

GIS BASED FEASIBILITY STUDY OF ECOTOURISM PROMOTION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN DISTURBED FOREST PROVINCES OF WEST BENGAL AS A PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE

Abstract

In contemporary world sedition and extremist movements are the biggest threats to the human civilization. In most of the cases the birthplace of these extremist groups are the most backward and inaccessible part of a nation, where physical austerity has impede the development of agriculture and industry but protected the natural environment from the voracity of civilization. Jungle Mahals of West Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia district of West Bengal is a treasure house of natural beauties but hilly terrain and thick forest cover have made many parts of these District inaccessible by road and thus lacking in medical and educational facilities. Though the climate of this region is not very harsh but high evaporation and infiltration losses caused agricultural drought, which accumulated over years and had weakened the economy of the area. Taking advantage of these physical and economic handicaps, an organized group of social and political activists called Left-Wing Extremists (LWE) perpetrating violence and keeping the people of this region under threat. Non-cooperation of local population being the prime obstacle, government security forces with all its intelligence network and muscle power had not been utterly succeed to stop these extremist activities.

This study plans for economic and social stabilization of this region through the promotion of alternate economic practices for underprivileged forest dwellers and involving them in anti-terrorism operations. As physical environment of this region is not suitable for intensive agriculture and unskilled tribal people will also not be preferred by the modern industry, implementation of 'Ecotourism' in these forest villages seems to be the best income-generating activity and ecologically permissible too. Due to essentially spatially distributed nature of tourism and terrorism related data and need of various types of spatial and statistical analysis GIS has proven to be a successful means in this study. An IRS-LISS-IV MX data (GCR-5.8m) of 2014-15 has been classified by ERDAS/IMAGINE-8.5 Software to extract land cover information of the region. Existing and potential tourist spots are identified and they are classified based on spatial, non-spatial and attribute data. The inputs in the form of arc-coverages (Arc/GIS-10.3) were assigned relative weightage in accordance to its influence/importance in decision-making based on expert opinion. Cadastral level action

plan maps have been prepared for sustainable land use practices and 'Ecotourism' infrastructure development. Spatial database created on last ten years extremist movements and terrorist attacks to identify the spatial pattern, association and causes of vulnerability of the hot spots. Lastly spatial decisions have been made for allocation and relocation of police out posts, military camps and local participatory groups to dissuade extremist movements. It is expected that economic and social uplift will automatically bring social awareness among native villagers, and they will spontaneously act against any kind of social disorder that can adversely affect the tourism industry.

Keywords:	GIS, Ecotourism, Sustainable Development, Poverty Alleviation, Socio-economic Uplift, Anarchism Dissuasion.
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