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## Dalla as a Model of Sustainable Community Based Home-stay in Madhuban, Bardiya

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### Abstract:

*This paper tries to exploration of Dalla as a model of sustainable community based home stay. The main objective is Dalla homestay as a successful model of community-based tourism that offers a unique and authentic cultural experience while promoting cultural preservation and environmental conservation of Madhuban Municipality -1, Suryapatwa, Bardiya district. Fieldwork methods, including direct observation, interviews were utilized to gather data. The Dalla home stay is a successful model of community-based tourism, providing an authentic immersion into Tharu culture while prioritizing environmental conservation. This initiative significantly contributes to women empowerment, with women playing crucial roles in its operation and benefiting economically. Guests are accommodated in traditional Tharu-style mud houses, offering a unique cultural experience. The home stay's proximity to Bardiya National Park enhances its appeal for wildlife enthusiasts*

*. A study assessing its sustainability found general agreement among stakeholders, highlighting the importance of guest satisfaction, community cooperation, and management efforts. Most respondents have only primary education, earn NPR 10,000 20,000/month, and show high environmental awareness across both genders. Recommendations for its continued success include public sector support in infrastructure and policy, private sector involvement in service improvement, and financial sector provisions for home stay operators. The Dalla homestay demonstrates a valuable and sustainable approach to tourism in Nepal.*

**Keywords:** Community-based Tourism, Environmental Conservation, Women Empowerment

### Introduction

In simple terms, tourism means traveling for fun or for work. It involves activities like attracting visitors, providing places to stay, offering entertainment, and organizing trips (Holloway & Humphreys, 2019). Tourism can be international or within a person's own country. While some people think tourism only means going on holidays, it actually includes any travel where people leave their usual surroundings for leisure, business, or other reasons (Camilleri, 2018).

For over four decades, tourism has been regarded as a key driver of economic growth in developing countries, often referred to as the "white industry" (Pleumarom, 1994). It is seen as a crucial tool for development and a preferable economic alternative to the traditional primary and secondary sectors (Helmsing, 2003). In particular, international tourism especially from developed to developing nations-is believed to bring in much-needed foreign currency and inject vital capital into the economies of developing countries (FaladeObalade & Dubey, 2014). Commonly anticipated benefits of tourism development include job creation, increased income, enhanced foreign exchange and tax revenues, reduced rural-to-urban migration, and improved trade balance (Bakker et al., 2023).

Despite being a steadily growing and dependable sector, Nepal's tourism industry faces numerous challenges. Among the most significant are limitations in transportation and communication infrastructure (Khadka, 2025). As a landlocked nation, Nepal lacks access to maritime routes, relying solely on roadways and air travel for transportation (Adhikari & Ma, 2022). However, these modes of transport primarily serve a few major cities and select rural areas due to the country's difficult and mountainous terrain (Bhagat, 2017). While the overall quality of road infrastructure remains poor largely due to widespread corruption in the road construction sector and frequent landslides Nepal's road network has expanded considerably since the 1950s (Naazie et al., 2018).

In 2011, the global travel and tourism industry contributed 9.1% to the world's GDP and supported approximately 255 million jobs, accounting for 8.7% of total global employment (Assaf, n.d.). In contrast, Nepal's tourism sector contributed only around 2.0% to the national GDP in the fiscal year 2011/12 and directly employed an estimated 160,000 individuals (Assaf & Al-Shaikh, 2013). Despite Nepal's rich biodiversity, stunning mountain ranges, cultural variety, lush landscapes, and protected wildlife, the tourism sector has not achieved its full potential (Amare & Amare, 2015). One of the key challenges is the lack of adequate tourism infrastructure, particularly in accommodation facilities. In response, the government launched the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 as a national campaign aiming to attract one million international visitors—nearly twice the previous annual figure of just over 500,000 (Upadhayaya, 2013). Beyond increasing international arrivals, the campaign also aimed to encourage at least 40% of foreign tourists to explore destinations beyond the

traditional tourist sites, boost tourism infrastructure investment by 50%, and promote and document domestic tourism (Devkota et al., 2023).

Since March 2011, the Shiva Community Forest Consumers' Committee has launched the "Khata Biological Corridor Homestay" initiative, commonly referred to as the Dallagaon community homestay, in select Tharu households of Dalla village, located in Ward No. 1 of Madhuvan Municipality, Bardiya district (Woli, 2022). The Tharu are an indigenous community living in Nepal's Terai and inner Terai regions. They celebrate Maghi as their New Year, which holds deep cultural and social importance. More than just a festival, Maghi strengthens community ties and represents the Tharu people's evolving identity and shifting social values over time (Pathak, 2024).

The Dalla Homestay is located near the Shiva Community Forest, one of the community-managed forests within the Khata Corridor. Out of the 105 households in Dalla village who benefit from the forest, 11 families were the first to join the homestay initiative (Lama, 2013). The program was launched with conceptual and technical support from TAL-Nepal. By December 2013, another 11 households had joined, bringing the total number of participating families to 22. To oversee and manage the homestay operations, the Shiva Community Forest Coordination Committee (SCFCC) established an Eco-Tourism Development Sub-Committee, which now functions as the homestay management body (Development & Kathmandu, 2020). Homestays often considered a form of village tourism offer travelers a chance to stay with local families and experience the community's lifestyle in a warm, welcoming, and authentic environment (Sapkota, 2020).

Homestays offer travelers a rare and meaningful chance to dive deep into the warm and vibrant culture of village life. Instead of just observing from a distance, visitors get to truly experience the local way of living whether it's tasting incredible, often unheard-of traditional dishes, or being welcomed as part of a household, not just a guest. They allow for genuine connections with local people, far beyond what you'd get from a quick glimpse through a bus window. Staying with a family means sharing their space, stories, and daily life, which helps travelers see the world from a different perspective. More than just a cultural exchange, homestays directly support the rural economy, helping families in need and creating local jobs. They also encourage conservation and help preserve traditions, making tourism more sustainable and rooted in local empowerment (Bhandari et al., n.d.; Acharya & Halpenny, 2013).

Today, there's a broad consensus among governments, international development agencies, trade bodies, universities, and non-governmental organizations: true development isn't possible without sustainability. Development that fails to include all stakeholders, tackle urgent challenges like extreme poverty, and protect the natural and cultural resources essential to human well-being simply isn't sustainable (Tolba, 2013). Homestay tourism, by its very nature, is meant to exist in harmony with the environment. Its long-term success depends heavily on how well conservation efforts progress. For tourism to be genuinely sustainable, it must directly benefit the local people (Oli & Woli, 2024; Rastra Bank, 2015). Achieving sustainability in homestays also requires strong commitment, collaboration, and

active participation from all involved homestay operators, community members, guests, and the managing committee (Suardana et al., 2024). Recognizing Nepal's geographical diversity, the Tourism Vision 2020 plan divided the country into 18 ecological regions, identifying Bardiya district as a central hub for the mid-western Terai. In this context, the homestay initiative in Dalla village aligns well with the broader goals of that vision. Studying Dalla's homestay model its operations, socio-economic impact, and long-term sustainability is therefore timely and highly relevant (Thakuri & Nepal, 2016).

Nepal is a country that has recently emerged from a decade-long civil war between the Maoist rebels and the government. Understandably, this prolonged political instability took a heavy toll on the nation's economy (Sharma, 2006). Tourism remains Nepal's main source of income, especially given its location nestled between two giants, China and India. However, traditional forms of tourism haven't been growing as expected, which calls for exploring other options. One promising alternative is the development of rural tourism (Ludena Vaquerizo, 2013).

The rural areas of Nepal hold incredible potential for visitors, offering breathtaking natural landscapes, rich traditions, diverse cultures, and plenty of opportunities for outdoor adventures and sports (Dhungel, 2024; Pande, 1 C.E.). Despite this, there hasn't been enough thoughtful planning to ensure that tourism benefits the local communities while minimizing the well-known negative impacts on the environment, culture, and local economy (Kaini, 2019). So, the big question is: can rural tourism bring economic prosperity back to the people of Nepal? The answer is yes if managed carefully, by exploring new possibilities and addressing existing challenges (Chaudhary, 2013).

There's also a noticeable lack of case studies on community-based homestay programs. This report aims to fill that gap by providing valuable insights, data, and examples about one of Nepal's growing homestay initiatives (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). What makes this study unique is its focus on measuring the impact of homestays on local communities, along with evaluating their sustainability using a Likert-type scale based on baseline criteria suggested by the World Tourism Organization (Mekkamol et al., 2013). The study also highlights challenges faced by homestay operators in rural areas like Dalla village and offers practical recommendations to support and promote these programs. Ultimately, this work hopes to guide policymakers in Nepal as they develop long-term strategies to boost tourism-driven growth across the country (Kanel et al., 2024).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective is Dalla homestay as a successful model of community-based tourism that offers a unique and authentic cultural experience while promoting cultural preservation and environmental conservation of Madhuban Municipality -1, Suryapatuwa, Dalla, Bardiya district.

## Literature Review

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 2004 proposed over 50 different sustainability indicators that destinations can choose from to assess various aspects of their tourism industry. These indicators help show the current condition of tourism, the pressures it places on local systems, the impacts it creates, the efforts made to manage it, and the results of those efforts (Manning, 1993). However, the WTO doesn't expect destinations to use all these indicators at once. Instead, they recommend selecting the ones most relevant to the specific priorities of each location.

Among these, the WTO highlights 12 key baseline issues essential for sustainable tourism. These include how satisfied locals are with tourism, the effects tourism has on communities, maintaining tourist satisfaction, managing tourism seasonality, economic benefits, energy use, water availability and conservation, drinking water quality, sewage treatment, solid waste management, development control, and regulating how intensely the area is used (White et al., 2002). Later, the United Nations Environment Program and WTO (2005) suggested that other important topics and indicators might also be considered for sustainability evaluations, such as health, safety, environmental protection, and employment, along with their related indicators (Lew, 2017).

Separately, Aryal (2005) conducted a study on the economic impact of tourism in Nepal. His research focused on analyzing trends in tourist arrivals, the tourism sector's contribution to Nepal's GDP, foreign currency earnings from tourism, and a review of Nepal's tourism policies (Bhattarai et al., 2021). Aryal's study relied entirely on secondary data and used regression analysis. This work laid important groundwork and helped guide the research methodology for the current study (Aryal et al., 2024).

Upadhyay (2008), in his article "Rural tourism to create equitable and growing economy in Nepal," describes rural tourism as a complex and multifaceted activity, not just limited to farm-based experiences (Wood, 1999). It includes a wide range of activities like farm holidays, eco-tourism, hiking, climbing, adventure and sports tourism, health tourism, hunting, fishing, and educational, art, and heritage tourism. The ultimate goal is to promote sustainable socioeconomic development in rural areas, reduce regional inequalities and economic gaps, and contribute to poverty reduction all aimed at improving overall human welfare and happiness (Ghimire, 2023).

In a longitudinal study conducted between 2005 and 2010, Hamzah and Mohamad (2012) examined the performance of Miso Walai Homestay in Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia, comparing it with three other community-based tourism projects in the same region (Nair et al., 2013). Using a qualitative approach that combined semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the researchers identified key factors behind Miso Walai's success and long-term sustainability as it advanced in the tourism value chain (Hosen et al., 2023). The study highlighted that dynamic leadership, strong organizational structure, the establishment of a tourism cooperative, partnerships with government bodies and industry players, and a dedicated focus on conserving biodiversity all contributed to making Miso

Walai Homestay a standout example of community-based eco-tourism (Hamzah & Mohamad, 2012).

Thompson (2010), Explain on his research work the grand fond home stay project in Dominica serves as a case study in community-based tourism, aiming to bring tourism income to a remote village while offering culturally authentic experiences (Thompson, 2010). Established in response to the limited benefits of cruise tourism reaching inland communities, the project emphasizes interaction between hosts and guests. This initiative aligns with the broader goals of community-based tourism by involving local families in hosting tourists, thereby fostering economic benefits at the grassroots level and promoting cultural exchange (Hall & Richards, 2000). The project's sustainability relies on factors such as host and guest satisfaction and effective coordination (Narayanan et al., 2011).

The Tharus of Naya Gaun, Surkhet, have shifted from traditional to modern cemented houses as income levels improved. Joint families are now nuclear, and interest in education has grown. Traditional farming tools have been replaced by tractors and machines. Many now engage in wage labor and Adhinya-based land cultivation (Pathak, 2010).

Lama (2013) set out to understand how homestay programs contribute to sustainable tourism development in Nepal. Her research had three main goals: first, to explore how these homestay programs are being implemented across the country; second, to analyze their impact on three key areas of sustainability social and cultural practices, environmental effects, and the local economy; and third, to identify the challenges faced by homestay operations in Nepal (Bhuiyan et al., 2011; Rastra Bank, 2015). Using a quantitative approach and secondary data, Lama's study revealed that homestay programs play an important role in supporting both economic and environmental sustainability in rural communities, especially by helping preserve local traditions and culture. She also emphasized the need for stronger government support, better infrastructure, and capacity-building within local communities to address existing challenges (Jim Masenya, 2023).

### **Research Methodology**

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore Dalla Homestay as a model for sustainable community-based tourism in Madhuwan Municipality-1, Dallagaon, Bardiya district. To gather firsthand insights, interviews were conducted with homestay operators, Tharu community leaders, local residents, and tourists. Additionally, on-site observations focused on how the homestay operates, its eco-friendly practices, and cultural activities. Supporting information was also collected from academic papers, government reports, and tourism policies related to sustainable tourism in Nepal (Bank, N. R. 2015; Thapa, 2023). The data was then carefully analyzed through thematic analysis, highlighting important themes such as economic benefits, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and community involvement. Throughout the study, ethical standards were upheld by obtaining informed consent, protecting participant privacy, and ensuring research integrity. This approach offers a thorough understanding of how Dalla

Homestay contributes to sustainable tourism through community-based practices (Kataria et al., 2023).

### Results and Analysis

The Researcher focus Dalla homestay on preserving practicing and sharing their sustainable community homestay experience and engage with the local Tharu culture. The "Khata Biological Corridor Homestay" program in Dalla village is deeply rooted in the Tharu community's traditions and way of life. Here are some key result which is based by research of the Dalla homestay as a community based home stay, as highlighted in the sources:

**Table: 1**

*Educational Status of the Respondent*

S.N.	Education Level	Male	Female	Percent	Remarks
1	Illiterate	2	1	16.67	
2	General	8	2	66.67	
3	Basic	1	0	8.33	
4	Higher Secondary	1	0	8.33	
5	Graduate and above	0	0	0.00	
Total		12	3	100.00	

*Source: Field survey, 2025*

The above table presents the educational status of 15 respondents, including 12 males and 3 females, showing that the majority-66.67% of both males and females—have attained only general or primary education. Among them, 16.67% of males and 33.33% of females are illiterate, indicating a significant literacy gap, particularly for women. A small percentage of males (8.33%) have reached basic and higher secondary levels, while no females have studied beyond general education. Notably, none of the respondents have achieved graduate-level education. This data reflects a low overall educational background, with limited access to higher education, especially among female participants.

**Table: 2**

*Income level of respondent*

S.N.	Respondents an income of Homestay	Male	Female	Percent
1	1000- 5000	1	2	20.00
2	5000-10000	0	2	13.33
3	10000-15000	4	2	40.00
4	15000- 20000	2	2	26.66
5	20000 Above	0	0	0.00
Total		7	8	100.00

*Source: Field Survey, 2025*

The table presents the data from 15 respondents (7 males and 8 females) showing that most homestay operators earn between NPR 10,000 to 20,000 per month, with a higher

concentration of males in the 10,000–15,000 range and females earning across lower brackets as well, while no respondents reported earnings above NPR 20,000, indicating that the homestay business in the surveyed area generally yields moderate to low income, with slightly greater female participation.

**Table: 3**

*Knowledge of respondent on Environment protection*

S.N.	Respondents Environment Protection	an Yes	Percent (Yes)	No	Percent (No)	Total ( Male and Female)	Percent (Total)
1	Male	6	85.71	1	14.29	7	46.66
2	Female	7	87.50	1	12.50	8	53.33
	Total	13	86.76	2	13.33	15	100.00

*Source: Field Survey, 2025*

The above table presents data on the respondents' knowledge of environmental protection, based on a total of 15 individuals-7 males and 8 females. Among the males, 6 which is (85.71%) reported having knowledge about environmental protection, while 1 which is (14.29%) did not. Similarly, 7 which is females (87.50%) responded positively, and only 1 which is (12.50%) lacked knowledge. In total, 13 out of 15 respondents (86.67%) demonstrated awareness regarding environmental protection. This indicates a generally high level of environmental awareness among both genders, with only a small portion (13.33%) being unaware. The data suggests positive engagement and potential for community-based environmental education and conservation initiatives.

### **Distinct Characteristics of the Dallagaon Homestay**

"Cultural Immersion" as a distinct characteristic of the Dallagaon homestay, setting it apart from other Tharu community homestays. The focus on preserving and sharing their unique cultural heritage is a central theme of the Dallagaon homestay experience.

Visitors to Tharu communities are offered a rich, immersive cultural experience that goes far beyond typical tourism. One of the most appreciated aspects is the opportunity to witness and actively participate in Tharu traditions, including their vibrant music and dance, as well as their unique way of life. Guests are especially drawn to the community's cultural identity, including their customs, attire, and traditional livelihood practices. Food plays a central role in the cultural exchange, with guests enjoying traditional Tharu dishes such as Ghungi, Dhikri, local alcoholic brews, and mice. Some even express a keen interest in learning how to prepare these meals themselves. Language and customs also become key areas of engagement, as many visitors take the initiative to learn basic Tharu phrases and understand local values and social norms, which deepens their appreciation of the community. Staying in traditional mud-built Tharu homes, guests often feel like part of the host family, enjoying a warm and welcoming atmosphere that gives them a sense of belonging.



This homestay model encourages meaningful cross-cultural exchange, where both guests and hosts benefit. Hosts report gaining new skills and perspectives through these interactions, making the experience mutually enriching. Guests not only observe but sometimes join in daily activities such as farming and harvesting, giving them firsthand insight into rural Tharu life. However, alongside these benefits, there are concerns. The growing influence of tourism and exposure to external cultures pose risks to the preservation of Tharu identity. There is a possibility of cultural dilution or loss if such exchanges are not managed thoughtfully. As such, it is essential for stakeholders to strike a careful balance ensuring that tourism supports and uplifts the community without compromising its cultural integrity.

### **Conservation Based Tourism Initiative**

Bardiya National Park is a significant draw for tourists visiting the Dallagaon homestay, offering opportunities for wildlife viewing and contributing to the homestay's appeal as a conservation-based tourism initiative. However, the proximity also poses challenges related to human-wildlife conflict, which need to be addressed through appropriate measures. There is also potential for greater collaboration between BNP and the homestay to enhance the visitor experience and promote the homestay program. Here's a discussion of Bardiya National Park (BNP) based on the sources:

The Dalla Homestay enjoys a prime location near Bardiya National Park (BNP), which adds to its appeal for visitors, especially those passionate about wildlife. This closeness allows guests to embark on jungle safaris, making the homestay a gateway to one of Nepal's top destinations for wildlife enthusiasts. More than just a tourist spot, the Dalla Homestay also known as the Khata Biological Corridor Homestay is deeply connected to conservation efforts in the nearby Shiva Community Forest. This forest lies within the Khata Corridor, an important ecological bridge that enables the movement of species like tigers, rhinos, and elephants between BNP and India's Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, ensuring vital genetic diversity. During a community discussion, locals expressed that there is no sense of competition between BNP and the homestay. In fact, they proposed that BNP could support the initiative by hosting a Dalla Homestay Information Centre on its premises to help inform and guide visitors. However, the proximity to wildlife also brings challenges. There have been troubling incidents of wild animals straying into the village, damaging crops and, at times, attacking people and livestock, creating fear and tension for both hosts and guests.

### **Community Based Homestay Model in Dallagaon Demonstrates**

The community homestay model in Dalla demonstrates a collective approach to tourism development, leveraging the cultural heritage and natural resources of the village. The active involvement of numerous households and a dedicated management committee are central to its operation and potential for sustainability. However, effective coordination, equitable resource distribution, and addressing shared challenges are crucial for the long-term success of this community-based tourism initiative:

The Homestay Operating Guidelines of 2011 define a community homestay as one

that brings together at least five separate family-run households. In Dalla village, the Dallagaon homestay model far exceeds this minimum, involving 22 Tharu households working collectively an essential feature of its success. This initiative began in March 2011, led by local families primarily engaged in agriculture. The idea gained momentum with initial support from TAL-Nepal, which provided conceptual and technical guidance, followed by various organizations offering training and resources underlining the importance of external backing in getting such community-based efforts off the ground.

A vital element of Dalla's homestay model is its structured management. The Eco-Tourism Development Sub-Committee, later renamed the Dalla Homestay Management Committee (DHMC), was formed under the Shiva Community Forest Consumers' Committee (SCFCC) and is responsible for running the homestay's day-to-day operations. The committee's tasks are wide-ranging: from selecting suitable households and ensuring service quality, to marketing the homestay, coordinating with travel agencies, keeping guest records, and organizing cultural programs. It also handles logistics like menus and maps, promotional efforts, and government liaison.

The broader community's involvement has played a major role in the program's sustainability. Even families not directly hosting guests have embraced the initiative, benefiting from increased opportunities to sell domestic goods and local agricultural products. The positive socio-economic and environmental impact is visible throughout the village. By involving many households, the homestay has boosted local capacity for tourism while distributing responsibilities fairly under DHMC's oversight.

Still, managing a community homestay isn't without challenges. Coordinating among many families and maintaining consistent service standards can be complicated. The study also revealed some disparities in training distribution, pointing to a need for more equitable support. Ensuring transparency within the DHMC remains essential for maintaining trust and unity among all involved.

### **Sustainable Practices of Dallagaon Community Homestay**

The Dalla community homestay program places a significant emphasis on sustainable practices, recognizing their crucial role in the long-term viability and positive impact of the initiative. The study on the Dalla homestay specifically assessed its sustainability and considered factors contributing to it. The homestay focus: households' satisfaction, their commitment, the community's perception, the guests' satisfaction, and the committee's effort. The inclusion of a sixth factor further maintained a probability for sustainability. Here are the key sustainable practices and related aspects of the Dalla homestay as highlighted in the sources and our conversation:

The "Khata Biological Corridor Homestay" in Dalla village is deeply rooted in conservation efforts, particularly those connected to the nearby Shiva Community Forest and the Khata Corridor, a crucial wildlife route linking Bardiya National Park. These homestays were established not just as a tourism venture but as part of a broader conservation initiative.

The study found that the homestay program has had a significant positive impact on the local environment, underlining how eco-tourism can lead to sustainable environmental outcomes. The village itself has embraced eco-friendly practices, making environmental conservation a defining feature of the experience offered to visitors.

At the heart of this success lies the active involvement of the local community. Since the homestay model is community-based, its sustainability largely depends on the support, participation, and perception of the villagers. The research highlighted community cooperation as a cornerstone for long-term success. By sharing benefits and creating opportunities for more families, the homestay program fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility, which is vital for its sustainability.

Economically, the homestays have created valuable job and income-generating opportunities, particularly for women. This has helped uplift the local economy, as families benefit from tourism through employment, investments, and savings. The financial viability of the homestays is seen as a key component in their long-term sustainability.

Preserving and promoting local culture is another important aspect. Guests visiting Dalla are invited to experience authentic Tharu traditions, including dance, music, cuisine, and daily life. While this cultural exchange enriches the visitor experience, the community remains aware of the need to protect their cultural identity and minimize negative external influences or cultural erosion.

To support environmental and social sustainability, the village has introduced practical measures like waste management systems, dustbins, and bio-gas installations for cooking. Respondents view these initiatives as part of a broader sustainable approach. However, challenges remain, particularly in terms of infrastructure, such as poor road conditions and inadequate access to clean water, which need attention for overall development. In addition, the use of renewable energy and organic farming practices has become a defining feature of the homestay program. These sustainable initiatives are not only environmentally friendly but also add to the unique appeal of Dalla as an eco-tourism destination. The study recommends further policy support, such as training and subsidies, to strengthen organic and renewable-based tourism systems.

Finally, guest satisfaction plays a vital role in the sustainability of the homestay program. Positive experiences encourage repeat visits and word-of-mouth promotion, which are crucial for the long-term growth and success of the initiative.

### **Community Participation Model of Dallagaon Homestay**

The respondent discuss about that Dalla homestay has evolved into a venture with substantial female participation and has contributed significantly to women's empowerment within the local community.

The Dalla community homestay program has significantly contributed to empowering local women by creating meaningful employment opportunities. Many women have become

actively involved in income-generating activities, which has led to greater economic independence and improved their social standing. Notably, the homestay is predominantly managed and operated by women, with a larger proportion of female family members participating compared to males. This strong involvement reflects a high level of female leadership and empowerment within the community. The socio-economic impact of the homestay has been widely acknowledged by the participating households, especially in terms of women's empowerment. There is a shared perception among homestay families that the initiative has had a favorable influence on the status and roles of women. Through their engagement in the homestay business, women have gained increased confidence and financial autonomy, allowing them to play more active roles in household and community decision-making.

Although financial gain was not the main reason for starting the homestay, many families reported an improvement in their economic conditions as a result. This financial uplift has further strengthened the position of women within their families by giving them access to resources and greater influence over household finances. Additionally, the affordability of the rooms at the Dallagaon homestay makes it accessible to a wider range of visitors, supporting the sustainability of this women-led initiative. Specific room charges are provided, indicating the cost-effectiveness of staying there:

Most households (about 95.5%) charge Rs. 150 per night for a single person staying in a room, while a small number (4.5%) set a slightly higher rate of Rs. 200. For double occupancy, the pricing varies: 45.5% of the households charge Rs. 200 per night, another 45.5% ask for Rs. 300, a few (4.5%) charge Rs. 250, and another 4.5% go up to Rs. 400. In the case of a triple-bed room, only one household offers this option, charging Rs. 300 per night for three people. The affordability of Dalla's accommodation is evident in its low room charges. Its uniqueness stems from its community-based nature, the opportunity for cultural immersion within Tharu households, and the integration with the local environment and traditional architecture regarding uniqueness:

The Dalla homestay offers a warm and authentic alternative to traditional village tourism, inviting visitors to experience life in a genuine, homely setting. Unlike typical hotel stays, guests are welcomed into the homes of local families, allowing them to become part of the household and engage closely with the community's everyday life. This immersive experience provides a rare opportunity to witness and participate in the rich, hospitable Tharu culture that defines the village. The homestay is also closely connected to conservation efforts in the nearby Khata Corridor, highlighting a model of tourism that supports both cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. While the houses may not meet the standards of modern hotels with their traditional construction using mud, bamboo, cow dung polish, small ventilator-style windows, and at times, grass roofs these features are part of what makes the experience so unique. They reflect the local way of living and offer guests a true sense of place. The rooms are simply furnished with essentials such as a wooden table and chair, a mirror, a jug and glass for water, a mosquito net, and bedding covered in white cotton, and a pair of slippers each element thoughtfully provided with guest comfort in mind

while maintaining the authenticity of village life.

Ultimately, the Dalla homestay isn't about luxury it's about meaningful connection. It gives travelers a chance to enjoy the benefits of tourism while fully engaging with the local culture and lifestyle, offering an experience that is both enriching and rooted in community values.

### **Regarding cleanliness and comfort**

The homestay households in Dalla village place a strong emphasis on cleanliness, ensuring that guest rooms are tidied daily and bed covers are changed as needed. Since the introduction of the homestay program, the village as a whole has seen noticeable improvements in cleanliness, with locals becoming more conscious about maintaining a neat and welcoming environment. Although the houses remain traditionally built in the Tharu style, efforts have been made to provide guests with basic comforts. Rooms are typically equipped with simple furniture such as a wooden study table and chair, a small stool, a mirror, a water jug and glass, mosquito net, a mattress, pillow, blanket covered in clean white cotton, and slippers. Most rooms also have ceiling fans, electric lighting, and inverters for backup power.

While the accommodations may not match the luxury of conventional hotels lacking features like attached bathrooms, high-end beds, televisions, water filters, or solar lighting they offer something far more valuable: a chance to genuinely experience local life and culture. Guests are welcomed into an environment where authenticity takes precedence over opulence. To enhance hospitality within this traditional framework, several organizations have stepped in to provide training to the host families, helping them better serve their visitors. Overall, staying in Dalla's traditional mud homes offers an affordable and enriching cultural experience, where the focus is on meaningful connection, cleanliness, and modest comfort.

### **Discussion**

The Dalla community-based homestay, madhuwan municipality -1, Bardiya serves as a remarkable and thriving example of community-based tourism, presenting a distinct travel opportunity that diverges from the conventional hotel experience. This initiative not only channels economic advantages to the local Tharu community but also plays a vital role in actively championing cultural preservation and environmental conservation. Our ongoing conversation and the study excerpts provided underscore several crucial elements that shape the distinctive character and the promising sustainability of the Dalla community-based homestay.

A recurrent and significant theme in our discussion has been women empowerment, a notable achievement and characteristic of the Dalla homestay. The study clearly indicates that the homestay is predominantly female-led and female-managed, with a greater proportion of women engaged in the business on a full-time basis. This active involvement furnishes

women with employment opportunities, fostering economic independence and amplifying their influence in household decision-making and financial management. Participating households in the community homestay acknowledge the positive impact of the homestay on women empowerment within the community, signifying a widely held favorable view regarding this particular outcome.

The lodging provided by the Dalla homestay is characterized by both its affordability and its uniqueness. The study explicitly highlights the cost-effectiveness of the rooms and furnishes a detailed breakdown of the room charges, which are considerably lower compared to those of standard hotels. This affordability broadens the accessibility of the homestay to a diverse spectrum of travelers. The uniqueness of the accommodation arises from its community-driven nature, where guests are hosted in homes owned and operated by local Tharu families, thereby facilitating direct interaction and cultural exchange. This model offers an authentic immersion into the rich and welcoming Tharu culture.

Guests who choose the Dalla homestay are accommodated in traditional Tharu-style mud houses, constructed using locally sourced materials such as mud, bamboos, and dung. These dwellings often showcase traditional architectural features, including small ventilator-like windows and potentially grass roofs, providing a distinctive experience of the local built environment. While preserving this authenticity, the homestay providers prioritize cleanliness, ensuring that guest rooms are cleaned on a daily basis and bed linens are changed as required. To guarantee basic comfort, the rooms are typically equipped with essential furnishings, including beds with mosquito nets, electric lights, and frequently inverters for backup power. Although attached toilets and luxurious amenities may not be standard, the primary focus remains on delivering a clean and comfortable stay that aligns with the homestay ethos of experiencing local life firsthand.

In Summary, the Dalla homestay embodies a successful convergence of cultural tourism, economic empowerment, and environmental consciousness. Its affordable and unique accommodation within traditional Tharu-style houses offers guests an authentic cultural encounter. The significant involvement and empowerment of women further amplify the socio-economic benefits for the community. The potential for the long-term sustainability of the Dalla homestay hinges on sustained guest satisfaction, active participation from the community, and the dedicated endeavors of the homestay management committee. By providing a genuine and immersive cultural experience, the Dalla homestay offers a valuable and distinctive option within Nepal's tourism landscape.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In conclusion, the Dalla homestay stands as a notable success in community-based tourism sector, offering visitors an authentic immersion into Tharu culture within a framework that prioritizes environmental conservation. The initiative has demonstrably led to significant women empowerment, with women playing key roles in management and benefiting economically. The homestay has generated positive socio-economic impacts, particularly in raising environmental awareness and fostering community well-being. While

guests are generally highly satisfied and homestay households are committed to continuing their involvement, the long-term sustainability of the Dalla homestay hinges on maintaining guest satisfaction, ensuring continued community cooperation, and the effective efforts of the management committee.

To further strengthen the Dalla homestay and ensure its continued success, several recommendations can be made. The public sector should implement a comprehensive homestay promotion program, focusing on easing registration, investing in infrastructure like road networks and water supply, and providing financial incentives. Collaboration with Bardiya National Park to establish an information center and address human-wildlife conflict through measures like solar fencing is crucial. The private sector, particularly telecommunication companies, should improve services in the area. The financial sector needs to offer concessional credit facilities tailored to the needs of homestay operators to support upgrades and expansions. By addressing existing challenges related to infrastructure, marketing, and financial constraints through these collaborative efforts, the Dalla homestay can further solidify its position as a sustainable and impactful community-based tourism model in Nepal.

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