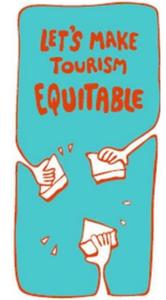


**AN OVERVIEW  
ON  
TOURISM TRENDS AND  
POLICY PERSPECTIVES**

**Talk For Change for Making Tourism  
Sustainable, Equitable and Just**

**EQUATIONS  
27<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

# EQUATIONS



- EQUATIONS is a research, campaign and advocacy organisation working on the social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of tourism from the perspective of local communities since 1985.
- A question that has been central to our work and directs much of it is 'Who Really Benefits from Tourism?'
- Thematic areas of Economic Impacts and Tourism, Ecosystems, Communities and Tourism, Governance, Law and Tourism, Child and Tourism, Women and Tourism

# EXPLORING DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY & RESPONSIBILITY IN TOURISM



- No standard pre-determined definition - it is an approach
- Contextualise tourism to ground realities
- Respecting the land, its people and their culture
- Non-exploitative, respecting human rights, gender just and does not dispossess nature and communities
- Equity in benefits
- People centred, accountable, where decision making is democratised
- Processes of planning and implementation are transparent and participatory so that all stakeholders influence its forms and outcomes

# TOURISM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF NORTHEAST REGION DEVELOPMENT



Tourism is one of key sectors identified in the NE vision 2020 towards achieving an encompassing (inclusive) development of the region

Tourism depends on several factors:

- Marketing of the state as a tourist destination particularly to national and international operators who largely determine a tourist circuit;
- Availability of hotel rooms to attract tourists of all income classes;
- Well-organized tourism circuits and good transport infrastructure,
- Peaceful law and order situation
- Administrative restrictions

# ISSUES NEEDING FURTHER CONTEMPLATION NER VISION 2020 FOR TOURISM



- What is the tourism vision? What will the core values and principles on which tourism will be developed?
- What have been the inspirational stories in tourism that can define the tourism path for the northeast?
- Who are the stakeholders, who will benefit, how can they engage?
- Impacts of tourism need to be addressed and to state how this will be assessed?
- What is the role & responsibilities of the state tourism departments?
- The recommendations and perspectives largely from the government & tourism industry associations

# FOCUS UNTIL NOW HAS BEEN ON

- Augmentation of infrastructure
- Improve accessibility - road (Asian highway), rail (India - Bangladesh rail link), air (open sky policy, developing Greenfield airports / heliports, upgrading airport infrastructure), water (inland waterways)
- Capacity building and Skill up-gradation (IHMs, FCIs, etc)
- Promotion of tourism (domestic & international markets - TV commercials & Print media, in Newspapers, Maps, Booklet on legends & folklores, CDs, road shows, familiarization tours, travel marts)



Constitution of the North Eastern States Tourism Forum - develop a Master Tourism Plan for the NE region as a single entity - to adopt a bottom-up approach (April 2010)

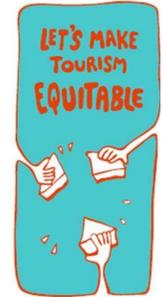


State tourism perspective plans - MoT forgotten that they had commissioned 20 year perspective plan exercise in 2003.

- Need to understand to what extent did they take that into account, what were the learnings from that process, what needs to be changed, do we need to reinvent the wheel.
- The only reason would be unless the process is going to be different this time and if so what is it?

Even more critical as MoT allocated 10% and spent even more and that they have been very active in commissioning planning and research reports.

# TOURISM TRENDS IN NORTHEAST REGION

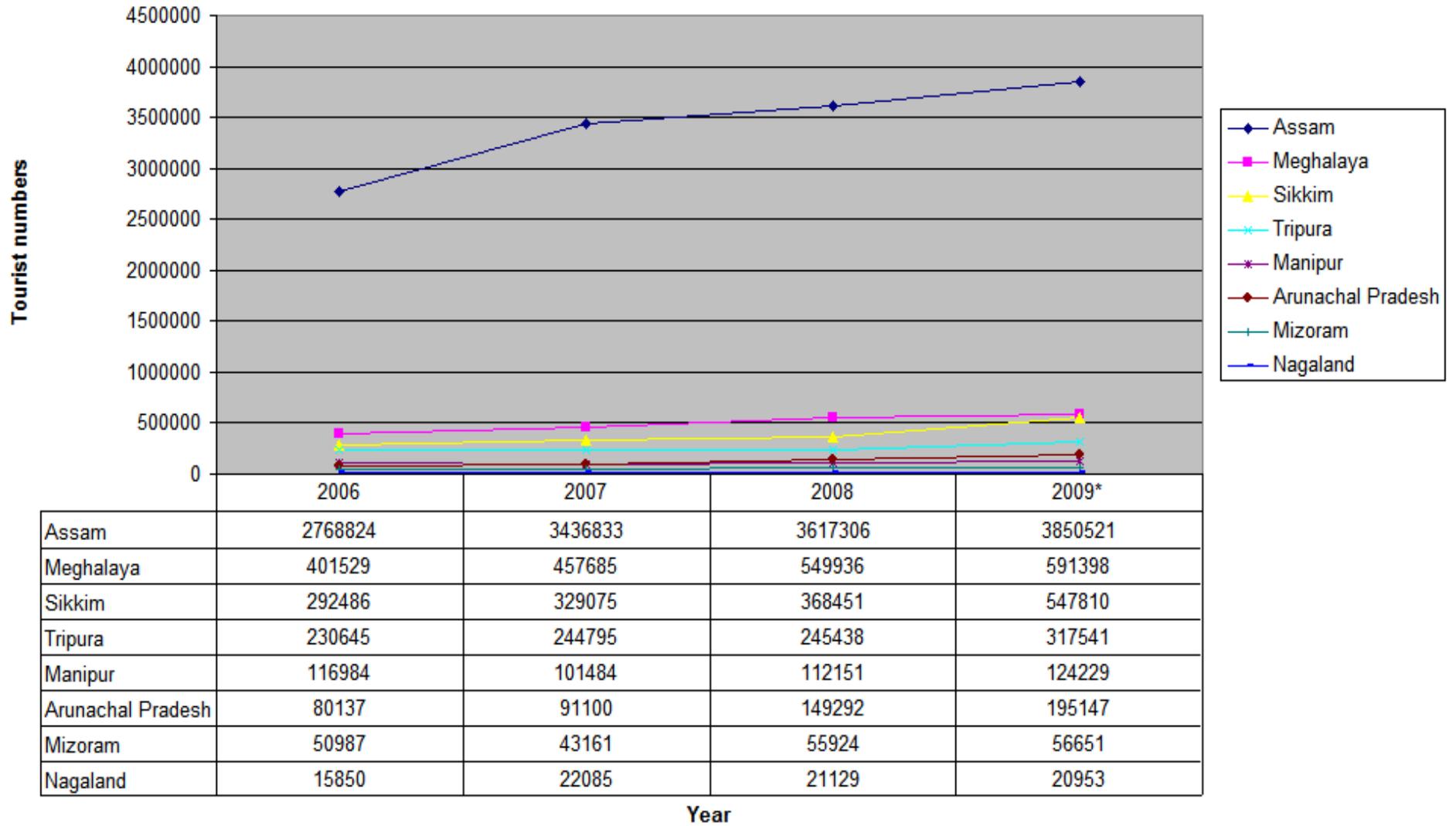


Developing high value / niche tourism products - nature-based, adventure, hydro, tea garden, MICE, golf, heritage, pilgrim, fairs and festivals, rural, eco-tourism and model villages, tourism circuits, ...

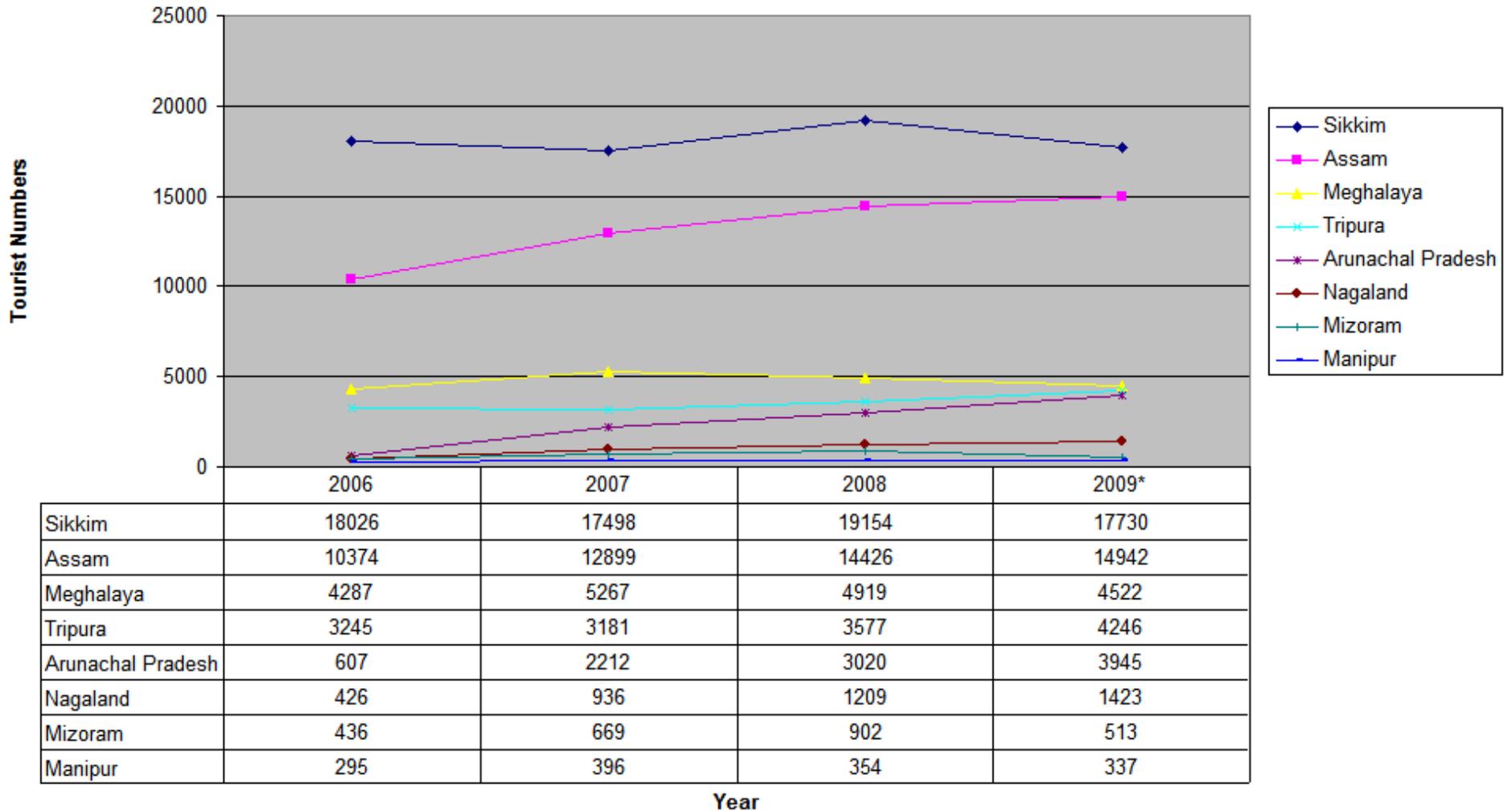
All have there pros and cons - need to understand each type and then choose one that is most appropriate given the reality and context of that place.

For northeast India, we need to learn from the experiences in other parts of the country on the reliance on some of these models and the extent to which these models are able to deliver on other goals such as poverty alleviation, local economy multipliers, community participation and community decision making.

**Domestic Tourist Arrivals (2006-2009)**



**Foreign Tourist Arrivals (2006-2009)**



The model of growth in tourism, implying growth in foreign tourists, needs far greater nuanced understanding and deliberation.

# TOURISM POLICIES



- A policy is a broad statement of intent and principles.
- There needs to a consensus on the framework of the minimum requirements of what a policy should include & make a statement on those aspects



- Sikkim (tourism policy, 2010)
- Assam (tourism policy, 2008)
- Tripura (ecotourism policy, 2004)
- Meghalaya (draft tourism policy, 2007)
- Mizoram (draft tourism policy, 2008 - submitted to state government for review)
- Manipur (draft tourism policy, 2009 - awaiting Cabinet approval)
- Arunachal - short tourism policy (Vision, Mission and Objectives)
- Nagaland - within the industrial policy
- Extremely varied in scope and details



Sustainability seems to be the guiding principle of most of the policy documents- but most fall short of how they will go about working towards achieving it.

Meghalaya - except for a couple of commendable points - addressing the micro, small and medium enterprises and incentives given to units that employ local tribals - does not say much about the way it sees tourism development in Meghalaya

Assam has well defined objectives addressing aspects of sustainability. However on the other hand it also recommends aspects like tourism zones which lead to enclavisation of tourism.

## Sikkim

- Kerala Declaration of Responsible Tourism - Education & Learning, Empowerment, Taking Responsibility for Sustainable Local Social and Economic Development, Governance, Multi-Stakeholder Processes, Partnerships, Disability and Inclusion, Monitoring, Measurement and Reporting, Right to Say No, etc -the policy should have addressed these concepts in greater detail.
- Problematic to then say, “To make tourism main livelihood of the people of Sikkim. Each & every household & individuals shall become a skilled force for tourism industry”.

Tripura ecotourism policy - does cover many of the aspects we speak of i.r.t sustainable and responsible tourism.



# FLAG OFF / COMPLEX ISSUES



## Tourism's role in conflict and peace

- Most policies have not situated tourism within the current realities of the NER
- Government proclaims - introduction of tourism, conflicts will be reduced, bringing in peace and leading to normalcy.
- This 'sense of peace' is built around a falsified and tenuous notion, as the root cause of the problems remains unresolved
- To layer already sensitive 'conflict' zones with tourism development, it is likely that several more conflicting situations surface
- To be fair, the conflicts that emerge may not all be inherent or attributable directly to tourism, but are simmering or underlying conflicts and tensions which exist anyway, and come to the fore.
- In a conflict ridden zone, there is little that tourism then can do - as its models are mostly consumerist and it works on creating products and experiences that have very little to do with the contexts and realities of the places it locates itself in.



- Many parts of the North East region are dealing with complex political situations of ethnic strife, political movements of various shades for self-determination and autonomy.
- Tourism relies on an environment in which tourists feel safe and secure
- AFSPA is operative in “disturbed areas” and has been in force since 1958
- Neither the MoT nor the PSC has taken a position on the AFSPA but proposes LTCs, relaxation of ILP / RAP for tourism purposes.
- Call to repeal this draconian act unconditionally has been made by large number of human rights and other civil society organisations in the country and internationally, on the basis of a clear record of longstanding and continuing human rights abuse in the region.
- Given such a long standing struggle by its own citizens, that tourism is being seen as the new peace broker is indeed ironic.

# FLAG OFF / COMPLEX ISSUES



## Single window clearance

- Contested previously by communities, local self-governing bodies and even few state governments
- Single window clearance system is to expedite the process of starting a venture/business by reducing delays in obtaining clearances and avoiding interface with multiple agencies
- Process often means bypassing significant institutions/bodies to seek public participation and consent to the relevant projects

## Land banks & land policies

# ISSUES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

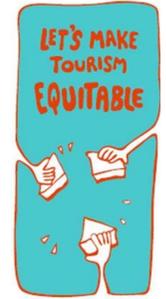


- What has been the engagement between the State Tourism Departments and the Ministry of Tourism in a common planning process and implementing plans?
- Role of policy makers

## Monitoring

- Actual monitoring of implementation of plans and policies
- Impacts of tourism - framework - tools at the level of communities, state, destinations - what have been the intended and unintended impacts?

# ISSUES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION



- Tourism role in conflict and peace
- Reconceptualising tourism as a cultural exchange framed within a developmental ethos, to go beyond products and schemes and looks at processes
- We believe that these questions need to be debated taking a range of perspectives and realities into account



# THANK YOU

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