

# Revenue Assessment of the Current Tourism Industry of Bandarban Hill District, Bangladesh, and its Economic Impact on the Local Indigenous Community

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**Abstract:** The tourism industry has been acknowledged as a contributor to destination economies in many countries. The tourism industry of Bandarban Hill District is a flourishing sector. The majority of people are heavily dependent on Jhum-based agriculture. Further, there is no emerging sector that can create new workplaces or factories overnight. As the geographical location, culture, people & society, and political scenarios of this area are different from most country districts, special observation and planning are needed to improve its economic situation. As the tourism industry of this area blooms automatically, the industry can be turned into a productive sector. So the people of this area can have more options for jobs. As a result, people will experience work diversity and social benefits in the long run. The research project aims to study the amount of revenue generated by this industry and identify its beneficiaries, their positions in the tourism industry, and the status of supply chain management. The study revealed that the district annually generated a large amount of revenue just after post covid. Comparing this amount to the research done 9 years ago, the revenue has increased almost 4 times. Among the 7 upazilas, Bandarban Sadar, Thanchi, and Rowangchari are holding first, second, and third positions respectively in terms of the amount of revenue. Most of the frontiers of this industry are elite class and many of them are outsiders. Locals are running mid to small-sized businesses and the amount of revenue generated by them is not greater. Although this industry is creating job opportunities for locals, the contribution could be doubled or increased if the industry is managed and promoted systematically by proper authority. Community empowerment is possible by bridging the gaps in the supply chain by spreading the benefits and advantages of this important industry among the common people. In addition, Bangladesh has set the Sustainable Development Goals-SDGs target by 2030, where Bandarban can become a model through the implementation of the proposed institutional framework.

**Keywords:** SDG 2030, Community Tourism, Supply Chain Gaps

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## 1. Introduction

The tourism industry has been playing a remarkable role all around the globe in making the economy grow within a short period. Tourists visit destinations because of their unique features including nature, culture, architecture, gastronomy, infrastructure, landscape, events and shopping, etc. All together, they are critical parts of the destinations and have a profound effect on their success (Science Daily, 2019). Bandarban is undoubtedly a haven with an abundance of natural beauty, cultural diversity, gastronomy, and landscaping. It consists of 11 indigenous communities, including the Marma, the Chakma, the Tripura, the Tanchangya, the Mro, the Khumi, the Bawm, the Lusai, the Chak, the Khaying, and the Pankhua. The indigenous people have different languages and cultures living in these districts. Each community has rules, regulations, norms, social culture, heritage, and beliefs that have enriched the culture of Bangladesh to a greater extent. Bandarban has the highest mountain peak in the country, known as Tazingdong, followed by Kewcaradong and Chimbuk. Bandarban is abundant with natural wonders of water bodies like Boga Lake and Prantik Lake. There are also some artificial recreational spots such as Rijuk Tour Complex, Meghla, Nilachal, Nilgirri, and the very heavenly beauty of Mirinza zig-zag way. Two of the major waterways of Bandarban are the Sangu River and the Matamuhuri River. (Bandarban Hill District Council, 2022).

However, due to many geographical, economic, and political reasons, the region's many places remained relatively isolated and underdeveloped for a significant period. The educational ratio, financial abilities, and ability to access information, institutions, administrations, social networks, securities, socialization, and communication are still far below that of mainstream people or the national average. These people are victims of a poverty trap as their society suffers from a high degree of inequality (United Nations Global Marketplace, 2019). However, now the place is flourishing in the tourism industry. Inland tourists in Bangladesh have been making their way to Bandarban for almost a decade. Bangladesh's government has declared Bandarban a tourist zone (Bandarban Hill District Council, 2022) Since then, government officers, including the district and Upazila administration, Zilla Parishad, Upazila Parishad, Bangladesh Army, and BGB, have been working with the general entrepreneurs to provide tourist services. Some significant spots have been created and managed by different sectors of government departments. The number of incoming tourists in Bandarban has increased over time and being. Therefore, revenue generated by this sector must have increased as well. Currently, the Bangladesh

Government has handed the management of the Bandarban tourism industry to the Bandarban Hill District Council (BHDC). This industry has started to emerge as one of the significant revenue generators for Bandarban the threats, challenges, and shortcomings that arise require proper management for the sake of the general people and the sustainable growth of this industry. Otherwise, the challenges will become major threats to its people and the environment.

The research project aims to study the amount of revenue generated by this industry. Also, to develop a framework to advocate and help implement tourism activities in a collaborative manner that will strengthen the economy in line with creating entrepreneurship among local youths, women, and Indigenous people. Therefore, this research sets the following objectives to accomplish the project.

### **1.1 Research Objectives:**

1. To explore the context and current economic status of tourism development and management in Bandarban Hill District
2. To identify direct and indirect stakeholders as well as how revenue-generating from the tourism industry in Bandarban Hill District
3. To identify the gap in supply chain management and help to develop an impactful model and strategic framework for the better benefit of the local community

To fulfill the research objectives, this study aims to assess the annual revenue generated by the tourism industry and its effects on the local community in the Bandarban Hill District. An economic assessment will be conducted through engagement with local stakeholders and service providers to understand the sources of revenue. Ultimately, the research seeks to develop a strategic framework to help policymakers guide and enhance the benefits of tourism for local populations.

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions (Barcelona Field Study Centre, 2025). In the context of Bandarban, a distinctive region in Bangladesh, a nuanced understanding of tourism revenue dynamics and their impacts on local indigenous communities is essential. This theoretical framework aims to guide the assessment of tourism revenue and its implications, synthesizing relevant literature and theoretical models.

Bandarban, designated by the Bangladesh Government as a key tourist destination, is often referred to as the "Roof of Bangladesh" due to its breathtaking mountainous landscape. The district comprises seven Upazilas: Bandarban Sadar, Rowangchhari, Ruma, Thanchi, Alikodom, Lama, and Naikhongchhari (DC Bandarban, 2022, 2024). It attracts a significant influx of domestic tourists, particularly from October to March, during the peak season. In contrast, the off-season from April to September sees a decrease of 30%-40% in visitor numbers (Ministry of CHT Affairs, 2022).

Traditionally, the economy has relied on agriculture, including jhum cultivation. While tourism offers a promising supplemental income, reliable data on revenue generation is scarce, complicating assessments of its economic impact (Ministry of Finance, 2024). The Bangladesh Poverty Map indicates that over 50% of Bandarban's population lives below the upper poverty line (The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2022) which raises questions about the effectiveness of tourism in alleviating poverty. The agenda set by the Bangladesh Government aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing public participation in achieving targets by 2030 (UN Bangladesh 2022, 2022). A well-structured tourism plan could contribute to these goals, potentially fostering economic prosperity and social cohesion.

### **2.1 Economic Contributions of Tourism**

Tourism is frequently recognized for its potential to generate substantial revenue and employment opportunities, thereby contributing significantly to local economies. The global tourism industry accounted for 10.5% of the global GDP in 2019 (World Travel Tourism Council, 2024). This economic perspective aligns with the Multiplier Effect theory, which asserts that initial tourist spending circulates within the local economy, fostering additional economic activity (Lange, 1943). This framework will be employed to evaluate how tourism expenditures translate into tangible economic benefits for the local community in Bandarban.

### **2.2 Socio-Cultural Impacts**

Tourism greatly influences social structures and cultural practices within host communities. The Social Exchange Theory refers to the interactions between tourists and local populations yield both positive and negative outcomes, impacting community dynamics (Rafael Robina-Ramírez, 2022). As the tourism industry expands, it

begins to influence the culture and lifestyle of the local people in that region. In the Bandarban Hill District, indigenous and Bengalis, regardless of their background, have largely been living together in a peaceful coexistence, although there have been some exceptions in certain cases. For example, with the development of the tourism industry in Thailand, there have been some changes in its religious culture due to the influx of tourists. To accommodate tourists, Buddhist temples now offer packaged religious ceremonies, sell souvenirs in temples, and sell tickets for taking photos at certain religious sites, which was never the case before. Such practices have emerged alongside the growth of tourism, marking a new trend.

### **2.3 Tourism and Sustainability**

Sustainable tourism management and sustainability are intrinsically linked. Through sustainable management in tourism, the natural, economic, and social environments of the area will be preserved equally. Along with sustainable tourism management, the balance of nature will be maintained, and at the same time, the economic and social security and growth of the area will be enhanced. In the context of the SDGs, this is specifically addressed in SDG 12 and SDG 8.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This research adopts both quantitative and qualitative methods. All stakeholders from the tourist points across the seven upazilas of Bandarban Hill District participated in the study as participants from April 15 to 15 July 2022. The participants included business owners, managers, employees, community members, and staff. A semi-structured questionnaire was used in the survey, and in some cases, the observational method was applied. In total, 535 participants were involved in this study, including 100 tourists from Bandarban Hill District.

Community consultation meetings were held at two well-known community tourist spots, one at Munlai Para in Ruma Upazila and the other at Debota Khum Tourist Spot in Rangchhari Upazila. These meetings were primarily conducted to understand the overall state and development of community-based tourism in the area.

### **4. Limitations & Ethical Considerations**

This study had some limitations in terms of data collection. Specifically, due to the lack of prior research activities related to revenue, the data collection process had to rely entirely on verbal responses. However, the general people were straightforward and naturally provided answers to the survey questions regarding their income and issues. Ethical considerations were also addressed seriously for the safety purposes of the participants. While the local people had given consent to disclose information about their income without objection, for the sake of security and sensitivity, no names were mentioned in the study. For government institutions, much of the data had to be accepted based on verbal trust, as they were not comfortable presenting official documents. Every effort had been made to accurately assess the financial earnings, spending time and engaging in sincere conversations in a calm and respectful environment. There were no unethical practices involved in this research.

### **5. Findings:**

#### **5.1 Case study 1 Bandarban Sadar Upazila:**

Bandarban Sadar has significant artificial and natural tourist spots and facilities around the central business district area. It has abundant natural and artificial tourist spots such as Nilachal, Nilgiri, Meghla Parjatan Kendra, Shoilopropat, and Upobon Lake. Apart from this, Beside the Sangu river, one of the main rivers of Bandarban. It enters Bangladesh through Bandarban. It flows from east to west across Bandarban falling into the Bay of Bengal at the end of 270 km. The Riverside and waterways around the city are still underdeveloped compared to the rest of the town, which is a setback to the economic development of Bandarban.

From the Bandarban Sadar riverway to Rowangchhari, Thanchi and Ruma are reachable by boat. Apart from a few exceptions, people use fewer waterways from Bandarban Sadar to Ruma to Thanchi. Bandarban Sadar Upazila has 52 residential hotels listed under Hotel & Restaurant Malik Somity. However, there are a few unregistered restaurants that are running businesses.

According to Md. Fakrul Islam lineman and Abul Kasem, Chairman, Microbus, Jeep, and Peak up Malik Somity Ltd; Bandarban Sadar Upazila has a total of 400 vehicles: 350 Mahindra bolero and 50 jeeps. The transport from Bandarban Sadar travels for a roundabout trip to Nilgiri, Nilachal, Sornomondir, Debotakhum, and Thanchi. Four hundred registered drivers are working in this sector. Among them, 250 drivers from mainstream communities and 150 indigenous.

**Table 1.1: Total Annual Revenue generated in Sadar Bandarban by different sectors**

SI Number	Name of the sector	Minimum revenue in BDT	Maximum revenue in BDT
1	Residential Hotels and Restaurants	611,748,000	744,372,000
2	Mahindra, Bolero	345,600,000	401,400,000
3	Riverway boating	4,590,000	5,400,000
4	Taxi, CNG	6, 750,000	27,000,000
5	Handicrafts and other sectors	13,500,000	319,800,000
6	Restaurants and food shops	117,720,000	149,976,000
7	Total received from tourist spots	1,099,908,000	1,647,948,000

The researchers in the Bandarban Sadar area, reveal that Bandarban Sadar is one of the leading sources of revenue from the tourism sector in Bandarban. Bandarban Sadar earns a minimum of 1,099,908,000 BDT to a maximum of 1,647,948,000 BDT per annum from the tourism industry. In conclusion, it can be said that the tourism industry of Bandarban Sadar Upazila generates nearly 1.65 billion BDT per annum,

### 5.2 Case Study 2 Thanchi Upazila:

Thanchi Upazila is the second-largest and one of the most popular tourist destinations. Some of the major attractions in this area include Rimaakre, Tindu Nafakhum, Boro Modok, Choto Modok, and Amiakhum. On average, this upazila generates income ranging from 434,500 BDT to 590,600 BDT daily. Hotels, restaurants, handicraft shops, and general shopkeepers make total sales ranging from 119,520,000 BDT to 155,268,000 BDT.

In Thanchi Upazila, water-based transportation plays a significant role. Due to water-based tourism, annual earnings in this sector range from 850,500,000 BDT to 891,000,000 BDT. Vehicles such as Mahindra Bolero and Jeeps generate income ranging from 115,200,000 BDT to 129,600,000 BDT. Additionally, tourist guides earn from 47,750,000 BDT to 117,000,000 BDT.

**Table 1.2: The total sector-wise yearly revenue generated by the Thanchi Tourism Industry**

SI No	Description	Yearly income Minimum	Yearly income Maximum
1	Hotels, restaurants, resorts, small handicrafts, varieties shop	119,520,000	155,268,000
2	Transportation	115,200,000	129,600,000
3	Boat	850,500,000	891,000,000
4	Tourist guide	87,750,000	117,000,000
5	Seasonal floating shops at Remakri-Tindu	25,200,000	63,000,000
	Total Minimum to Maximum	1,198,170,000	1,355,868,000

### 5.3 Case study 3 Rowangchhari Upazila:

Rangchhari is a sub-district of the Bandarban Hill District in Bangladesh, located right next to Bandarban Sadar. It covers an area of 43.43 square kilometers and has a population of around 23,000. Some of the main tourist attractions in the area include Devata Khun, Kachhp Cholisheel Bandha Waterfall, Shilpi Hill, and Telap Sitar Waterfall. The region is particularly famous for Debata khum. Notably, the area generates a significant income from tourism, especially through its restaurants. Apart from the restaurant industry, the transportation sector also contributes significantly to the local economy., there are 92 registered tourist guides in Rowangchhari, who are registered with the local upazila administration. Since the Debota Khum is associated with water-based tourism, there is a type of boat kind available here, known as a "Vela." A Vela is essentially a floating flatboat made of bamboo.

Accumulating all the sectors earning the upazila earning statement is given below:

**Table 1.3: The total sector-wise yearly revenue generated by the Rowangchhari Tourism Industry**

SI No	Description	Yearly income Minimum	Yearly income Maximum
1	Hotels, restaurants, resorts, small handicrafts, varieties shop	28,044,000	41,454,000
2	Transportation Taxi, bus, motorbikes	39,600,000	45,936,000
3	Boat &Vella	14,850,000	16,200,000
4	Tourist guide	87,750,000	117,000,000
	Total Minimum to Maximum	170,244,000	220,590,000

### 5.4 Case Study 4 - Ruma Upazila-Findings:

Ruma Upazila's tourism industry has been making a significant contribution to the local economy ranking 4th in position. The hotel, restaurant, car rental businesses, boat owners, and operators are directly involved in this

sector. Among them, Hotel Amirabad is one of the prominent ones. However, the owner has stated that during times with fewer tourists, it becomes challenging to cover the operational costs of running the hotel, especially since it is a large establishment and the costs are higher. To visit Ruma, travelers usually need both a vehicle and a boat. There are 64 registered Jeep available in the area. The jeep owners' association has reported that they collectively earn between 180,000 to 230,000 BDT, which amounts to an annual income of 45,505,000 BDT to 60,960,000 BDT at most. In addition to the jeep, boat owners and their crews also earn a significant amount. Their annual income ranges from 5,202,000 BDT to 7,956,000 BDT. Tourist guides, who play an important role in the services provided, also earn a notable income, with their annual earnings. As the number of tourists coming to the area has grown, the region has become busier. Based on the gathered information, it is analyzed that the total annual income of the area ranges from 134,691,000 BDT to a maximum of 237,820,800 BDT.

**Table 1.4: The yearly total revenue generated by Ruma Upazilaly**

Description	Annual Lowest income	Annual Highest income
Hotels, restaurants, resorts, small handicrafts, varieties shop	51,912,000	69,544,800
Transportation	45,505,000	60,960,000
Boat	5,202,000	7,956,000
Tourist guide	36,072,000	99,360,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>138,691,000</b>	<b>237,820,800</b>

### 5.5 Case Study 5 Alikodom Upazila:

Alikodom is one of the naturally enriched Upazilas in Bandarban. Many tourists travel to Alikodom through Thanchi Upazila, Alikodom Upazila is beside Thanchi. There are not many tourist spots in Alikodom. Tourists traveling through Thanchi tend to visit Alikodom Upazila. Tourists visit mainly waterfalls, as Alikodom has a significant number of waterfalls. They are most active during the rainy season, including Alir Guha (Ali's Cave), Damtua, Bang Jhiril, Wangpa, waterfalls, Rupmuhuri, Tinum, Palong khyaing, Tamung Jhiri, Bali jhiri, Shilbunia Jhorna, and Nona Jhiri Jorna.

Alikom has 25 hotels and restaurants actively serving tourists year-round. Alikodom has 100 Tom Tom (Electric Rickshaw), and each Tom Tom earns about 500 to 700 BDT in a day, which would make the peak season maximum (700X30daysX3)= 63,000 BDT each peak season and the minimum (500X30 days X3)=45,000 BDT per off-season. Apart from TomTom, travelers use bike services as a regular mode of travel. Alikodom has 100 rental bikes; each motorbike earns 700 to 800 BDT daily. Alikodom experiences tourists most for three months during the monsoon when waters and creeks become full of water. Below are the details of earnings from various sectors:

**Table 1.5: Summary of the total sector-wise yearly revenue generated by the Alikodom Tourism Industry**

SI No	Description	Yearly income Minimum	Yearly income Maximum
1	Hotels, restaurants, resorts, small handicrafts, Varieties shop	64,215,000	77,580,000
2	Transportation	6,363,000	6,345,000
3	Tourist guide	Not significant	1,800,000
	<b>Total Minimum to Maximum</b>	<b>70,578,000</b>	<b>85,725,000</b>

To conclude, the Alikodom tourism industry is generating a minimum of 70,578,00 BDT and a maximum of 85,725,000 which is not significant compared to Bandarban Sadar but is better off than most.

### 5.6 Case Study 6- Lama Upazila:

Lama Upazila has an area of 61.84 sq km, the river area is 8.173 sq km, the reserved forest area is 332.628 sq km, and the area under cultivable land is 260.845 sq km. Lama is called Aranyarani and is full of natural beauty. Lama ranked 6th in position and doesn't have significant tourist spots or activities compared to the other Upazilas. Upazila administration office mentioned a few tourist spots on their website, including Mirinza Tourist Spot and Quantum Schools name (Lama, Bandarban. govt,2022). However, research shows that most tourist goes to visit the Mirinza Tourist Spot. A small number of people visit the Quantum School for specific purposes but not for recreational reasons.

Lama has 150 jeeps. However, the maximum time average of 60 to 70 jeeps is active. The Secretary, Zafar Ahmed, Lama-Alikodom Jeep Malik Somity, has confirmed that not many tourists visit Lama. Among the 60 to 70 Jeeps during the peak season, and maximum of 10 jeeps go to Thanchi. According to the source, the

transportation business of Lama remains the same as ten years before. The number of jeeps over the one decade remained the same.

**Table 1.6: Total income of Lama from the tourism industry**

Entity	Maximum	Minimum
Food and shops	648,000	1,080,000
Transportation	3,600,000	14,400,000
<b>Total annual income</b>	<b>4,248,000</b>	<b>15,480,000</b>

**5.7 Case Study 7 Naikhongchhari Upazila:**

Naikhongchhari Upazila covers an area of 463.61 sq km, located between 21°11' and 21°40' north latitudes and between 92°06' and 92°23' east longitudes. Naikhongchhari Upazila has a few tourist spots: a crocodile farm, a gayal farm, and tea gardens. Tourists are allowed to visit without any fees. Further, no notable tourists travel to these spots. Besides, there is a tourist spot: Upabon Parjaton Kendra, managed by the Upazila Administration. An artificial location, Durbin Soilochura is in Sonaichhari Union, to which a few tourists travel daily. Durbin Shoilochura makes about 500 to 1,000 tourists during peak season per day. This upazila stands the least in the position.

According to the assistant of UNO, Naikhoyongahhari, Upaban Pajaton Kendra receives a minimum of 200 tourists per day during peak season. The authority charges a 30 taka entry fee that adds up to (200X30)6,000 BDT daily and (250X30)7,500 BDT minimum during peak season. On the other hand, 50 to 60 tourists visit the spot accumulating 50x30=1,500 BDT to 60X 30=1,800 BDT daily. The place provides small boat rides for tourists and charges 10 BDT per person. There are only 5 to 6 boats used daily. Four people can be accommodated in one boat. Per day minimum of 4X5X10=200 BDT and a maximum of 4X6X10=240 BDT during the off-season and the peak season, tourists increase almost three times from 600 BDT to 800 BDT. There are also watch-tower facilities at the spot. During the peak season, 500 BDT to 1,000 BDT, and during the off-season, 200 BDT to 300 BDT daily is earned.

**Table 1.7: Yearly income received from tourist spots and surrounding shops**

Season	Minimum in BDT		Maximum In BDT	
Peak season	67,100X30 days X6 months	12,078,000	77,300X30 days X6 months	13,914,000
Off-season	23,900X30 days X6 months	4,302,000	35340X30 days X 6 months	6,361,200
<b>Total Minimum in BDT</b>		<b>16,350,000</b>	<b>Total Maximum in BDT</b>	<b>20,275,200</b>

In conclusion, Naikhongchhari Upazila receives a minimum of 16,350,000 BDT and a maximum of 20,275,200 per year from surrounding restaurants and hotels.

The table below shows the total amount of revenue generated by the tourism industry of Bandarban. In total, the Bandarban Hill District's earnings range from BDT **2,726,153,000 to 3,621,959,000 annually.**

**Table 1.8: Summary of the total annual revenue earned by Bandarban Hill District**

No of upazilas	Destinations/Sector	Minimum	Maximum
1	Ruma	138,691,000	237,820,800
2	Rowangchari	170,244,000	220,590,000
3	Thanchi	1,198,170,000	1,355,868,000
4	Bandarban Sadar	1,099,908,000	1,647,948,000
5	Naikyongchhari	42,270,000	55,375,200
6	Alikodon	70,578,000	85,725,000
7	Lama	4,248,000	15,480,000
8	Toll received by BHDC Badarban kerihut Nilachal	1,774,000	1,774,000
9.	Meghla Parjataon by DC	270,000	378,000
<b>Annual Income Range</b>		<b>2,726,153,000</b>	<b>3,621,959,000</b>

**6. The supply chain gap analysis**

The research reveals significant deficiencies in supply chain management. Mainly due to the absence of a centralized government platform for information dissemination and resource allocation. Regarding marketing and promotional activities, the industry heavily relies on bloggers on social media, with limited planning and guidance, which restricts its reach. Notably, there is strong interest among tourists, with 80% expressing a desire for community-based tourism that fosters engagement with the local community's culture and traditions. This

indicates a market opportunity for portable accommodations, such as homestays and camping sites. Just as every industrial management requires central management, so does the case of Bandarban. In light of the peace agreement signed on December 2, 1999, the tourism sector is a department under the control of the Bandarban District Council.

In the context of tourism decision-making and management, several parties are involved in this region. Specifically, the Bandarban district administration (DC Office) collaborates with the military as a security media spokesperson. Due to the sensitive situation in this area, the army and the district administration work together on matters related to travel bans and their lifting.

Research shows that a large portion of service providers are people from outside the region, mostly from the wealthy class. They have partnered with influential local individuals to establish hotels and restaurants in the area. Where the participation of ordinary people is very minimal. It is worth noting that, as a special region of Bangladesh, in the context of the hill tracts, outsiders of the three hill districts of Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari, are not allowed to buy land of these region. An individual need to obtain a permanent citizenship certificate from the district commissioner (DC) by acquiring a certificate from the headman and the Cercle Chief (king). However, it is observed that outsiders, by forming companies in collaboration with the local influential figures, establish themselves as shareholders and gain control over the land in the area. As a result, outsiders take advantage of the loopholes in the legal process and become landowners.

The Bandarban and the other two District Councils do not receive any special allocation from any ministry or the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism for the development of the tourism industry. As a result, the opportunity to undertake special government projects in this regard is limited. Since the District Council is a local government institution, if it undertakes the implementation of tasks through its work plan, the committee in the area will be able to accelerate tourism-related activities. Currently, among the giant service providers are SAIRO, the Bangladesh Army, the District Administration, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), as well as external wealthy classes who are also involved. The research shows that the indigenous peoples' participation is at a minimum level.

**Table 2.0: People’s Participation Analysis**

**People's Involvement in Hotel & Restaurant Industry by Ethnicity**

S.N	Upazilas Name	Mainstream community in Number	Indigenous
1	Bandarban Sadar	81	11
2	Thanchi	32 & BGB	20
3	Ruma	8 & Bangladesh Army	15
4	Rowangchhari	12	80
5	Alikadom	10, 1, 1,	1
6	Lama	6	Nil
7	Naikhoingchari	2	Nil
		155	127

**Table 2.1: Driver By Decent**

S.N	Upazilas Name	Mainstream	Indigenous
1	Bandarban Sadar	440	60
2	Thanchi	Vehicle-25, Boat-12, BGB-20	Vehicle-17, Boat-295
3	Ruma	86	12
4	Rowangchhari		
5	Alikadom	Bike-100, Tomtom-70	Bike-50, Tomtom-30
6	Lama	60 -70 Mahidra	
7	Naikhoingchari	0	0

Around Boga Lake, the Bawm community works in this industry besides farming. Two Bawm families are running new restaurants near Munlai Para. Ruma has 64 jeeps registered to carry tourists, of which the mainstream community owns 95%. Near Kewkradong, Lal Min Thawn, a Bawm, runs his hotel and restaurant.

In Thanchi, 25 major hotels and restaurants are in Thanchi Sadar Bazar. These 25 big hotels and restaurants make a minimum of 119,520,000 BDT and a maximum of 155,268,000 BDT annually. BGB alone earns 30% of total sales in Thanchi Sadar Bazar. Mainstream people have the maximum transport (Mahindra-Boleros).

Indigenous people run seasonal floating shops and restaurants at Reemakree Falls (Mukh) during the peak season. People around the locality build those restaurants and provide other services to tourists. This group has

few shops, and they make a seasonal income for a living. These people mainly rely on Jhum cultivation and farming.

Since the multiplier effect theory applies in the case of tourism, with the arrival of tourists, retail shops, local rice hotels, transportation services, and the buying and selling of general raw materials and agricultural products increase. This happens due to the multiplier effect, and no separate initiative is required for this. At the same time, it is observed that the prices of goods in the area have increased due to the arrival of tourists.

On the other hand, during the unrest and extensive travel bans, when the military, through the office of the district commissioner, intervenes in tourism, an economic recession is observed in all sectors of the area. Mainly, agro-products and the tourism industry are the primary revenue generators of this area. As a result, when the travel ban is effective and prolonged, there are no buyers for agro-products. Due to the situation in 2024, the mangoes, lychees, pineapples, bananas, and other fruit products produced in Ruma and Thanchi Upazila rot and spoil in the gardens. It is worth mentioning that under normal circumstances, about 10,000 tourists visit Bandarban district daily. The main issue with the supply chain is that there is demand, but the supply is hindered by the travel ban due to unrest. Additionally, the participation of the local youth and general public in this area is limited. If it is reviewed in light of Human Capital Theory, Democracy and Participatory Development Theory, Empowerment, and Inclusivity Theory, it becomes clear that as the participation and involvement of the youth and the local working class of the area increase, not only does the economic empowerment of the local people grow, but there is also overall development in society, leading to stability. The Bandarban District Council can implement community tourism activities by formulating a specific budget and work plan in its annual budget. In this regard, by implementing a pilot project, it can make clear selections for the subsequent steps and gradually implement them in phases.

### **7. Current Status and Challenges of Tourism in Bandarban**

Ten years ago, around 700,000 tourists used to visit this region annually. Currently, the number has increased to over 1.5 million. Financially analyzing the situation, it can be observed that the tourism industry in Bandarban is generating significant revenue, ranging from 2.5 billion to 3.1 billion Bangladeshi Taka. However, due to the lack of a tourism model developed with the involvement of local people and youth, the profits mainly benefit big business owners and entrepreneurs. This situation hinders the equitable distribution of economic benefits. Interestingly, the places that attract tourists—such as the creeks, waterfalls, rivers, and mountains—are areas where local participation has remained minimal and the jobs created by elites provide them with marginal salary only. At this moment, it is crucial to ensure the highest level of involvement of local people in tourism development. If they are empowered and engaged, the natural environment will be better protected. However, currently, due to the lack of their participation in development, the environment is facing degradation. Outsiders are building structures haphazardly, turning streams and canals into drains, which will lead to further environmental damage shortly. If tourism continues to grow in this manner, Bandarban's natural beauty will soon be lost. Many outsiders, who illegally or unplannedly occupy land and take leases, have faced protests from the local population. In some cases, political influence allows these areas to be unlawfully taken over. Where development is happening unplanned and there is no involvement of local people in environmental conservation, environmental disaster and the downfall of this industry is only a matter of time.

### **8. Recommendations and Strategic Framework for Inclusive Community Tourism in Bandarban**

To ensure sustainability, local government, and relevant authorities including BHDC, the DC office, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism of Bangladesh, and other relevant authorities including the Bangladesh Army must lead this development process as team players to help and ensure security where necessary to maximize the locals' benefits. In this regard, an integrated strategic framework must be implemented, encompassing execution, monitoring, and follow-up processes mainly by BHDC.

By prioritizing the involvement e.g. with the committees of local youth, women, and entrepreneurs the benefit of creating entrepreneurs and working opportunities, the benefits can be equalized or balanced. Building capacity through targeted training programs, and engaging university students in these efforts can cultivate a new generation of community leaders and stakeholders resulting in positive attitudes toward protecting cultural values and traditions. BHDC must play a crucial role, employing experts for strategic planning and forming an executive committee for regular progress reviews. An institutional framework has been proposed below for the effective execution of the roadmap taken by BHDC.

An institutional framework is also suggested below to execute the CBT for Bandarban Hill District. Tourism Management Strategies for Bandarban Hill District

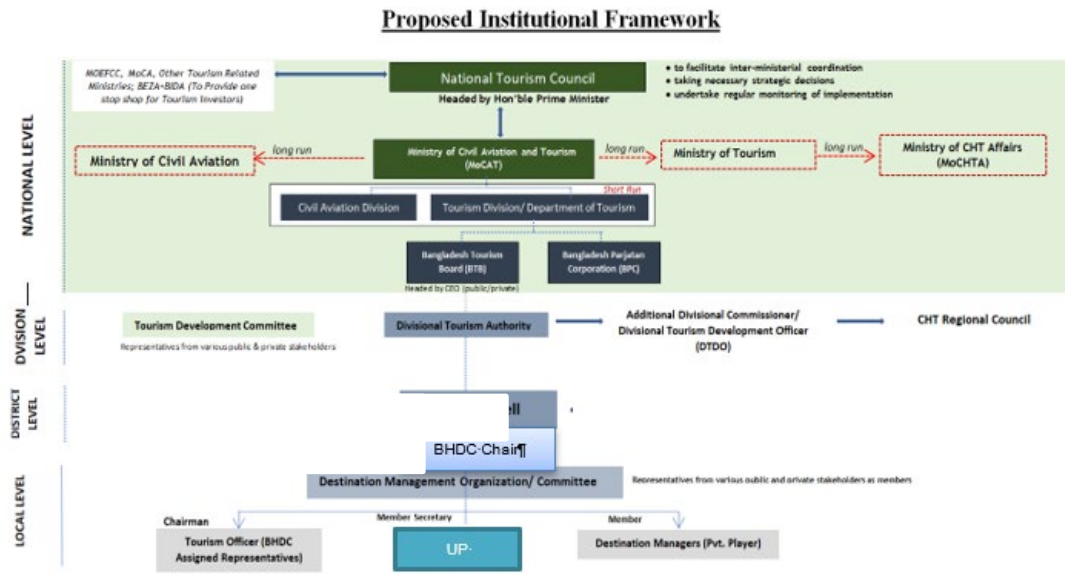


Chart: 1.1 Proposed Institutional Framework

As per the BHDC Act. 1989, 1998 (amended) and Regional Council Act. 1998, Bandarban Hill District Council is the key authority in the district and has the legal mandate to manage, supervise, plan, and execute tourism-related programs and coordinate with all concerned stakeholders.

The proposed setup will have a National Tourism Council (NTC), headed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister as the apex decision-making body. It will have representations from all major tourism-related Ministries, including the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (MoCAT), Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFC), Ministry of Culture, BEZA, BIDA, etc. Under the Tourism wing of the MoCAT, functions the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) and the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC). Major structural changes/additions are being proposed for the BTB in the current Master Plan. The major recommendations include the setting up of the Divisional Tourism Authority at the Division level chaired by the Additional Divisional Commissioner or a specially appointed Divisional Tourism Development Officer (DTDO). The District Tourism Cells will oversee the DMOs committees. This body will have a Destination Manager to carry out the day-to-day activities of the body and will be supervised by the Bandarban Hill District Council/assigned person of the district concerned.

Finally, BHDC can develop an inclusive master plan for Bandarban, aligned with the SDG-2030 goals that empower communities, protect cultural and natural resources, and foster economic growth of Bandarban Hill District. By leveraging the region's strengths, it will help to create job opportunities and promote entrepreneurship among youths, the working class, and women. As a local authority, BHDC must act swiftly by integrating the tourism roadmap for this region to reduce the current gap and ensure long-term benefits for local communities while safeguarding the region's cultural and natural heritage.

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