



### **Exposure visit for community members of the Mandi ecotourism model to a community-based responsible tourism model in Chamba.**

Development Alternatives has collaborated with Not On Map (NOM) for their 'Livelihoods through Ecotourism' project to organise a Training and Exposure Visit to a community-tourism cluster Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. The idea was to engage in cross-community interactions for creating and operationalising our community tourism model in Mandi. Interactions during the visit focused on aspects of livelihood benefits from ecotourism/responsible tourism, promotion of local culture, food and nature to the outside world, optimisation of natural and human resources of these areas for rural development, empowering rural women and creating an environment for women to come into mainstream livelihoods.

Eight locals from villages Thatta, Lagshal, Bhanuthi and Kalang visited Chamba between 15–19 February 2021 to have interactions and training sessions around hospitality, homestay setup, community engagement and capacity building at the homestays developed by Not On Map.

Manuj Sharma, the host at H2O House Chamba, discussed the requirements of running homestays and his journey with NOM as a co-founder. The team also met Prakash Dhammi, one of the first locals to create a home stay in Not On Map's Mystic Village in Chamba, and visited Rafi's house in Chaminoo Village to learn from their experiences. A heritage walk guided and highlighted the rich culture, traditions & heritage of Chamba. The session ended with an insightful discussion with the District Tourism Development Officer, Vijay Kumar, on setting up new homestays in the region.

NOM has developed numerous homestays across India using locally available materials such as bamboo, wood, local handicrafts and handloom products, etc. Each room offered a unique USP with a great sense of aesthetic beauty which was visible in their interior products like wood trunk style side-tables, locally

made bed using wood, local handloom curtains, ringal lamp shades and multi-purpose baskets. To create a rustic look, all walls have been mud-colored.

To mobilise and unite the community under one umbrella, they have identified a number of local champions who are the flag bearers of the Responsible Tourism practitioners in the village. These local champions are in-charge of coordination and management of homestays and entire tourism value chain. They play a crucial role by making lodging and food arrangements and creating experiences for guests.

The Mandi community learned a lot from this exchange (guest-host interactions) with a focus on promotion of their heritage, waste management and hygiene practices, being tech savvy, awareness on environmental conservation and building a community-led responsible tourism model to enhance the local economy.