swisscontact

DIGO
NEWSLETTER



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Edition 3

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OVERVIEW

Developing Inclusive and Green Opportunities (DIGO) aims to create additional jobs and income in Nepal's tourism sector while generating positive environmental impacts. The project intends to achieve this by enhancing the sustainable tourism offer of tourism destinations and enterprises in Gandaki Province by guiding their transition towards responsible and sustainable tourism practices. This will be achieved by strengthening destination governance and planning capacities, improving tourism business models and practices, and building human resource skills and capabilities of public and private stakeholders.

INTERVENTIONS

DIGO project's key interventions include:

Destination Assessment and Planning Support

DIGO supports evidence-based destination planning by facilitating multi-stakeholder workshops using the Strategic Visitor Flow (SVF) methodology to analyse and validate visitor patterns and develop actionable tourism initiatives, plans, and strategies.

Strengthening Capacities for Sustainable Tourism

The DIGO project supports accommodation enterprises in transitioning to sustainability by strengthening green skills, leadership, and business practices and models. It delivers targeted upskilling courses for operational staff and senior executives to lead green transitions. The project also provides technical assistance to help enterprises adopt innovative and responsible business models. DIGO also strengthens community capacity for sustainable tourism in rural destinations.

Learn more about DIGO Click here

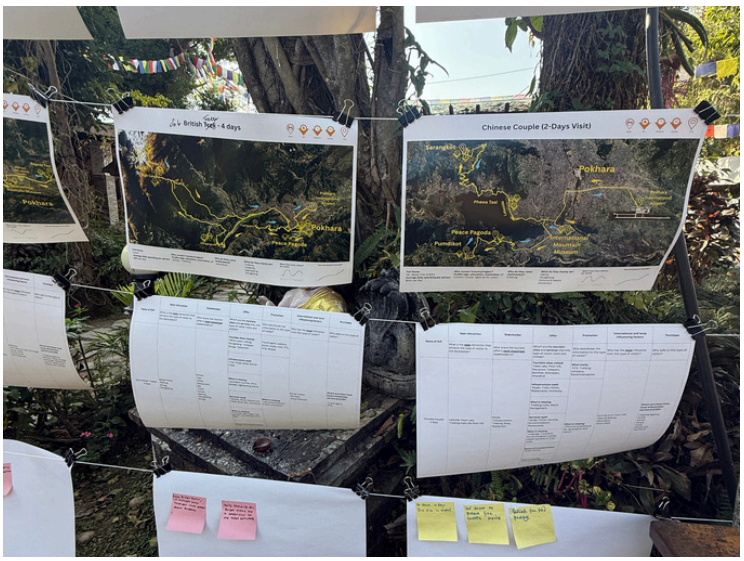
LOOKING BACK AT 2025

2025 marked DIGO's inception year, focused on laying foundations for strategic partnerships and conducting participatory stakeholder engagement that will anchor the project's ambition and intended outcomes.

JANUARY–MARCH 2026 HIGHLIGHTS

Tourism Impact Study Applying the Life Cycle Thinking and SVF Approach

DIGO commissioned a first of its kind 'Environmental Impact of Tourism' study in the project locations to understand the impact of tourism in the local environment in Pokhara and Madi Municipality. This was done by integrating Life Cycle Thinking Approach and SVF Methodology, which allowed Swisscontact to capture the impact of tourism in complex destinations quickly and efficiently. The SVF analysis allowed us to identify key visitor flows in the destination, to contain the scope of the assessment, while the life cycle approach allowed us to analyse the environmental footprint of visitors within these flows from the beginning to the end of their journey.



Launch of Community Coaching on Sustainability (COCOS) programme



This March, we launched the **Community Coaching on Sustainability (COCOS)** training programme in Tangting, Madi Rural Municipality in collaboration with Homestay Federation of Nepal (HOFEN), the apex body representing over 5,000 homestays across 60+ districts in Nepal. With HOFEN's leadership, the programme is envisioned to scale nationally across tourism villages after the pilot, turning a local intervention into a national standard.

What is COCOS?

COCOS programme is a demand driven capacity building programme designed to bridge the gap between rural tourism offerings and evolving needs of sustainable tourism market. Unlike traditional classroom settings, COCOS utilizes a practical coaching model where participants are supported in creating and implementing tangible action plans.

By empowering local stakeholders to produce professional outputs such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and transparent pricing, the programme builds the institutional capacity necessary to increase community income and economic resilience. Ultimately, COCOS fosters a collaborative governance model, treating tourism development as a collective investment between the community, government, and private sector.

News Coverage of COCOS launch:

HOFEN Tourism Face Homestay Khabar

Voices from the COCOS launch event



As the umbrella association of homestays in Nepal, we are pleased to support programmes like COCOS. We believe this training will strengthen our efforts to promote homestay-based tourism across the country.

Suraj Bastola
Treasurer, Homestay Federation of Nepal



I am proud that the COCOS training programme has started in our municipality. Tourism and agriculture are the major sources of livelihood here, and we have been continuously working to uplift our homestays and local products. I am confident that COCOS will help our homestay hosts promote our local practices, culture, food, and products even better. We are grateful to Swisscontact and look forward to continued collaboration for strengthening community-based tourism.

Kalpana Gurung
Deputy Mayor, Madi Rural Municipality

Community feature



Sustainable tourism starts in our kitchen. Our traditional dishes are meant to be shared with the our guests and visitors. I'm eager to learn how to promote our local delicacies through the COCOS Programme.

Ros Maya Gurung
Tangting Guest House

One of the COCOS coaching modules focuses on promoting local delicacies. Ros Maya holds wild-foraged fiddlehead ferns (called Niguro in Nepali), commonly served as a side vegetable dish by most homestays and guest house in Madi.

Learn more about COCOS

Development of Customized Upskilling Curriculum under Sustainable Hospitality Skills and Leadership Training Activity

DIGO aims to develop, and roll-out targeted training for business executives, managers, and operational staff of accommodation enterprises. For which, DIGO has partnered with SHL Schweizerische Hotelfachschule Luzern to develop the appropriate curriculum and conduct a train the trainers (TTT) program. SHL has developed the curriculum framework for the targeted training after their visit to Pokhara in December 2025 and completion of a needs assessment, with the aim of strengthening the capacity of existing employees in accommodation enterprises. These trainings will be delivered across two levels, which is as follows:

Sustainable Business Management & Leadership (SBML)

Course for hotel owners and senior managers, addressing identified gaps in sustainable business planning, operational leadership, and organizational development and equipping them with the tools needed to lead green transitions.

Green Skills in Jobs in Hospitality (GSJH)

Program for operational staff, targeting practical competencies in resource efficiency, sustainability practices, service quality and environmentally responsible daily operations, with aim of building practical green and sustainable skills.

Technical Assistance (TA) for Development of Sustainability Transition Plans (STPs)

Sustainability Transition Plans (STPs) are DIGO's flagship technical assistance product designed to serve as a key first step in the Technical Assistance (TA) support to AEs; guiding collaboration and the phased implementation of interventions that support the transition of accommodation enterprises toward more sustainable operations. Through direct partnerships with Temple Tree Resort and Spa, and Fishtail Lodge by Annapurna, DIGO is supporting the development of STPs and implementation of environmentally friendly, financially viable solutions. A service provider is developing STPs for the two selected AEs. Recently, a validation workshop to confirm and adapt the plan based on feedback from the two AEs was also conducted.

DIGO intends to support additional AEs in their journey towards sustainability.





Partnership with eSewa for Promoting Digital Access

Swisscontact has entered into a partnership with eSewa, Nepal's leading digital wallet and payment service provider. Through this partnership, we will collaborate with eSewa Hotels, a hotel booking and promotion platform that makes travel planning easier, to strengthen the integration of Nepal's tourism enterprises into the digital economy.



Homestays, eco-lodges, guesthouses, and small hotels in Sikles, Tangting, Yangjakot, and Pokhara will now benefit from:

- Digital onboarding onto the eSewa Hotels platform which will support improved visibility and help attract more guests
- Secure and cashless payments through merchant QR systems
- Improved digital and financial literacy

Learn more

This partnership opens new pathways for tourism enterprises to increase market access, reduce transaction costs, expand income opportunities, and fully participate in Nepal's growing digital economy.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- SVF Recommendation Validation Workshop in Pokhara Metropolitan City and Madi Rural Municipality.
- A collaborative Multistakeholder Consultation Meeting in Madi Rural Municipality.
- COCOS training programme on different modules.
- Train-the-Trainer (TTT) Programme on SBML and GSJU to build a local pool of trainers in Pokhara to deliver the upskilling courses. The TTT will be conducted by SHL experts.
- TA support to AEs to implement approved STPs.

DIGO
DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE AND GREEN OPPORTUNITIES

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