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Integrated Tourism Concepts to Contribute to Sustainable Mountain Development in Nepal

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This publication showcases the results of 2 workshops conducted in Nepal on 8–14 October 2008 and 15–22 June 2009. In the preface, it is stated that the purpose of these workshops was to examine tourism development approaches in the Hindu Kush–Himalaya and in the Pamir mountains. These proceedings comprise a collection of contributions from 25 individuals, organized in 10 sections, preceded by 2 welcome addresses and ending with 2 annexes with details of the workshop program and list of participants.

After the introductory chapters in Section 1, the topic of Section 2 is tourism in Nepal, with a focus on historical aspects of tourism development, current approaches to tourism, and the various impacts on host communities. Section 3 consists of 4 case studies, all from Nepal, on a variety of topics, including pro-poor tourism, and sustainable development, complemented by 2 case studies from the Annapurna region. The

focus of Section 4 is on transboundary tourism. Section 5 is entitled “Interactions with Stakeholders and Presentation of Field Work Results.” It contains brief remarks by some stakeholder representatives and has 2 reports from the field. Section 6 summarizes the findings of 2 working groups: the Xinjiang Working Group and the Tibet Autonomous Region Working Group. Section 7 consists of 7 short presentations put together as sustainable mountain tourism strategy and action plans. Section 8 summarizes the findings of 2 reports, 1 each from Pakistan and China, on integrated tourism concepts. A final statement by the workshop delegates is summarized in Section 9. The final Section (10) provides a concluding statement by the workshop chairperson.

I have mixed feelings about the value of this publication. Although the effort put into documenting the workshop deliberations is noteworthy and should be applauded, most of the sections contain very little practical information. The publication thus ends up as a documentation of the efforts made to organize the workshop rather than a toolkit for sustainable mountain tourism development practices, which I had hoped the workshops would produce. Sections 1 through 4 contain articles by several Nepali tourism experts. Although these are good summaries, the global context of tourism is missing; for example, what would be the likely implications of the development of competing mountain destinations in the region? How would

this impact country-specific mountain tourism policies and practices? These issues must be examined from the broader perspective of global tourism and competing market forces. This publication does a good job of underlining the importance of greater cooperation and collaboration between multiple institutions and entities for cross-border or transboundary tourism. But there are no specific strategies as to how such collaboration may be strengthened at the local, national, and regional scale.

The publication does have some scholarly value because it provides important background information to students interested in mountain tourism development issues in the Hindu Kush–Himalayan region. The issues addressed are important and thus can be taken up as future research challenges. The publication also provides some case studies to illustrate the opportunities and limitations of mountain tourism. However, it has limited value to practitioners and policy-makers. It would have been nice to see a good checklist of best practices in sustainable mountain tourism and novel approaches to developing policies that directly impact practitioners in the field.

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