



## Review Article

# Promoting Livelihood Opportunities in Rural Areas through Sustainable Tourism: A Sustainable Livelihood Approach

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## Abstract

The tourism sector is poised for significant expansion throughout the country. Supported by prior research, developing sustainable tourism stands out as a critical strategy for poverty alleviation. Sustainable tourism generates livelihood opportunities, stimulates the local economy, enhances community assets, drives infrastructural development, and ensures environmental protection. These elements are essential for improving the well-being of residents, reducing vulnerability, and promoting a more responsible use of natural and other resources within communities. While the discourse on sustainable tourism has gained momentum over the past few decades, insufficient attention has been dedicated to its role in tackling key issues like sustainable livelihoods and overall well-being. This study decisively utilizes the “Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF)” developed by the Department for International Development (DFID) to analyze the impact and relationships among its core components—vulnerability context, livelihood assets, structures, and processes—in promoting livelihood opportunities in rural areas through sustainable tourism. The insights from this paper underscore the critical importance of these SLF components, which connect in a non-linear fashion, and their implications for effective livelihood interventions. Moreover, the abundant social capital present in rural areas must be strategically harnessed to create enhanced livelihood opportunities.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Tourism; Livelihood Assets; Vulnerability Context; Livelihood Strategies; Sustainable Livelihood Framework

## Introduction

Livelihood is a fundamental element of community development, encompassing the capabilities, assets, and activities essential for sustainable living (Serrat, 2017). Tourism is a powerful platform for enhancing livelihoods, and its significance cannot be overstated. As one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, the tourism industry is a crucial driver of economic growth in India, particularly

within the hospitality sector. With its rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and favorable climate, India is undeniably one of the most sought-after destinations worldwide. From 2016 to 2019, the tourism sector made remarkable contributions to foreign exchange earnings, growing at a CAGR of 7%. While the COVID-19 pandemic caused a temporary decline in 2020, the importance of tourism to the economy remains resolute. In FY20, the

sector accounted for approximately 39 million jobs, equating to 8.0% of total employment. Projections indicate that this will rise to around 53 million jobs by 2029. In 2019 alone, travel and tourism contributed 6.8% to India's GDP, demonstrating their critical impact.<sup>1</sup>

Tourism generates diverse livelihood opportunities, elevates income levels, and enhances overall community well-being, especially in remote areas. There is no denying the potential of the tourism sector as an economic powerhouse. It is instrumental in driving job creation across various sectors, supporting environmental sustainability, celebrating cultural heritage, and fostering global peace (Ministry of Tourism, 2020: 6). However, the indiscriminate use of resources must be curtailed. This reality underscores the necessity of adopting sustainable tourism practices. The UN Environment is committed to mainstreaming sustainability into tourism development, demonstrating sustainable tourism's substantial economic, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits.<sup>2</sup>

This approach is imperative for addressing the needs of travelers, stakeholders, and host communities. Since most of India's population resides in rural areas, promoting sustainable rural tourism is crucial for driving extensive development within these communities. Rural tourism capitalizes on the unique attributes of countryside and village life, anchored in local initiatives and cultural heritage. It is an effective strategy for rural development, creating new opportunities and fostering growth. To harness the full potential of rural tourism, it is essential to address the various factors that will influence its implementation, including community readiness and potential economic impacts. This paper will analyze how different vulnerability contexts shape the livelihood opportunities associated with sustainable rural tourism. Rural tourism can stimulate local economic growth, drive social change, and promote a balanced distribution of demand, making it a vital component of sustainable development in India.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sustainable Livelihood and Rural Tourism**

Chambers and Conway (1992) define livelihood as "comprising the capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living." A sustainable livelihood copes with and recovers from shocks and stresses and actively enhances its capabilities and assets to meet the needs of both present and future generations, while preserving the natural resource base. Livelihood encompasses access to assets and activities, strengthened by social capital, essential for the well-being of rural individuals and households. Social capital fosters community bonds and interactions, which are vital in creating robust rural livelihood opportunities (Ellis,

2000; Ellis & Freeman, 2005). A livelihood consists of various economic activities impacting many people, including self-employment and wage employment. It extends beyond mere income generation; it champions empowerment and upholds the dignity of individuals. Livelihood strategies represent people's diverse activities and choices to achieve their livelihood goals.<sup>4</sup>

Rural tourism is a powerful alternative source of livelihood for communities, generating substantial employment opportunities in rural areas. Promoting rural tourism is a strategic move toward establishing sustainable livelihoods for rural populations. In India, where nearly 68.8 per cent of the population lives in approximately 7 million villages primarily dependent on agriculture, there is immense untapped potential beyond traditional agricultural practices. "Rural tourism is multi-faceted, encompassing agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, and ecotourism, all of which are intricately intertwined" (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). As an emerging concept in India, widespread adoption of rural tourism could create robust, sustainable livelihood models for a significant proportion of the population. It has the potential to generate vital income for local communities, which in turn can sustain traditional activities, promote and conserve arts and crafts, and effectively curb migration to urban areas. With its breathtaking scenic beauty and abundant biodiversity, rural tourism in India possesses tremendous growth potential. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor connectivity, insufficient promotion of rural destinations, a lack of skilled human resources, and limited basic amenities must be addressed decisively. Immediate action is necessary to overcome these impediments and unlock the full potential of rural tourism.

### **Sustainable Tourism**

Integrating sustainability into the tourism industry is vital for reducing adverse social and environmental effects while fostering local communities' economic viability, infrastructure, health, and education (Yu et al., 2011; Medina-Muñoz et al., 2016). The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that considers its current and future economic, social, and environmental effects, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and local communities"<sup>5</sup>. Sustainable tourism should responsibly use environmental resources to preserve essential ecological balances and protect ecosystems' natural heritage and biodiversity. It is crucial to acknowledge and honor the socio-cultural and ethnic authenticity of host communities, safeguarding their cultural heritage and valued traditions while enhancing

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ibef.org/industry/tourism-hospitality-india.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/responsible-industry/tourism>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unwto.org/rural-tourism>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/a0273e/a0273e04.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabletourism>

intercultural connections and understanding. Additionally, sustainable tourism must ensure lasting economic viability, improving the well-being of all stakeholders through the fair distribution of resources and opportunities, resulting in better income-earning opportunities and enhanced social services for local populations. This method directly tackles issues of poverty and marginalization. Attaining sustainable tourism is an ongoing effort that requires thorough monitoring of its impacts and taking necessary preventive or corrective actions when needed. Furthermore, sustainable tourism should maintain high levels of tourist satisfaction and offer meaningful experiences that raise awareness of sustainability issues, thereby motivating tourists to embrace and promote sustainable tourism practices”<sup>6</sup>.

### **Sustainable Livelihood Framework for Tourism (SLFT)**

A sustainable tourism livelihoods approach seeks to intricately weave together the fundamental principles of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework with the ideals of sustainable tourism. This concept, known as SLFT, operates as a comprehensive system that encompasses several critical components: the vulnerability context, the diverse livelihood assets that facilitate tourism, the strategies employed for sustaining livelihoods, and the outcomes that arise from these efforts. A livelihoods approach to sustainable tourism is characterized by its ability to

effectively manage and adapt to environmental, economic, or social vulnerabilities. It strives to achieve outcomes that are not only financially viable but also socially equitable, environmentally sound, and institutionally robust. This means that sustainable tourism should benefit various stakeholders without compromising the livelihoods of local communities or degrading the natural resources they depend on. As articulated in the work of Chambers and Conway (1992) and Ellis (2000), the hallmark of a sustainable tourism livelihood lies in its resilience, ensuring that it can withstand challenges while contributing to the well-being of all involved. Ultimately, the essence of sustainable tourism is inextricably linked to the destination's sustainability, emphasizing that a thriving tourism sector can only exist in harmony with a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable environment and community.

### **Sustainable Livelihood Framework**

The livelihood framework effectively underscores the various components influencing people's livelihoods and critically examines the relationships among these factors (Fig. 1). This framework is instrumental in highlighting key

issues and placing emphasis on the core influences and interactions between the elements involved. Among the different livelihood frameworks available, the DFID livelihood framework stands out as one of the most widely utilized.

The 'Vulnerability Context' provides a crucial perspective on the external environment in which communities live, highlighting the various factors that impact their livelihoods (DFID, 2001). By understanding this context, stakeholders can better identify the specific challenges and opportunities present in the area. 'Livelihood Assets' encompass community members' diverse forms of capital and capabilities, including human, social, natural, and physical assets. Recognizing these assets allows for a more targeted approach in developing initiatives that leverage existing strengths. 'Transforming Structures and Processes' refer to the institutions, organizations, and legislation (DFID, 2001) that can be harnessed to enhance livelihood strategies. By improving these structures, communities can create more effective pathways toward improved economic conditions. 'Livelihood Strategies' involve community members' specific activities to achieve their goals, while 'Livelihood Outcomes' represent the desired achievements, such as enhanced well-being and increased income. Sustainable rural tourism presents a significant opportunity to create diverse livelihood prospects that can foster the overall development of local communities. Utilizing the livelihood framework enables a structured analysis of the steps needed to capitalize on this potential fully. Starting with the vulnerability context allows for an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing community livelihoods, establishing a solid foundation for crafting an effective action plan to promote new livelihood opportunities among residents. Through collaboration and strategic planning, communities can thrive in this sector.

### **Vulnerability Contexts in Sustainable Rural Tourism**

“Vulnerability context” refers to the “external environment in which people live,” fundamentally influencing their assets and livelihood outcomes (DFID, 2001). This context encompasses the various factors that significantly impact livelihoods positively and negatively. It consists of three key elements: (a) Trends, (b) Shocks, and (c) Seasonality. Sustainable rural tourism generates livelihood opportunities, undeniably shaped by these elements of vulnerability in the context. As a result, people's assets and livelihood outcomes are directly influenced, highlighting the crucial role of this environment in determining their well-being (Fig. 2).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

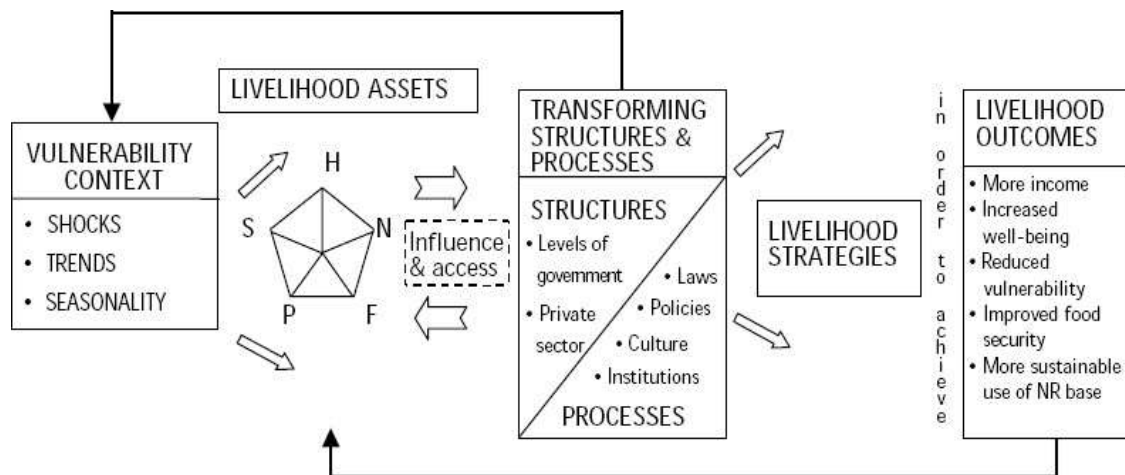


Fig. 1: The DFID framework has five components. [Data Source: DFID (2001)<sup>7</sup>]

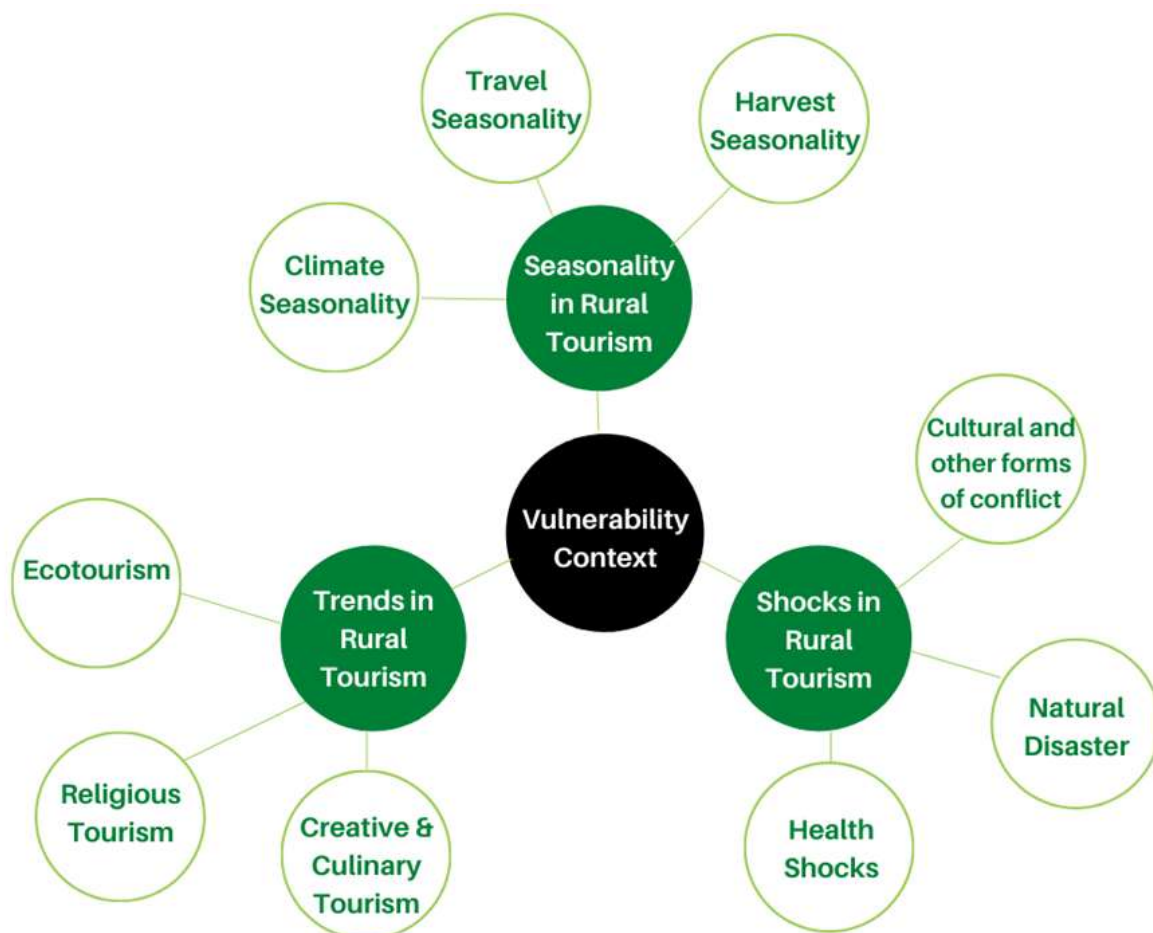


Fig. 2: Elements of the Vulnerability Context [Source: DFID, 2001].

Rural areas are primed to become prominent tourist destinations, particularly as more nature enthusiasts flock to these regions. Kiper (2011), in a study on ecotourism in Turkey, underscored the necessity of establishing alternative nature walking routes as a crucial strategy for the sustainable conservation of natural resources. The

International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, supports the well-being of local populations, and involves interpretation and education”.<sup>8</sup> Ecotourism significantly boosts local economies by

<sup>7</sup><https://www.livelihoodscentre.org/documents/114097690/114438878/Sustainable+livelihoods+guidance+sheets.pdf/594e5ea6-99a9-2a4e-f288-cbb4ae4bea8b?t=1569512091877>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ecotourism.org/news/ties-announces-ecotourism-principles-revision/>



enhancing income for residents, promoting local businesses, and creating diverse livelihood opportunities in traditional arts and crafts. When a community's income and well-being are tied to ecotourism, they are far less likely to engage in unsustainable practices that harm natural resources. Additionally, many religious sites have transformed into major tourist attractions, leveraging the strong cultural and religious connections that foster a more profound affinity for nature and place (Javadi, 2018). It can be inferred that religious tourism is the union of religious belief and travel, searching for truth and salvation.

Rural areas with significance as religious destinations for various faiths invariably attract followers of those religions, who continuously seek to visit. Local food and cuisine play a crucial role in enhancing the tourist experience, drawing attention to the unique characteristics of each destination (Symons, 1999). Culinary tourism is gaining substantial traction, particularly as it infuses creativity and authenticity into rural and urban settings. The rise of social media has exponentially amplified awareness of these places, their culinary offerings, and the associated lifestyle. The establishment of the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) by the Ministry of Tourism, conforming to international standards, underscores the commitment to reviving and preserving India's rich culinary heritage through specialized training, research, and documentation in culinary arts (Ministry of Tourism, 2020: 52). Promoting local cuisine serves as a mutually beneficial endeavor for both tourists and local communities, fostering sustainability (Okumus et al., 2007). Nonetheless, it is imperative to prioritize the care and protection of these areas to maintain their serenity and tranquility. Unpredictable shocks can take many forms, with the COVID-19 pandemic serving as a recent example that has significantly impacted the global tourism industry, resulting in substantial economic losses. Natural disasters, such as floods, landslides, and earthquakes, also pose severe threats, particularly in regions like Kerala, where rural communities relied heavily on backwater tourism during the floods of 2018 and 2019. Similar risks are evident in northeastern India and Himachal Pradesh, where natural disasters disrupt livelihoods. For many rural families, livestock represents a critical source of income, and health issues affecting these animals can devastate their livelihoods, especially when local delicacies are crafted using livestock products. Climate change has rendered weather patterns more volatile and unpredictable, further jeopardizing livelihoods. Additionally, conflicts arising from caste, gender, class, ethnicity, and religious differences fracture the social fabric of communities, significantly impacting residents' livelihoods. All these shocks affect tourism activities; thus, sustainable tourism must prioritize raising awareness among people about local culture, beliefs, and practices. Seasonality is a paramount factor influencing tourism, with the tastes and preferences

of tourists often dictated by the seasons. Many travelers seek refuge from extreme weather conditions, making climate seasonality a key determinant in tourism activities. In regions such as Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, many locals have taken the initiative to transform their homes into welcoming stays, offering local cuisine and transport services, thereby capitalizing on tourism opportunities. Harvest season also draws significant tourist interest, as rural areas showcase their cultivated landscapes, fruit-bearing trees, and abundant vegetable farming, creating an attractive environment for visitors.

### **Analysis of Social Assets to Enhance Livelihoods in Rural Areas via Sustainable Tourism**

The Department for International Development (DFID) (2001) defines social capital as a critical web of community relationships providing crucial access to opportunities and resources for sustaining livelihoods. Communities must leverage these connections to form self-help groups and cooperatives, empowering individuals to initiate small-scale businesses and livelihood activities. Substantial social capital is fundamental for fostering collaboration and interaction among diverse communities. By connecting individuals with shared interests and goals, rural areas can harness this power to drive collective action, particularly in securing sustainable tourism initiatives. Expanding networks among individuals who share a commitment to community development is essential for building trust and empowering action towards common objectives. It is vital to address the exclusion of vulnerable groups, particularly women and marginalized populations, from access to these critical resources. Social capital must be utilized strategically to create pathways that include everyone. Sustainable tourism presents a powerful opportunity for socially responsible business practices (Laurie, 2005). It generates income and creates significant livelihood opportunities while benefiting local communities. This approach effectively bridges connections between those with access to resources and those ready to work with them, leading to improved well-being and the sustainable use of local resources. By supporting local economies through increased demand for local goods and services, communities ensure active participation in decision-making and organising tourism activities. Moreover, hotels serving visitors are pivotal in providing jobs and supporting local producers. Strengthening community associations and networks cultivates a strong sense of local identity and increases access to influence local government and attract necessary private investment. Social capital is essential to access vital information, opportunities, and additional networks. Empowering rural women through initiatives such as women's self-help groups and cooperatives is beneficial and imperative for progress in rural communities. These programs create livelihood opportunities for women

in small enterprises, including eco-friendly product development, snack shops, and handmade goods. These initiatives fulfil community needs and drive sustainability by prioritising locally produced items. Establishing cooperative institutions is crucial for providing women with the support they need to meet financial requirements and diminish their vulnerability. In recent years, research on the social economy has increasingly highlighted the importance of sustainability within social enterprises. Within this organizational framework, there is a strong emphasis on generating financial resources; however, sustainable development also prioritizes achieving social well-being, even in the face of financial constraints. By balancing these priorities, social enterprises can create lasting positive impacts in their communities while ensuring viability (Alam, 2020).

### **The Potential of Social Capital in Enhancing Livelihood Opportunities Through Sustainable Tourism: Collective Action and Linkages**

Mutual trust, solidarity, and cooperation among community members are essential for enabling effective production and support systems. These elements play a pivotal role in achieving diverse development goals. Rural communities can maximize their benefits through robust social networking, collective action, and community empowerment, regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds. By implementing the DFID (2001) sustainable livelihoods approach, we can establish a more conducive social environment for growth. Shared norms and sanctions among individuals are critical for forming new organizations that pursue common interests. We significantly enhance livelihood opportunities by fostering networks and linkages in rural areas. Social capital enables individuals to forge strong bonds as producers and consumers, facilitating the exchange of goods and services. Community members actively support each other's production efforts and referrals. The fisheries, eco-products, handicrafts from micro and small enterprises, animal rearing, and aquaculture offer substantial potential for integration with tourism. Creating various linkages among input suppliers, service providers, transporters, traders, and consumers generates meaningful employment for rural communities. Sustainable tourism delivers vital income-earning opportunities for rural residents through tours that showcase historical and cultural significance, allowing visitors to engage with village life and customs while staying in eco-friendly accommodations. This sector fosters job creation in formal and informal markets, generating employment opportunities for carpenters, shop assistants, security guards, labourers, and local grocery stores and food shops. Local organizations further support vending activities through these interconnected networks.

### **Strategies to Promote Livelihood Opportunities in Rural Areas through Sustainable Tourism**

The focus of livelihood strategies is to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. These outcomes include increased income, enhanced well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security, sustainable use of natural resources, and restored human dignity. However, it is important to balance these goals when conflicts arise (Serrat, 2017). The livelihoods framework provides a valuable lens for exploring the complexities of people's livelihoods, particularly those of people experiencing poverty in rural and urban settings. It aims to understand the diverse aspects of an individual's livelihood, including the strategies they pursue, their objectives, and the opportunities and constraints they face. In rural areas, sustainable tourism can play a significant role in enhancing livelihood opportunities. Here are several constructive strategies to consider:

1. **Destination Marketing:** Promote rural areas' unique scenic beauty and rich biodiversity to attract tourists.
2. **Livelihood Expansion:** Broaden existing opportunities within the farm and non-farm sectors to create diverse income sources.
3. **Skills Development:** Enhance employability skills tailored to tourism-related jobs, ensuring residents are prepared for new opportunities.
4. **Support for Local Enterprises:** Provide technical and financial assistance to support and grow local businesses.
5. **Inclusive Growth:** Focus on the socio-economic inclusion of poor and marginalized groups to ensure everyone benefits from rural tourism.
6. **Collaborative Development:** Encourage stakeholder collaboration to leverage rural tourism to catalyze broader rural development.
7. **Sustainable Practices:** Promote and ensure the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices for long-term viability.
8. **Institutional Support:** Strengthen institutions involved in agriculture and related activities to bolster the livelihoods of the impoverished.
9. **Training and Capacity Building:** Invest in training and human resource development for rural inhabitants, especially in management and operational skills.
10. **Infrastructure Investment:** Address infrastructure gaps that hinder rural tourism by making targeted investments and promoting personal and community hygiene awareness to facilitate homestays and authentic tourist experiences.
11. **Environmental Awareness:** Foster environmental consciousness through informative orientations

and programs to ensure sustainable practices among residents. By focusing on these strategies, we can maximize the positive impact of tourism on rural livelihoods while promoting sustainability and resilience in these communities.

2020 is officially recognized as the 'Year of Tourism and Rural Development,' a theme highlighted on World Tourism Day. It is crucial to recognize that the sustainability of tourism in rural regions relies fundamentally on implementing a thorough and inclusive planning strategy, which is defined by a participatory approach involving multiple actions and various stakeholders. The UNWTO Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development aim to enable governments at all tiers, the private sector, and the international community to foster tourism in rural areas that ensures inclusive, sustainable, and resilient growth. This approach ensures that the benefits and resources from tourism are equitably and fairly distributed, bolstering livelihood opportunities, safeguarding local resources and culture, promoting social inclusion, and empowering local communities and marginalized groups. Inclusive tourism is crucial for enhancing local infrastructure and accessibility, achieving a significantly improved quality of life. In the study conducted by Alam & Actovin (2020) on the impact of tourism on quality of life among Gypsy Community (semi-nomadic Narikuravar community) in Puducherry indicated substantial link between tourism and quality of life. Nevertheless, it is essential to address several critical concerns associated with tourism activities, which can be effectively resolved through sustainable tourism practices:

**Access:** According to DFID (2001), key objectives of sustainable livelihoods include ensuring secure access to and improved management of natural resources. Local populations often face restrictions on accessing these resources due to government conservation laws. It is essential to transform structures and processes to grant local communities' appropriate access to natural resources while preventing exploitation.

**Environmental Sustainability Standards:** A high influx of tourists risks degrading ecosystems and irreparably damaging fragile natural resources. Authorities must enforce stringent regulations, while local communities should be actively educated about these issues. Conducting awareness classes for the local population is vital, as well as providing training that enables them to compete for desirable ecotourism jobs.

**Preserving Local Culture:** Tourism has, at times, disrupted local economies and undermined unique indigenous cultures. In the worst cases, indigenous peoples have been displaced by development projects led by outsiders from mainstream societies. It is crucial to sensitize indigenous communities and enforce strict regulations to prevent such abuses. The most effective ecotourism programs actively

work to regulate against exploitation and focus on maximizing local benefits.

**Indigenous Knowledge:** The implications of Indigenous knowledge for sustainable development and environmental protection cannot be overstated. This knowledge can be instrumental in creating viable livelihood strategies within sustainable tourism for local communities. Indigenous knowledge enriches cultural tourism by preserving traditions, educating about community history, and maintaining the critical relationship between communities and visitors.

**Natural Resources:** An analytical approach is necessary to evaluate the natural resources designated for promoting sustainable tourism. The chosen resources must be locally available, sustainable, and cultivable throughout different seasons. Furthermore, they should not threaten biodiversity due to excessive cultivation, overuse of water resources, or deforestation. Moving forward, we must prioritize these aspects to ensure that tourism catalyzes positive change in rural areas.

### Government Initiative

The Government of India has placed significant emphasis on rural tourism, defining it as "any form of tourism that showcases rural life, art, culture, and heritage at rural locations. This approach benefits local communities economically and socially while facilitating interaction between tourists and locals for a more enriching experience" (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). The 'Incredible India' campaign also explores rural areas' serene beauty and tranquility, focusing on extending tourist stays and creating livelihood opportunities for local villagers. Local participation in the decision-making process regarding rural tourism development fosters ownership and recognition within the community, thereby ensuring the sustainability of rural tourism projects. The aim is to help tourists experience village life by engaging in everyday rural activities and witnessing the unique skills of residents. Growing interest in heritage, culture, and environmental sustainability has contributed to the expansion of rural tourism. The Ministry of Tourism has drafted a "National Strategy on Rural Tourism" for the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. This approach, which is presently undergoing final discussions with different ministries, state authorities, and industry participants, includes multiple essential elements: (i) Rural Tourism and Atmanirbhar Bharat, (ii) SWOT Analysis of Rural Tourism, (iii) Vision, Mission, and Objectives, (iv) Key Strategic Pillars, and (v) Governance and Institutional Framework." (Ministry of Tourism, 2020: 35)

## Initiatives by stakeholders to promote livelihood through rural tourism

To enhance the active participation of local communities and marginalized groups in the tourism industry, it is essential to develop comprehensive skill development and training programs. These initiatives should equip individuals with the necessary skills to excel in various roles within the tourism sector, thereby improving their employability and promoting economic independence. Additionally, we seek to create viable opportunities in agri-business activities, such as pisciculture (fish farming), sericulture (silk production), and horticulture (fruit and vegetable cultivation), to meet the diverse needs of visitors. By leveraging the region's rich agricultural heritage, we can ensure that local products are available and actively promoted to tourists, ultimately increasing economic benefits for the community. To ensure that local communities reap the benefits of tourism development, infrastructure projects—including constructing roads, accommodations, and recreational facilities—should prioritize local hiring and resource procurement. This strategy will provide communities with tangible improvements in living standards, directly linked to tourism investments in rural areas. Moreover, it is important to encourage the rural poor to take an active role in nature conservation while developing tourism facilities and operations. By fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility toward their natural surroundings, communities are more likely to protect the environment, thereby enhancing the sustainability of tourism ventures. Establishing regulatory frameworks that promote responsible development practices is crucial to address the excessive and often unchecked expansion of rural tourism development projects initiated by private firms. This approach ensures that tourism growth aligns with community needs and preserves local culture and resources. Establishing community-based organizations will also empower local communities by giving them a significant stake in managing and utilizing local resources. This involvement fosters accountability and aligns economic activities with community interests and sustainability goals. Furthermore, promoting locally made goods and services is vital for strengthening the local economy. Creating platforms to market these products can attract tourists and local consumers, enhance demand, and support local artisans and producers. Finally, recruiting local community members for tourism-related positions is equally important. This effort will increase representation from the community and ensure that the workforce reflects the diversity of the population, promoting inclusivity and fostering a deeper connection between tourists and local culture.

## Conclusion

Tourism has the remarkable potential to enhance and develop rural areas significantly. Rural tourism presents a

vital alternative for generating livelihood and employment opportunities in these regions. Beyond serving as a source of income, it is a key driver for fostering sustainable livelihoods within rural communities. By minimizing negative impacts and maximizing positive outcomes—such as preserving natural, social, physical, financial, and human resources—we can ensure these vital assets are preserved for future generations. Empowering local communities is crucial, enabling them to identify and utilize their unique resources for tourism projects. This approach opens up numerous opportunities for youth, women, and other community members, promoting inclusivity and engagement. However, establishing a sustainable tourism hub in rural areas relies heavily on the active participation of local communities. Community support is essential to address any resistance and clarify misconceptions about tourism. Educating community members about their roles and responsibilities in achieving sustainable tourism is a key component of this effort. Rural tourism is a powerful strategy for rural development that creates new livelihood opportunities and decreases dependency on agriculture. By implementing a comprehensive livelihood framework, development practitioners can devise actionable plans that fully harness the potential of rural tourism. A thorough analysis of the vulnerability context allows us to identify influential factors and their interconnections, facilitating the establishment of effective structures and policies to address these elements. With over half of India's population living in rural areas, nurturing rural tourism and creating new employment opportunities in the tourism sector are vital for developing rural regions and the nation. We can build a brighter future for these communities through sustainable tourism practices.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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