann, 2007, emphasis added).

Pro-poor tourism, which is promoted in different forms to gain policy support and funding from international development organisations, should be more about the poor and less about tourism – in the sense that this should be a development intervention about the best option to reduce poverty (it has been pointed out that in some third world economies foreign remittances of migrant workers may reduce poverty better than tourism). Lately, the argument of leakages of tourism revenues – which was one of the strongest and most damning critiques of the trickle down theory is being countered by persuasive arguments by the ODI and DFID that to focus on leakages is "muddled thinking". We are told that if one is really committed to poverty alleviation (as undoubtedly DFID should be) then one must focus on linkages. The rationale they offer, that policy makers can do very little about leakages anyway, is perhaps the most disturbing evidence of the entrenchment of the neoliberal agenda in international development bodies. And how these are, in turn, pushed onto national governments and policy makers. Policy makers in India for instance have therefore paid much more attention to the expansion of tourism and much less to the real issue – the extent to which tourism development in practise and in reality contributes to poverty alleviation

So what should we talk about when we demand that tourism be responsible? We believe it is important to talk about development, about poverty, and about taking care of the planet. We also believe it is important to talk about ethics, equity, and justice. Responsibility needs to go beyond the 3 R's (reduce, reuse and recycle) and the current notions of corporate social responsibility. Tourism policy makers and the industry need to demonstrate a willingness and accountability to engage with serious issues that confront current forms of mass tourism particularly when they claim tourism's credentials as a development tool. In the discourse about equity and justice, it is critical to understand the process of valuation – what is valued, how these values are articulated and what frameworks, ideologies and ethical positions they are based on. Without such an articulation, it may be very difficult to strive for the changes that we believe are necessary for a better society and for an improved environment. David Harvey explains how neoliberalism functions by redistributing existing wealth (in a pro rich rather than in a pro poor way), rather than generating it in the first place. He terms this "capital accumulation by dispossession" rather than accumulation by the expansion of wage labour. There is therefore an inherent inability built in the neoliberal system to deal with social justice, equity and environmental sustainability. If current forms and practise of tourism promoted by all shades of organisations - from the industry-led WTTC and UNWTO to the pro-poor World Bank, ADB and ODI, as well as our governments - are clearly committed to neoliberal ideas and ideals, then we need to seriously examine whether tourism can at all hold a claim to be responsible and a credible tool for development.

Responsibility in Tourism – Going Beyond the 3 R's
So, what then would social-economic-political-cultural responsibility in tourism entail? That, we believe is for communities to decide rather than corporations and their agents! It must at the very minimum mean not damaging society, responding to critical social problems and acting in social interest. In their paper on "*Tourism and Poverty Alleviation: an integrative research framework*", Zhao and Ritchie 2007 give us some pointers that are useful in trying to understand tourism and its links to poverty - destination competitiveness, local participation and destination sustainability. Tourism policy continues to be focussed on the short term "increase arrivals; increase tourism revenues" mind-set and this would need to shift to a vision for tourism which is long-term and sustainable, if tourism is to be more responsible. It may be useful to critique the process of formulation of tourism policy and practice in India in the light of these criteria.

In the area of destination competitiveness, the Central Ministry of Tourism in India is focussed excessively on international tourism as the core strategy for tourism development. Seeking competitiveness in a smaller geographical scope and among reachable markets rather than simply targeting at global, national or regional markets may be a more practical or promising strategy for destinations in developing countries (Ghimire, 2001 UNRISD, *The Native Tourist: Mass Tourism within Developing Countries*) has made a persuasive argument to change focus from inbound tourism to developing domestic tourism. Furthermore, commercial viability is paramount – as the poor do not have the luxury to risk engaging in initiatives which do not assure them of returns. However, policies and projects on tourism show that it is the assurance of commercial viability and links to markets that are the weakest, whereas a large proportion of the budgets and energy goes into building infrastructure and in overseas promotional campaigns. This is evident in the Endogenous Tourism Project of the Ministry of Tourism and UNDP that has been in operation for three years now. The project has laudable objectives of addressing poverty by mobilisation of rural communities

around income-generation through rural tourism but as on date while 15 of the project's 36 sites are "ready for tourists" there is no clear conception of business plans, revenue models, commercial viability and established market links for these sites.

The increasing number of policy initiatives towards encouraging private sector investment through tax holidays, facilitating land acquisition and subsidies are visible in tourism policy at the centre, at the states and in the country's development reports and five-year plan documents. We must recognise that the strategy of shifting responsibility for poverty reduction to the private sector may show some success in one-off small scale efforts. But tourism enterprises it seems can and will only marginally contribute to increased rates of equity, within the bounds of what they see as commercial reality.

The second dimension of local participation in Zhao and Ritchie's framework is linked to the notion of empowerment. Empowerment is about enhancing the capacity of the poor to influence the state and social institutions, and thus strengthen their participation in political processes and local decision making.

However, in most policy documents on tourism in this country, empowerment is reduced to the notion of building capacity of the local community through developing certain knowledge and skills and giving training (many corporate social responsibility initiatives focus on this aspect as well). Worse still, many policies restrict the idea of local participation in tourism processes to employment (either wage work or self employment) and/or local hospitality (the *athithi devo bhava* syndrome).

Tourism policy needs to ensure local community access to credit and access to economic opportunity, building their ability to engage effectively in markets. Capacity must also be seen in terms of developing the capacity and having the political space to engage in order that they are able to both promote and protect their interests.

The other side of the capacity and participation coin is security – the poor have fewer assets and less diversified sources of income, increasing their vulnerability to disasters and economic shocks. This is a critical aspect especially in the context of tourism where such vulnerabilities are an inherent part of the nature of tourism itself. Given also that the informal sector in tourism is extremely large, this aspect of economic security becomes very important for any serious attempt at impacting poverty.

In order to formulate the XI Five year Plan the Planning Commission constituted a series of sectoral working and steering groups to provide inputs that would form the basis of India's long term strategy for development for the next five years. In the case of tourism, while bureaucrats and industry representatives were clearly on board, representatives of communities, local governments and civil society organisations working on impacts of tourism were clearly out. The process was centralised and top-down with no design of even regional consultations to allow for a more inclusive and democratic process. Detailed critiques of this process by civil society organisations, in an attempt to tilt this bias towards influential corporations, in favour of a more people-centred tourism policy formulation process, was not even acknowledged by the Ministry of Tourism.

EQUATIONS' research on tourism policy and planning in various parts of India reveals that the idea of community participation has in most cases been paid lip service. This is often a public relations exercise to minimise adverse community reaction rather than genuine community involvement in determining the role of tourism development in their communities – including their ability to say no to tourism. The ADB South Asian Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Tourism plans for the North East region of India, a product of corporate consultancy, has focused on obtaining and understanding government and industry requirements for tourism in the region. There has been negligible involvement of communities or their elected local representatives both in formulation of this document and its implementation aspects. No consultation or workshop has been held in important 'key areas' identified by the TDP for intensive tourism development in the North East. Consequently, communities in the region are rejecting the SASEC Tourism Project as a claimed means for their "development" - such experiences only serve to nullify claims policy makers make about tourism development in this country being participatory.

Jharkhand, which was formed on the basis of the struggles of adivasis for their own state – has proudly announced a new product - "mining tourism" claiming this as the first ever in India. (IANS 12 March 2007).This is ironical as long standing struggles of dispossession by these communities against mining and its concomitant detrimental social and environmental impacts have reached no resolution.

The fact that communities have much to say about their own experiences, needs and aspirations from tourism is hardly ever recognised or acknowledged. The case of the "*Development Strategy for Environmentally Sustainable Tourism in the Andamans*", prepared by the UNDP and Ministry of Tourism for the Andaman Islands commissioned in 1997, is evidence of the complete absence of seeking community views and experiences and consulting them on critical tourism development strategies. This, in the Andamans, where local communities have relatively favourable views about their hopes, aspirations and concerns from tourism and hope to benefit from it. In the more recent case of the UNWTO developing tourism plans for the Sundarbans the situation is fraught with complexity as plans for a mega tourism project proposed by the Sahara group were challenged and protested on grounds of unsustainability and significant environmental impacts. Fisher folk communities in Kerala protested the Kerala Tourism Department's plan to build an artificial reef in Kovalam as a part of the tsunami rehabilitation plans without any consultation. Fishing communities said such a reef would only add to tourist pleasure but would seriously impact their livelihoods. Thus, we see that the need to consult with communities and their local government in developments that can have huge implications on their lives and livelihoods is most often sidelined in current tourism thinking.

Tourism is a sector that is built and relies on natural capital (both human and ecological) and this makes issues of sustainability very critical. In their first issue of 2008, (Vol 16, No 1) Editors Bramwell and Lane of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism make a set of critical observations. They point to the renewed interest in tourism environment interrelations particularly notable with rising concerns on the links between tourism and climate change. They however flag off the danger of equating sustainability with green concerns. Quoting Agyman and Evans (2004:157), they argue for a *"move away from the dominant orientation of environmental sustainability towards the idea of a "just sustainability""* - a balanced approach that would imply an explicit focus on justice, equity and environment together. An interesting trend is also when the notions of sustainability leads to the phenomenon of the class dimensions of tourism when, under the banner of sustainability, policy makers clamour for "high-value low-volume" tourists. This is a recurrent theme in several tourism policy and planning documents in India. This suggests a form of neo-colonialism disguised as green, as it links who deserves to travel solely with their ability to spend. In the light of environmental degradation also being a reality, it will be important to deconstruct the implications of these terms and nuance how we use them.

Today, the worlds Protected Areas (PAs) are targets of intensive tourism development. Luxury-oriented and resource intensive accommodation infrastructure is being set up in sensitive and fragile ecosystems, including around many PAs in the country. Tourism, seen as a softer option than extractives like mining and logging, to provide the rationality and funding for conservation schemes. People are displaced from forests and national parks so that non-indigenous ideas of conservation can be implemented – and tourism comes in to supposedly generate money for conservation.

Regulation is a key step in achieving a power shift in favour of communities. But this will happen only when the governments are increasingly pressured to regulate tourism rather than listen to lobbies that have always pushed for voluntary codes and guidelines and the dilution of regulation. The free market mantra epitomised in Milton Friedman's oft repeated quote "the business of business is business " epitomises this reality that corporations get away and are getting away with misconduct in example after example of corporate impunity.

It is a well-recorded fact that the first push for dilution of the CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone) Notification, 1991 in this country came from the tourism industry. In the 1991- 2005 period there have been 20 amendments and 3 corrigenda to the provisions of the Notification diluting and rendering many of the protective clauses meaningless. In the breathtakingly beautiful and ecologically fragile Andaman Islands, the one unifying factor among all tourism establishments along the beach – whether government owned, private owned, big, or small, is that they have with impunity violated the Coastal Zone Regulation. In Kerala, the Vigilance wing of the Local Self-Government Department detected 1,500 cases of unauthorized constructions and CRZ violations in Vizhinjam Panchayat where the international beach destination – Kovalam is located. So much so that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India's Report on the country's tsunami relief and rehabilitation plans have clearly implicated the Ministry of Environment and Forests for failing to ensure the strict implementation of this regulation and allowing considerable expansion of industrial activity on the country's coastline which led to increased losses of life and property as a result of the disaster (CAG, 2006).

In such an environment of complete violation of the CRZ, it is the efforts of vigilant communities, local self governments and watchdog bodies that have to resort to legal action to counter this onslaught on our coasts. As a result of such concerted action, several state High Courts have given landmark verdicts directing state government to

demolish tourism establishments that have been constructed in violation of the CRZ Notification. These include the High Court of Karnataka ordering the demolition of government-run Jungle Lodges and Resorts camp at Devbagh in Karwar, the High Court of Andhra Pradesh ordering the demolition of VUDA (Vishakhapatnam Urban Development Authority) established amusement parks and construction by private players in the Vizag-Bheemunipatnam coastal stretch and the High Court of West Bengal upholding the verdict of the district court to demolish illegal hotels and resorts in Midnapore coastal stretch of West Bengal.

In the Indian context as well, impact assessment frameworks and tools, clear regulatory guidelines and safeguarding and enhancing spaces and voice for communities to influence forms of tourism that benefit them are given very little priority. We must acknowledge that there is also a recommendation to create impact assessment frameworks and tourism regulatory authorities in the Reports to the Planning Commission on tourism development in the XI Five Year Plan. We hope, like many other good legislations and regulatory frameworks, they do not remain on paper. We must remember that soft law such as codes of ethics, codes of conducts (including the UNWTO) and declarations have not surprisingly, shown a poor record of implementation. (Richter 2004:14-15) as neither the tourism industry nor interested governments has established a record for self-policing or more regulation.

The Ministry of Tourism as well as the tourism industry in India have been silent spectators to various issues of the exploitation of children - one of the most shameful realities of tourism. The ban on child labour in the hospitality industry in 2006 by the Ministry for Women and Child Development gave tourism the dubious distinction of been categorised as a hazardous industry. However, child labour and child sexual abuse continues unabated. The government of Goa remains the only state government that has acknowledged tourism's complicity in denying children their basic right to protection and lack of abuse through the enactment of the Goa Children's Act 2003 after persistent advocacy by child rights groups and civil society. However very little has been done on implementing the provisions of the Act.   Recently stringent provisions proposed against child pornography using the internet were dropped in recommendations on the Amendment to the Information Technology Act. Campaigns and protests by civil society organisations seem to fall on deaf ears – and we question why.

With the recent spate of incidents around molestation, rape and murder of foreign women tourists in India, the Ministry of Tourism swung into action. The safety of foreign tourists and NRIs had to be prioritised as the image of our country was at stake. Ex-servicemen are being pressed into action. It is quite unfortunate that there is no outrage when we let our children be sexually abused by tourists. There is, apparently, no question of the image of country in this case! The report of the Planning Commission's Working Group had almost nothing to say about child abuse and exploitation of women in the context of tourism and offered no clear strategies to resolve to address these issues. This, despite the fact that the report of the Working Group on Development of Child to the XI Five Year Plan clearly identified tourism as a cause for increasing sexual and non-sexual exploitation of children in the country.

Environmental Impact Assessment for projects was made mandatory in India in 1994 with the objective to predict environment impact of projects, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts shape the projects to suit local environment and present the predictions and options to the decision makers. The Ministry of Environment and Forest's new Notification in 2006, has removed tourism projects from the mandatory list to conduct EIA and clearance from the Central Government. This is a retrograde step and incomprehensible as the negative impacts - not just environmental but social and economic - of tourism projects on local communities is well documented. Attempts by EQUATIONS and many other groups for the last two years to even get an appointment from the Ministry on the rationale for letting tourism go scot-free have not been successful.

Communities from Kulu led by the Him Niti Campaign and Jan Jagran Evam Vikas Samiti, Himachal Pradesh are fighting against the Alfred-Ford owned Himalayan Ski Village project which would have huge implications on their lives, livelihood and on the protection of the environment. The signing of this proposal and the agreement to its terms has been done in complete secrecy. The Government of Himachal Pradesh has flouted its own laws to accord hasty clearance to this project. A cursory reading of the project proposal makes it clear that it is unsuitable, incongruous and detrimental to the lives of the local community and environment of the region. Further, approved without due public consultation, it thereby undermines the rights of local communities to determine what form of development they seek for themselves and the region and is therefore being severely opposed by them.

As we write this, in Kevadia in Gujarat – at the dam site of Sardar Sarovar, the adivasis and peoples movements are still fighting a 40 year struggle against the flawed development ethic of big dams. Having acquired excess land and displaced thousands in Kevadia village on grounds of public purpose, the Government of Gujarat instead of returning

the land and offering a just compensation to the displaced adivasis, is promoting mega tourism in Kevadia and handing over land to private companies. While this is in violation of various Constitutional provisions, what is shocking is the disregard for basic principles of human justice in the mindless pursuit of pleasure for a few.

"Not in My Backyard!" or "Partnering for Change"? The Call for a Paradigm Shift in Tourism Policy and Practise

Since what constitutes responsibility can be decided only by society it is critical that policy makers and industry must be willing to listen to learn from and partner with local communities, local councils, local governments and a range of civil society organisations.

Working with an active civil society to identify appropriate paths for tourism development would mean recognising dissenting voices regarding tourism development, recognising organic struggles such as resistance of communities to ski villages , golf courses, appropriation of beaches and common forests, water bodies and reduced access to basic livelihood resources such as water and the erosion of traditional occupations.

We have many inspiring examples of local communities waking up to the realities of tourism and taking matters into their own hands – people's charters on tourism have been developed in Lata village in Nanda Devi in Uttarakhand, in Jharkhand , and in Kumarakom Kerala.

The role of civil society organisations such as ours and many others in this country and across the globe is also an important aspect of the commitment to responsibility. We are seen as a nuisance because we demand accountability from our governments and we campaign for business ethics. We amplify the voice of communities at the policy level and call for democratic, transparent and participatory processes. It is rare that the state or the market have welcomed us or played this role themselves. It is important to ask policy makers and the industry why they have engaged so little with organisations such as ours and in fact mostly refused to engage. We ask why it is left to poorly resourced communities and civil society organisations to constantly work on these issues. We believe this is highly irresponsible.

A quick look at the research by Ministry of Tourism at the centre and the states as well as proposed budgets for the XI plan indicate a singular and consistent lack of interest in research, tools and processes to understand, evaluate and mitigate the many negative impacts of tourism. Instead the push is for consultancy reports to make the case for and plan for greater expansion and growth of tourism. The push also is for the promotion of tourism with little evidence of the direct return on investment of such promotion (Rs. 2000 crores i.e. approximately 45% of central schemes outlay is the earmarked amount for promotional and publicity campaigns in the budget for tourism in the country's XI Five Year Plan).

Information is power. Disinformation pervades our society through the mass media - which tells us that corporations are socially responsible, that consumption will make us happy, that more of something is always good, that going on a holiday to a developing country is an act of charity. Dismantling such myths through research, exposing policy failure and policy bias, corporate misconduct, exploitation and greed are important ways to build awareness about responsibility in tourism.

When our governments aggressively position tourism as a development tool it raises the hopes and aspirations of local communities who believe that tourism is going to be the answer to all their problems – only to see quite soon that they lose more than they gain. It is critical that what can and cannot be achieved under the pro-poor and responsibility rubric must be honestly examined – the "mutually beneficial" and "win-win" argument does not hold much water and neglects the critical dimension of equity. It is perhaps better that the industry moves to an altruistic or moral - ethical principle in being responsible. This is because the argument that responsibility will not dent in anyway their profitability does not seem to be tenable and a reduction in profits is not something they seem to be ready for! Our policy makers and governments of course have no option. Their very mandate demands that they are accountable, ethical and responsible to secure the interests of people.

There is an onus on all of us present at this conference. Tourism today is debated more than it ever was before. Are we willing to work with the fundamental issues that are being raised today and have been raised before? Are we really committed to being responsible? Are we willing to see that this requires a paradigm shift? Is this economic power horse willing to accept its role in perpetuating injustice and poverty? Or is it going to escape into a make-

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believe world – just like the holidays it sells to millions of tourists who also look for an escape from their reality? The choice is clearly ours – as much of the responsibility also lies on our shoulders.

Paper presented by EQUATIONS at the II International Responsible Tourism Conference, 21st – 23rd March 2008, Kochi, India.

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