

Towards Sustainable Tourism in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Lessons from the Mro Community in Bandarban District

¹Md Sazzadul Kabir 

¹Staff Reporter, *The Daily Sun*,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Corresponding Author:

Md Sazzadul Kabir
E-mail: kabirdu31@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Hill tourism is an important feature of Bangladesh's tourism industry, where the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are renowned for their distinguishing traits, such as hills, forests, waterfalls, rivers, and their flora and fauna. Bandarban is one of the CHT regions with the most tourist attractions, but tourism, on the other hand, has numerous adverse impacts on the area that are often ignored. The Mro are one of the largest ethnic groups that have lived in the CHT regions for generations. They face a great deal of various kinds of adversity as a result of numerous development projects and over-tourism, which also goes unnoticed. This paper aims to analyze the impacts of tourism on the Mro community and identify pathways for sustainable tourism. The study employs a qualitative method, collecting primary data through 10 key informant interviews (KII) and gathering and analyzing data from secondary sources. The area of the study was several localities of Bandarban (Ruma, Lama, Thanchi). Findings of the study suggest that the Mro people have been struggling to cope with recent tourism development interventions that are on the verge of destroying their homes, significant infrastructure, encroaching on their property, and disrupting their livelihood. To minimize the negative impacts of tourism in the Bandarban district, a proper tourism plan focused on community participation and mitigating environmental effects is needed. The study attempts to contribute in such a way that the recommendations based on the analysis can be incorporated into the policy formation regarding sustainable tourism and the protection of the community.

KEYWORDS

Mro community, CHT, Tourism, Ethnic group, Eco system

1. Introduction

Tourism is the fastest-growing industry all over the world (Cooper and Wahab, 2004). Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) areas are attributed as having fantastic natural beauty, fascinating lifestyle of ethnic minorities, and many tourist spots attract a lot of tourists every year (Morshed, 2006). This area piqued the attention of the British East India Company because it was rich in natural resources such as trees, cotton, and spices. In 1776, the British mobilized colonial forces in the CHT to further the Company's commercial and political goals, sparking a decade-long conflict with the indigenous peoples (Uddin, 2010). In this way, CHT had lost its freedom and independence as a sovereign state during the period of colonization (1757- 1947), and after a long time, it integrated Bangladesh and acquired unique topographical and cultural characteristics. Though they are now recognized as part of Bangladesh, the



CHT has its own distinct identity in terms of ethnicity, tradition, culture, politics, and geography (Parveen, 2013:41). Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban are the three hill districts that make up the area. The Mro's are one of Bangladesh's indigenous communities and among the poorest (Thorvaldsen and Islam, 2012:10). They live in the Bandarban district's hilltops, ravines, cliffs, and dense forest zones. Despite being part of the southern belt of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), they originally came from the state of Arakan in Myanmar, where they had a blood feud with the Khumi tribe several hundred years ago (Brauns & Loffler, 1990).

Hill areas, being refugia zones, offer ideal conditions for the three R's – Rest, Relaxation, and Recreation (Rathore, 2019). More and more tourists may now visit even the most distant alpine regions by means of modern modes of transportation. Bandarban is one of the most fascinating travel destinations among all the tourist spots in Bangladesh (Hasan and Islam, 2015:283). The impact of intensive tourism on the physical environment, such as deforestation, landslides, food and water shortages, and over consumption, is caused by tourists every year. It damages the ecological system and the lifestyles of the native communities living in Bandarban. One of the native communities living in Bandarban is “the Mro”. Recently, UN experts called for halting a tourism spot owing to the damage of the possession of native lands and the environmental damage it can cause (Bhuiyan, 2021). Also, the influx of tourists causes great harm to the environment and makes local communities suffer from it. Tourists constantly pollute the environment by throwing rubbish and harming the local ecosystem (Das, 2020). Further, tourism-induced issues (e.g., commercialization of lands, hotel and resort construction) have appeared as major challenges for ethnic minorities living there. The Mro people are one of the sufferers. To address the issue, this paper aims to find out the impacts of tourism on the Mro community and analyzing possible ways to develop eco-tourism in the area.

2. Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to explore the impact of development projects on Mro community and propose possible ways to develop and promote tourism at Bandarban without affecting the lifestyles of the ethnic communities. Moreover, the study highlights sustainable tourism in Bandarban, emphasizing community participation.

The research paper is designed with the following main objectives:

- To examine the activities of tourism industries and their impact on the natural environment and the Mro community.
- To explore the attitudes of the Mro community towards tourism.
- To investigate the factors and challenges for community participation-based tourism development in the study area.
- To suggest an appropriate plan for tourism development without damaging or destroying resources, nature, inhabitants, and culture.

3. Methodology

The study aims to understand the impact of tourism on the Mro communities in Bandarban. To do it, the research employs a qualitative method by utilizing both primary and secondary data, where primary data were collected through key informant interviews (KII) to gain a comprehensive view on the attitudes of the Mro community towards the development of tourism, their struggle,

and sustainable ways for ecotourism. Besides, relevant secondary data were gathered from several reports, journal articles, and other sources concerning research objectives. The researcher conducted 10 key informant interviews with key figures of the community. They are: Local people associated with human rights and tourism, Representatives from local authorities (District Council), NGO representatives working in the study area, Leaders of Communities, Representatives of local villages and ethnic clans, and representatives of different social groups. Since these persons have ample knowledge of the history, the struggle of Mro's, and the present condition, they are counted as a reliable source who can enlighten the study. A checklist of required topics was prepared before going to the field to collect data. Before starting the interview, consent from the participants was taken properly. After collecting data, all the recordings are transcribed and then divided into thematic codes for analysis. The current research project is empirical in character, and it has concluded by utilizing both descriptive and analytical methodologies.

3.1. Study Area

The study area has been identified as a cultural region with firmly interconnected landscape characteristics. Bandarban is a district in South-Eastern Bangladesh and a part of the Chittagong Division. This district (4,479 kilometers) is not only the most remote district of the country but also the least populous (population 3,88,335). Chimbuk is located in the remote hill area of Thanchi Upazilla of Bandarban district. This hill is one of the most well-known tourist destinations in Bandarban. The longitude of Chimbuk hill is 92.2724213, and the latitude is 22.057572. The elevation of this hill is 582 m (1909 feet). Bandarban Sadar is around twenty-six kilometers distant. Chimbuk Hill rises roughly 2,500 feet above sea level, and it is called the "Queen of hills." Standing at 2500 feet high will see this diverse natural. The relatively recent geological structure that makes up Chimbuk Hill directly contributes to landslides.

4. Socio-Economic Profile of Bandarban District

There are thirteen different ethnic groups living in the hilly district of Bandarban. The Marma ethnic group made up the majority of the district's population. During the British period, Bandarban was originally a Thana. Later, during the Pakistani era, it was transformed into a subdivision of the Chittagong Hill Tracts District. In 1981, it was promoted to a district. Bandarban is one of the most disadvantaged and isolated areas in Bangladesh. In CHT, there were twenty-five years of Civil unrest, which formally ended in 1997 with the signing of the Peace Accord. The fact is, the unique physical and socio-economic characteristics of the area has left the local communities lagging behind in the social and economic indicators. This district has a total area of 4,479.03 square kilometers, where forest and riverine regions encompass approximately 2730.48 square kilometers (60.96%) and 3.16 square kilometers (0.07%). Bandarban town covers 51.80 square kilometers. 3,88,335 people are living in this district overall (BBS, 2011).

Bandarban's economy is mostly agricultural, with 71.26 percent of the district's production of crops. The district's main exports are fruits (banana, pineapple, jackfruit, papaya), masala (ginger, turmeric), and tribal textiles, with tourism rapidly becoming a source of revenue. Bamboo and tobacco grow in significant quantities, but are not considered economically profitable products. According to the poverty rate of Bangladesh, out of 64 districts, the position of Bandarban district is 3rd.² The three

highest peaks of Bangladesh -Tahjindong (1280 meters, also known as Bijoy), Mowdok Mual (1052 meters) and Keokradong (883 meters) are located in Bandarban district, as well as Raik Hiang Lake, the highest lake in Bangladesh. Chimbuk peak and Boga Lake are the major highly noted features of the district. Sangu, the only major river born inside Bangladesh territory, runs through Bandarban.

5. Ethnic Minority Mro: At a Glance

The area where the borders of Bangladesh, Myanmar, and India converge is home to the majority of the Mro community. Besides, a small portion of the Mro reside in northern Rakhine State and the Arakan Yoma district in western Myanmar. In India, they reside in the Jalpaiguri district. There are approximately 39,004 members of the ethnic group also known as the Mru, who are dispersed throughout the hills of the Bandarban district. There are no significant differences between Mro and Mru communities; rather, they are the same ethnic group with several names. But Mru is considered the most common name used for people who reside in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). They reside in the Bandarban district's Lama, Ruma, Alikadam, and Thanchi Upazilas, which are close to Chimbuk Mountain.

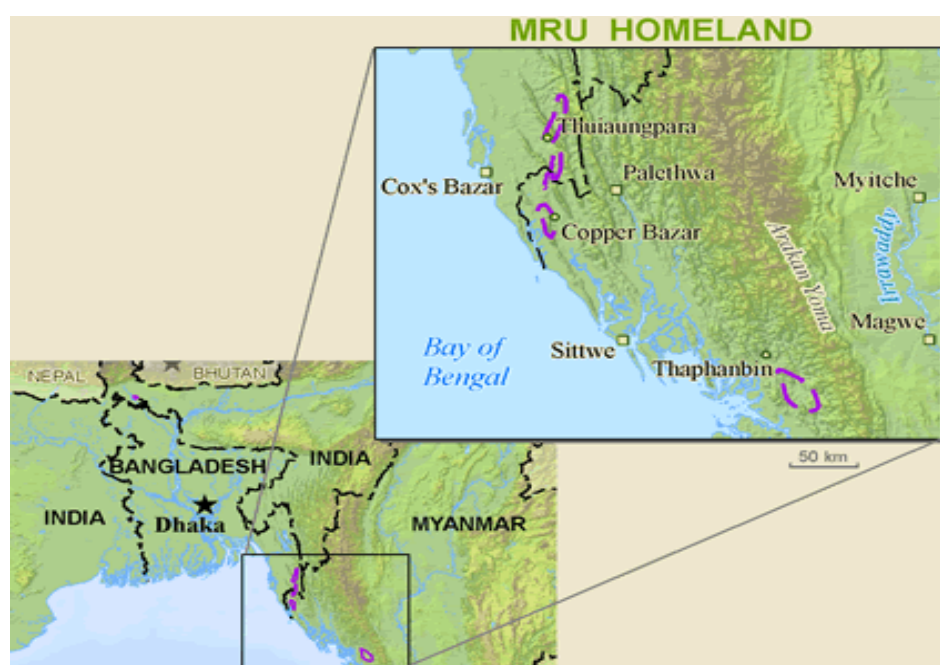


Figure 1 Geographic distribution of Mru People within Bangladesh

The Mro's are from the ancient Arakan region, which is today in Myanmar. There, they were ruled by people like Pai-Phya (964) and A-mya-thu (957), two Mro kings who ruled Arakan in the tenth century, who are well-known Arakan aborigines (Chowdhury, 2016). Wathaly served as the capital of Arakan at the time. On the bank of the Koladain, Mro and Khumi fought a brutal war. The Mro's were vanquished and driven from Arakan by the Khumi tribe. Between the late 17th and early 18th centuries, they moved to the Bandarban hills after clashes with the Khumi tribe. They are one of the most well-known indigenous groups in the CHT due to their lengthy history there, even though the precise time of their migration is still up for question (Rashid, 2020). The stories told to guests get cultural richness from this rich historical context (UNESCO, 2010).

In terms of their language, previously lacking a script, Man Ley Mru's efforts led to the adoption of the Latin alphabet and the creation of a script in the 1980s (Chakma, 2019). Cultural tourists looking for genuine experiences of indigenous oral traditions may find that language preservation initiatives and encounters with Mru storytellers and singers offer a distinctive draw. The Mru have historically spoken a language without a written script (Sultana & Roy, 2021).

In addition, Manlay Mro, also called Manlay Mru/Murong, founded the "karma" religion in 1984. Right now, among the Mru, karma is the second most popular religion (Chowdhury, 2018). The Mru are Bangladesh's fourth-largest hidden tribe. There are no castes and just a few hereditary roles in their society (Rashid, 2020). They are non-confrontational and take pride in their patience and tranquility. Recently, UNESCO has classified the Mru language as "severely endangered."

Farming comprises the major occupation of the Mru. The villagers lack the technology and expertise to improve their economic circumstances, despite living in an area with abundant lumber and hydroelectric potential (Rashid, 2020). They are still impoverished farmers as a result. Mru are particularly well-known for their exotic appearance, ascetic attire, mystical music, and long, flower-adorned hair styled in topknots (Sultana & Roy, 2021). Strangely, unlike other indigenous peoples, the Mru do not consider themselves to be "tribal." They think of themselves as mere flocks. Mru place a high importance on their independence and merely want to live a traditional life free from exploitation or dominance.

6. Struggle of Mro Community

Tourism can be a powerful vehicle for economic prosperity, but it can also be harmful to habitats and pristine ecosystems, resulting in the misuse of natural resources such as freshwater, trees, and aquatic life if not well planned (Rabbany et al., 2013:117). Many of the tourist spots in Bangladesh are in danger because of the environmental hazards caused by tourism. Hill areas, being one of the major tourist attractions, face the risk to a great extent. The natural resource base in the hill regions of Bangladesh has declined due to land cover and land use change (Biswas et al. 2011; Biswas and Chowdhury, 2007; Iftekhar and Hoque, 2005). The Mro people are one of the victims of the land issue.

The Mro community of the Chimbuk hill in Bandarban are now facing daunting challenges of the loss of ancestral land and forced urbanization. They are deeply anxious that this development project will negatively impact their way of life and means of subsistence. Additionally, it would damage the wildlife and plants, which might disrupt the natural equilibrium of this pristine area (Parvez, 2021; Adnan & Dastidar, 2011). According to the CHT Accord 1997, land and land management shall be included in the functions and the responsibilities of the Hill District Council. Sometimes the Hill District council uses its power illegally (Adnan & Dastidar, 2021; Roy, 2012). The Mro communities in Bandarban are one of the most victims of Bandarban Hill District Council's (BHDC) business expansion (Parvez, 2021). BHDC was grabbing the lands of Mro's in the name of "Tourism" development. The Army Welfare Trust and the Bandarban District Hill Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on December 27, 2015, pertaining to a 20-acre plot of land for a 40-year lease. According to reports, a 35-year agreement for leasing on a profit-sharing basis has been agreed upon by the Army Welfare Trust and R@R Holding Ltd., which is owned by the Sikder Group. The Army Welfare Trust and R@R Holding Limited announced plans on September 12, 2020, to build a tourism complex on an 800- to 1,000-acre plot of land in Chimbuk, Bandarban district of the CHT. According to reports, the

massive project will include a new Marriott hotel, an amusement park, an artificial lake, staff housing, and a full range of utility facilities, such as cable cars that will carry visitors over the area's twelve hills. About 155 families in the ancestral villages of Kapru Para, Dolapara, and Erapara are reportedly directly impacted and in danger of being forcibly evicted. Additionally, it is feared that an estimated 116 more villages will be indirectly impacted, as well as the nearby villages of Markinpa, Longbaitanpara, Riamanairpara, and Menringpara. The resort's construction will put about 10,000 people in danger of being forced to leave. The biodiversity and ecological balance in that area would probably be harmed by such constructions (Biswas et al., 2011).

For this project, the Mro community lost its land, which they highly depended on for their livelihood. They use these lands for zoom cultivation. The Mro community has concerns that the army will soon forcibly evict them without warning. People are afraid that evictions could happen abruptly and without warning because of the Bandarban district's past experiences. In 2006, the army forcibly evicted the Mro from the Tonkaboti neighborhood of the Bandarban hill district overnight without warning. The Mro community fears that the army will repeat its previous actions and has yet to receive compensation for the lands they lost (Barman & Chakma, 2010).

According to the Hill District Council Act, BHDC officials are not allowed to transfer land ownership to third parties without the people's express consent and the Mauza headmen's recommendation. But BHDC violated this rule for this project and also violated the 1997 CHT agreement. BHDC did not assess any the environmental and social impact. The lease transfer mechanism's inability to obtain the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the Mro people affected by the project is another serious flaw. International law is starting to adopt FPIC as a standard for dealing with indigenous peoples. Mro community organized several demonstrations and cultural manifestations to protest against the authorities to stop the construction activities and evictions. On 7 October 2020, the Mro community submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister urging to halt the construction activities.

7. Negative Impacts of Tourism in the Mro Region

The problems related to tourism in the Mro region are similar to those in Aleppy. Aleppy, located in the Indian state of Kerala, is featured in National Geographic's list of the 50 places to visit on Earth. The influx of tourists has had an impact on the culture, livelihood, food security, and employment of the local population in this area (Chakma, 2016:16). Similarly, with the advent of tourism flourishing, the Mro community is facing a tremendous threat in CHT. Daily necessities became unaffordable for the locals due to their excessive consumption of food and energy. Recently, an attempt to build a Five-star hotel in Mro's living space failed due to the protest of the community people.

In this situation, tourism in hilly areas has a huge environmental impact. The people suffered from the destruction of the surrounding hills, the felling of trees, and the disruption of water supplies. Engineers and builders have been ferried in spectacular SUVs to weigh the site and schedule building of state-of-the-art buildings, loud vehicles dragging in construction supplies, and men shoveling in foundations piercing Mother Earth over the last few months (Abrar, 2020). They fear that, in addition to negatively affecting their survival and way of life, this "development" project (a five-star hotel on Chimbuk Hill) will also negatively affect the plant and animal life, and consequently the ecological balance of this natural area, which is one of the few in the world (Abrar, 2020).

One of the respondents from Mro community said,

'We should give our permission if they wish to create gardens. However, we have no desire for tourism.'

Land and displacement problems have a significant impact on tourism. The relationship that Indigenous people have with their ancestral homelands is one of the characteristics that sets them apart from other people. They see land as more than just a financial resource that is essential for their economic, social, and political survival (Hughes 2000:8). To put it briefly, land is the core of the preservation of their cultural and ethnic heritage. Thus, any development that might endanger their lands could not be voluntarily permitted by indigenous people. The development needs of the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are linked to their lands, which are vital for assessing the growth of tourism in the CHT (Chakma, 2016).

For the development project, A minimum of 115 families from four villages would be displaced at first, and 10,000 more Mros from nearby villages are anticipated to be impacted. One of the residents there complained sadly that,

"It is unlawful, inhumane, and unfair. The completion of this initiative will result in the Mro people becoming refugees in their own country."

So, these types of development projects also make them displaced, which becomes a new burning issue for them.

However, It also causes reduced food production, such as rice, vegetables, and fruits, which are grown in jhum. Most community members' livelihoods, which rely on jhum cultivation, would suffer greatly (Abrar, 2020). Another respondent said that,

"We don't have enough land for jum cultivation, and if the hotel is built, our situation will get worse,"
-----stated a farmer from Kapru Para.

As a result, they have to depend on wage labor or uncertain tourism-related jobs, which may not be accessible to all and increase poverty. In addition to increasing the price of local land and making it hard for residents to afford, tourist overcrowding can result in traffic jams and congestion (Mount, 2015, mentioned in Chakma, 2016:13).

Disruption of traditional agricultural practices threatens their rituals, festivals, and collective way of life. Rapid influx of tourists and outsiders could lead to erosion of indigenous language, beliefs, and customs. A breakdown of community bonds may occur if families are relocated to different areas (Roy, 2000; Adnan & Dastidar, 2011). According to the development plan, some of the buildings will be built on land that is home to hundreds of Mro families, trees, streams, waterfalls, fruit farms, holy funeral sites, sacred stones, hills that are revered, and other elements that are important to the Mro culture (Uddin, 2019). Such a development plan poses a great danger for local communities that prefer to live alone without being disturbed by other people. When a tourist attraction becomes overcrowded, it puts a strain on local residents' living areas. Too many visitors will disrupt the calm, privacy, friendliness, and way of life of the locals.

The responsible authority of the Bandarban district oversees and operates a large portion of the tourism growth projects in CHT directly, ignoring the responsible local and indigenous authorities and abusing human rights, particularly when it comes to the purchase of indigenous lands. It has found

from secondary sources that, when they were asked about their development activities in Bandarban district, one of the officials from the Sikder Group said that,

“There was no settlement of these communities within ten kilometers of that area. There never was. Rather, if tourism develops there, employment opportunities for ethnic groups will increase.”

From the statement, it is evident that, the issue is not addressed by the authority. Since modern states frequently do not recognize indigenous peoples' customary collective rights, several nations consider the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples as their own. Since traditional land rights are often undocumented, indigenous peoples' lands may be regarded as "empty" lands. Occasionally, ostensibly "empty" lands are bought, acquired, or seized with the claimed goal of conserving nature (Archambault 2007; Brandt et al. 2000).

8. Participation-Based Tourism

Many natural regions worldwide are at risk from uncontrolled conventional tourism. This can put a great deal of stress on an ecosystem, leading to issues including deforestation, soil erosion, discharges into the ocean, depletion of natural resources, harm to endangered species, and heightened vulnerability to forest fires. It often strains water supplies and can lead to competition among locals for limited resources (Rabbany et al., 2013:118). Furthermore, tourism certainly has a more profound and negative effect on the host community when there is a significant cultural gap between the host and visitor societies (Burn and Holden, 1995). Until now, all tourism attractions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have been built at the expense of local people's lives and livelihoods, social structures, and forests. Every spot, whether it's Sajek, Nilgiri, or Nilachal, is built on the backs of people's tears and sighs. It is a major problem if the tourist mentality is to overexploit a location once a stunning spot is exposed (New Age, 2020). That is why, before constructing any tourist spots, locals need to be involved in the process. Also, the landowners should get some priority in decision-making.

Tourism based on natural attractions in remote rural areas can be a beneficial source of economic diversification and a source of income (Ashley et al., 2001). In Bandarban, tourism development is expected to support the local population, both ethnic and non-ethnic. Tourism in Bangladesh, especially in Bandarban, has tremendous potential for employment growth, poverty alleviation, and ecological balance (Hasan and Islam, 2015:289). One of the approaches that can minimize the negative impact of tourism and bring fruitful outcomes for the local community is “community participation” in the tourism process. Community-based tourism is a recent approach that integrates tourism actors with the poor and local community, bringing them economic, environmental, and cultural benefits. This approach ensures the participation of local people with the use of local simple technology and must have a designed structure (Khan, 2014). Mro people, being isolated from other groups or tribes, face the utmost challenge because of poverty and topographical location. In this circumstance, a tourism plan must be developed concerning their livelihood and culture. One of the approaches that can be an ideal example of community participation in tourism is “Trekking trails” (Hurni 1999).

The idea of trekking tourism is about walking through unknown routes through hills and rivers and staying at a ‘Trail Village’. A “Trail Village” is a stop along a long-distance trail where visitors can relax; enjoy the scenery, facilities, and culture of a unique area. These ‘Trail Villages’ may be built as

tourist-service-points with home-stay or camping facilities, as well as food and beverage (Hasan and Islam 2015:287). There is the trail village, local people can present their cultural shows and sell locally made products. Involving the community in trekking trail tourism is essential to assuring both authentic visitor experiences and local empowerment. Locals share their customs, tales, and environmental knowledge while actively serving as guides for trekking, cultural events, and sightseeing excursions. Many households help by providing campgrounds, homestays, or community-owned hotels, which generate revenue while letting visitors experience local culture. In a same vein, families and women's organizations frequently run small eateries or cook at home, promoting traditional cuisine. Local transportation options, including rickshaws and boats owned by the community, also include locals in making travel accessible and safe (Hasan and Islam (2015:291).

In addition to helping the Mro people, ecotourism can be important in protecting the delicate natural environments of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). A tourist strategy for the Mro's can be created that guarantees sustainable development and cultural preservation by adhering to the guidelines provided by The International Ecotourism Society (2011).

First, by emphasizing the Mro's customary farming methods, spiritual beliefs, and special bond with the forest, tourist projects should foster environmental and cultural knowledge and respect. It is possible to plan cultural events, trekking trips, and visits to indigenous villages in a way that respects local traditions while educating tourists. Second, tourism ought to offer both hosts and guests satisfying experiences. This might expose tourists to Mro music, flower-adorned braids, and storytelling customs in a genuine way. It guarantees hosts respect, acknowledgment, and chances to present their culture according to their own conditions (Sultana & Roy, 2021). Third, there should be immediate financial gains for conservation from ecotourism. The natural environment that the Mro rely on can be directly supported by reinvesting a percentage of the money made from community-based tourism into programs that conserve biodiversity, clean water efforts, or forests (Chowdhury, 2018). Fourth, ecotourism needs to empower locals and provide them with financial gains. The Mro can lessen their reliance on subsistence farming by establishing alternate sources of income through homestays, handicraft sales, guided forest hikes, and cultural events. Keeping these principles in consideration, a sustainable eco-tourism plan can be designed. Without involving local people, it is hard to minimize the adverse effects caused by tourism-induced impacts.

9. Existing Land Law of Bandarban

Land is regarded as the mother of indigenous peoples, who consider themselves the children of land and forest, as their survival is entirely dependent on it. The major international laws governing the land rights of indigenous peoples include the UDHR (1948), ICCPR (1966), and the UN Declaration on the Rights of indigenous peoples (2007).

Bangladesh was one of 11 countries that abstained from voting for or against the declaration, and since then, it has consistently maintained the position. Article 26(1) of the declaration acknowledges indigenous peoples' right to lands, territories, and resources that they have traditionally owned or otherwise used, and Article 26(2) mentions the lands, territories, and resources that they possess under indigenous customary notions of ownership. Article 26(3), on the other hand, requires states to give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. While in Bangladesh, the laws governing land rights of indigenous peoples in the plains are contained in the SAT

Act (1950), the CHT Regulation (1900), CHT Development Board Ordinance (1976), the Hill Districts Council Acts (1984), the CHT Accord (1997), the CHT Regional Council Act (1998), the CHT Land Disputes Resolution Commission Act (2001). SAT Act (1950) restricts the sale of lands of “aboriginal castes and tribes” to anyone except aboriginal castes domiciled in Bangladesh. Under the CHT Accord of 1997, no *khas land* or tenancy of hill tracts can be subjected to disposal, transfer or lease without the prior permission of the regional district councils.

Lastly, the Bandarban Hill District Council Acts (1989), in its section 64, provides the provision to protect local and indigenous land rights

“Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, no land with the jurisdiction of Bandarban Hill district shall be made a settlement without prior approval of the council (Mauza Headman), and such land without such approval shall not be transferred to a person who is not an inhabitant of this district.”

Since the passing of the 15th Amendment of the Constitution, it has been observed that many attacks have reportedly taken place on the Mro peoples of Bandarban in CHT.

10. Recommendations

Due to the rapid growth of the tourism industry in Bandarban, the district is experiencing severe ecological and cultural stress. A bunch of strategic and time-bound strategies need to take to lessen the sufferings of displacement, dispossession, and loss of livelihoods for the Mro community, who have lived on the Chimbuk hill for generations. To address these issues, some policy guidelines are given below:

1. To resolve these aforesaid problems, the government should form an independent land commission for the indigenous peoples of the plains to resolve all disputes about illegally grabbed lands.
2. The Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Rights ACT (2015), drafted by the Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous Peoples, should be reviewed and considered for enactment.
3. Development of tourism initiatives can be encouraged that can be owned or co-managed by the indigenous community.
4. The Bangladesh Government should stop illegal and artificial tourism in CHT. The Govt should put more emphasis on community tourism to share the culture and to protect the diversity of the ethnic groups in CHT.
5. It should be mandatory to maintain Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for all proposed tourism-related projects in the future so that no further harm can be done to these communities.
6. Proper implementation of Section 64 of the BHDC Act can be a strategic milestone to reduce inequality and discrimination against the Mro community.
7. We must not forget that these communities are part of the material and immaterial heritage of the destination they are a part of. These local communities and the natural heritage form an inseparable binomial. Hence, programs and events focusing on attracting tourists can include the traditional presentation of Mro’s (songs, handicrafts, products).

8. The authority should encourage building some eco-friendly and low-impact tourist infrastructure instead of large resorts and hotels, which can reduce the exploitation of the community.
9. There needs to be a good long-term planning scheme of development for Chimbuk hill tourism, in which one of the most important things is to keep it in line with the visual natural beauty and ethnicity of the hill. If the latter is lost, one of the most important factors attracting Chimbuk's tourists will be lost.
10. To guarantee adherence to land, environmental, and human rights regulations, the Hill District Council and pertinent government organizations should step up their oversight.

If "Protection is Development" has been adopted in Bandarban, positive implications will be found, such as protecting Mro's rich traditional cultural heritage, protecting Mro's religious artifacts and warm hospitality, protecting environmental issues. From beginning to end, respect for the group's ethnicity, uniqueness, protection, participation, civilization and rural life should be upheld.

11. Conclusion

It is undeniable that tourism is a big part of the economy in Bandarban, but money and power remain in the hands of powerful actors. The Mro community are the vulnerable groups those are facing severe problems due to the unplanned development of tourism activities in Bandarban district. To combat with the issue, the encouragement of community participation can be an effective way to manage hill tourism in a sustainable manner through three basic components: conservation of natural resources on which tourism depends; improvement in the quality of life of the local population and enhancement of visitor's satisfaction. Moreover, carrying capacity evaluation is mandatory for scientific planning of tourism and infrastructure in hilly areas. Not only that, the government and the authority of Bandarban need to be neutral and responsible to protect the rights of the Mro's and also paves the way for implementing the activities for tourism. The government's inability to protect the Mro people's civil rights has been obvious. The state must acknowledge the "right of ownership, collective or individual, of the members of the populations concerned over the lands which these populations traditionally occupy," according to Article 11 of the ILO's 1957 Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention (C-107)." In 1972, Bangladesh approved the convention. So, it is urgent to protect Mro's land and design a participation-based tourism plan so that it doesn't result in negative consequences for them. Thus, proper planning and management can benefit local people, tourists, and the overall tourism industry. Moreover, these sector creates opportunities for poverty reduction as well as the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and infrastructure development. Though the study attempts to show the overall scenario of the tourism development and the condition of ethnic living, it can be helpful if the study could incorporate other ethnic groups and collect data on a large scale, employing surveys throughout the research. Lastly, numerous studies can be conducted in the future on other ethnic groups to understand their condition, environmental impact, and the inclusion of their opinions and ideas in the ethnic community policy framework of Bangladesh.

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