



Executive Summary

Tourism is considered to be the largest and fastest growing economic activities. The National Tourism Policy of Bangladesh 1992 considers tourism as 'an industry of due priority' and The Industrial Policy of Bangladesh 1992 identifies tourism as 'a thrust sector'. Tourism and economical development go hand in hand. It is usually viewed as a 'natural renewable resource industry' with visitors to admire – not to consume – the landscapes, customs and monuments of destination area. However, as tourism grew in size and scope it became apparent that this industry, like others, competed for scarce resource and capital. Its non-consumptive attributes did not necessarily prevent erosion or alteration of attractions. So if the natural environment is not taken into profound consideration and the community of destination area does not have direct participation in tourism, the development won't be sustainable.

As Chittagong Hill Tracts has many attractive tourist destinations, many people expected a boom in the tourist industry there after The Peace Treaty, 1997. At the same time the indigenous community apprehends that the vices accompanying a boom in tourism might disrupt the social harmony of the region although they welcome the tourists. To use tourism as a natural renewable product, we must consider its positive as well as negative impacts on

environment, biodiversity and its conservation and socio-cultural structures of the community. Since ecotourism includes programmes that minimize the negative aspects of mass tourism on the environment and enhances the cultural integrity of the indigenous people, community based ecotourism will be the best form of tourism in Barkal as well as in CHT. In addition to evaluating environment and cultural factors ecotourism promotes recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation and creation of economic opportunities for the local community. It will not only help indigenous community of Marmapara (Barkal, Rangamati) to break the shackles of poverty, but also conserve ecological balance and socio-cultural integrity.

Barkal is one of the remotest upazilas of Rangamati Hill District. It is 59 kilometers away from the district headquarters. The Marmapara is at the middle of Barkal upazila and situated at foot of the hill Girichara. It is inhabited by the Marmas who live in a community there. Economically they are marginalized. They have little land for cultivation. Most of them are day laborers and some of them live on *jhum* cultivation. They collect firewood from the nearby forest and sometimes, for their survival, they hunt wild birds and animals. Although the Marma community is economically poor, they have a very rich culture. The scenic beauty of the area, its flora and fauna and the rich culture of its inhabitants easily attract the tourists from home and abroad.

To extract positive benefits from tourism, it should be a natural renewable product and a tool for alleviating poverty of the destination area. Community

based ecotourism, in this connection, can help the Marma community of Barkal economically, environmentally and socially and, by this way, can bring sustainable development to the community.