

POVERTY

right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and living in a secure and peaceful environment. The right to the highest attainable standard of health is inalienable and its realization is a fundamental condition for the enjoyment of all other human rights. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. The child, the aged and the physically and mentally handicapped are entitled to special care and assistance.



# Poverty Alleviation and Community-Based Tourism: Experiences from Central and South Asia

by David Tresilian



Cover page photo: The Kalash Spring Festival  
in the Kalash Valleys in Chitral, North West  
Frontier Province, Pakistan is an event that attracts  
locals and tourists alike. © David Tresilian

**Publication coordination and contact**

Francis Childe and Wen-Chyi Soo

UNESCO Project for the Development of Cultural and Ecotourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central and South Asia

7, place de Fontenoy 75352 Paris 07 SP France

[www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism)

**Layout and realization**

Isabelle Dunand

[dunandisa@yahoo.fr](mailto:dunandisa@yahoo.fr)

+33(0)6 62 16 99 93

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## Preface

Recent years have seen much attention given to the question how tourism, one of the world's fastest-growing industries, can be harnessed for poverty alleviation, particularly since it presents many features that make it attractive for poverty alleviation and development strategies.

This publication reports on pilot activities carried out in eight Central and South Asian countries between 2002 and 2005 as part of the UNESCO project *Development of Cultural and Ecotourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central and South Asia*. The activities aimed at developing community-based ecotourism in order to help bring the economic and other benefits of increasing tourism to poorer members of rural communities in remote mountainous areas.

The project was implemented directly in the field with local NGOs and local communities and accumulated a wealth of experience and expertise at grassroots level. It has also garnered some impressive results, demonstrating how household incomes can be increased by 25% through community-based tourism, how young people and women can benefit from the opportunities for employment and skills building that increasing tourism can bring, and how the natural environment and cultural heritage can be protected and conserved through community involvement in tourism.

The project is part of a UNESCO cross-cutting initiative on the *Eradication of Poverty, Especially Extreme Poverty*, approved as part of the Organization's *Medium-Term Strategy, 2002-2007*. Among the objectives of the strategy are broadening the focus of international and national poverty reduction strategies through the mainstreaming of education, culture, the sciences and education; supporting the establishment of linkages between national poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development frameworks and mobilizing social capital by building capacities and institutions and helping to enable the poor to enjoy their rights; and contributing to an enabling national policy framework and environment for empowerment, participatory approaches and livelihood generation.

The strategy thus goes hand in hand with the larger aims of the UN Millennium Development Goals, the first of which is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. In its conception, execution and results, this UNESCO project suggests ways in which such aims might be met at grassroots level through the development of community-based ecotourism.

One of the most important aspects of this regional project and of the wider UNESCO strategy of which it is a part is its commitment to a rights-based approach to poverty alleviation. This approach is implicit in UNESCO's *Medium-Term Strategy*, which states, "Poverty is a denial of basic human rights and is today a concern to all societies." The strategy, which emphasizes the need to help the poor to enjoy their rights and to encourage an environment for empowerment and participatory approaches, has been underlined by the United Nations Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights in its definition of poverty and in its linking of poverty alleviation to the enhanced enjoyment of human rights: poverty may be defined as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

The elimination of poverty is not just a matter of good development results or of aid priorities, but is a responsibility for all with an obligation to fulfill, protect and respect the most vulnerable and preserve their human dignity. UNESCO's strategy stresses that freedom from poverty is a human right, a global ethical imperative and a top priority for governments and the international community. This project adopted a rights-based approach to poverty eradication through the awareness activities of duty bearers on their obligations to develop environmentally sound activities and of rights holders on their right to a healthy environment, thereby introducing a new approach to the alleviation of poverty, the reduction of rural-urban migration and the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage. The project aims to apply this human-rights framework to poverty eradication by developing income-generating activities respectful of the environment, the integrity of the poor population and their cultural and natural heritage.

The project detailed in this report, which emphasizes community management and the building of skills and capacities that can lead to real income-producing activities for poor people, worked within a development perspective that stresses human-centered concepts and sees poverty as reflecting deficiencies in capabilities,

skills and access to basic services. In building skills and capabilities, as well as in increasing financial resources, the project worked to assist poor people in developing their assets and capacities and in claiming their rights. Details of these aspects of the project are given in section one below.

From the beginning the project worked directly in the field with local communities and through mostly local NGOs, helping to build the skills and capacities of local people and developing ways in which community-based ecotourism development can assist in poverty alleviation in remote poor communities. Activities supported by the project included promoting environmentally and socially responsible tourism products, including home-stays and bed-and-breakfast type accommodation run by local families, training local guides, producing high-quality craft items and promoting cultural festivals and events while fully involving local communities in these income-generating activities.

Through this project, these remote mountain communities have learned how their cultural and natural resources can contribute to local socio-economic development through community-based ecotourism, ensuring that the benefits are shared as widely as possible, and underlining the need to protect and preserve these resources for future generations.

Details of these activities, showing their design, development and results, are given in sections three and five of this report, making the project as a whole a true “laboratory of ideas” for policy makers and project managers working on similar issues, as well as for government, members of the tourism industry wanting to contribute to local communities, and NGOs and international organizations.

Among the most useful aspects of this paper are its policy recommendations, particularly since these have emerged from grassroots work with local communities in the field. Working in eight countries and at ten project sites, the diverse experiences of community-based ecotourism development reported on here have been a source of strength to the project and to its wider policy implications, since activities have in each case been developed to fit local conditions and in consultation with local communities. There has been no sense that “one size fits all”. This report presents the policy aspects of the work under two headings: *Best Practices & Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations*. The first details the emergence of best practices from work carried out in the field and the latter abstracts policy recommendations from this work and from the project as a whole.

Among these recommendations are the need for a receptive policy environment, the need to work with and through the communities concerned to ensure participation and ownership, and the need to foster opportunities both for technical assistance and for exchange and South-South sharing. It is my hope that these recommendations and the details of the work in the field from which they emerge will be of value to policy makers working on poverty issues, as well as to government, NGOs and other international organizations.

Work on poverty can sometimes be an academic exercise, theory not always finding its way into practice, or, worse, practice not always finding its way back to inform and enrich theoretical reflection. The great value of the work reported on in this publication is that it demonstrates results achieved through working with poor local communities directly in the field, indicating recipes for success and making recommendations on ecotourism development for poverty alleviation tackled through human rights that emerge directly from diverse experiences in areas suffering from high levels of poverty.

**Pierre Sané**

*Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO*

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Executive Summary

This publication is part of a UNESCO project, *Development of Cultural and Ecotourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central and South Asia*, begun in 2002 as part of a cross-cutting initiative on the *Eradication of Poverty, Especially Extreme Poverty*, and approved as part of the Organization's Regular Programme until the end of the 2006-2007 biennium. Descriptions of the overall aims of this cross-cutting initiative be found in the relevant UNESCO documents, as listed in the references section of this publication. Other links are given at the project Website, [www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism).

The project has developed ways in which local people living in remote mountain areas in selected Central and South Asian countries can benefit from increasing tourism, and in doing so it has forged partnerships with local organizations, mostly local NGOs, in eight regional countries working at ten project sites. The project has benefited from generous extra-budgetary funding from the Governments of Norway and the Principality of Andorra, in addition to funds supplied under the UNESCO Regular Programme. Its aim has been to develop pilot activities in the countries concerned, drawing lessons and best practices from them that can be used in the development of similar initiatives elsewhere.

This publication reports on these pilot activities and the thinking behind them in the hope that lessons learned from them will be of use to policy makers and project managers working on similar issues in these regions or elsewhere.

Among the significant results achieved are:

- an increase of 25% in household incomes at the project site in India, which also won two major international ecotourism awards in 2005;
- the establishment of ecotourism as a major source of cash incomes for local people at the project site in the remote Eastern Pamirs region in

Tajikistan, which had no previous experience of community-based tourism development;

- the strengthening of community-based and civil-society organizations at project sites in Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran and elsewhere, due to work carried out by UNESCO partner organizations as part of this UNESCO regional programme.

These encouraging results represent only a small part of the whole. Further details of these results are given in Section 5 of this publication.

Notable policy recommendations, emerging from work carried out under this regional programme, include the need for:

- A Receptive Policy Environment: Though major investment is not necessary for the development of community-based tourism, the policy environment can affect its success or failure, particularly in areas such as legal regulation, fund management, availability of micro-grants or loans and policy regarding tourist registration, visas, and controls. UNESCO projects have sought to build linkages between community and government, showing how the development of community-based tourism at grassroots level can help governments to achieve their own objectives in poverty alleviation, environmental conservation and cultural-heritage protection, while doing so with the full participation of local communities;

- Local Partnerships: The 10 pilot projects described in this report have been able to take advantage of the knowledge of and deep links with local communities enjoyed by the mostly local partner NGOs in the areas concerned when designing and implementing project activities, UNESCO supplying technical expertise and monitoring implementation and results. There has been no sense that “one size fits all” at these diverse project sites: the needs and potentials of each local community have been closely reflected in the activities implemented, needs and potentials that have been defined by the local communities themselves;

- Participation: Local people have been consulted at every stage in planning and implementing the country projects, in order to ensure that project design meets local conditions and fulfils local needs. Furthermore, there has been a strong commitment on the part of all the projects to ensure that the activities themselves are locally managed and owned. The projects have in many cases built local associations and community funds, putting project management and responsibility in the hands

of local people and thereby building sustainability;

- International Expertise: UNESCO's network of field offices, backstopped by UNESCO Paris, has provided international expertise in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as training opportunities to local project staff. The programme has thus had an important skills-building component, building capacity and expertise at local levels;

- South-South Sharing: UNESCO has organized a series of bi-annual regional project workshops, allowing local project staff and members of the communities with which they are working to gain training in project design and management, building local skills and capacities. These have provided opportunities for training and South-South sharing, as have the opportunities for intra-regional exchange supported by the programme;

- Regional Networking and Sharing of Lessons Learned: The programme has been managed on an annual basis within the perspective of a six-year programme life (2002-2007), and lessons learned have been shared with government, tourism-sector actors and the NGO community and civil-society organizations in the countries concerned. Disseminating lessons learned as widely as possible in this way has made the programme a veritable "laboratory of ideas," suggesting new activities, modes of implementation, and ways of sharing results.

The project is working in eight countries and at ten project sites, including areas of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim in India; Masouleh in Iran; the Phobjikha Valley in Bhutan; the Northern Tien Shen Mountains in Kazakhstan; the mountainous region around Lake Issyk Kul in Kyrgyzstan, a Biosphere Reserve of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB); Humla in Nepal, Chitral and the Kalash Valleys in Pakistan; and the Pamir Mountains in Tajikistan. A full list of project areas and local partner organizations is given in Appendix 1.

Activities supported by the project include promoting environmentally and socially responsible tourism products, including home-stays and bed-and-breakfast type accommodation run by local families, training local guides, producing high-quality craft items, and promoting local cultural festivals and events while fully involving local communities in these income-generating activities. These activities, designed and implemented by local partners working closely with the local communities, have already helped to alleviate poverty, reduce rural-to-urban migration,

and protect the outstanding cultural and natural heritage of the regions concerned.

It is hoped that the results and lessons learned from these pilot activities, reported on in this publication, will be of value to policy makers and project managers working on similar issues elsewhere, as well as to government, members of the tourism industry and NGOs and international organizations concerned with similar issues.

## 1.2 Key Facts

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries, and for many countries, especially those in the developing world, it holds impressive economic potential. Not only does tourism create jobs and possibilities for economic growth, but it can also do so in regions having few other economic resources. It is estimated that tourism directly or indirectly supports 195 million jobs worldwide, forecast to rise to 210 million in 2010 (Cooper *et al.* 4). Because of the economic structure of the tourism industry, mostly consisting of small- to medium-sized businesses, tourism development can have important multiplier effects across the economy without necessarily involving large investments or major infrastructure development.

In addition to transport and accommodation, tourists routinely buy other goods and services such as restaurant services, equipment rental, local tours and various forms of instruction and guiding, as well as locally made products, including, but not restricted to, handicrafts and souvenir items. Tourism development can therefore support jobs and income-generating activities across the economy, passing on benefits down the supply chain. For these reasons, many countries, especially in the developing world, have been keen to develop tourism industries as part of national development strategies.

However, tourism development can also have significant problems attached to it, recent years having demonstrated the negative environmental effects of increasing tourist numbers, for example along much of the Mediterranean coast of Spain, and tourism can also distort the local economy by injecting poorly managed or highly seasonal demand (Cooper *et al.* 150ff). Tourism can act to commercialize the expression of local cultures, leading to the phenomenon of "staged authenticity" at tourism destinations, and the economic benefits of tourism can be passed on

unequally, exacerbating existing inequalities. As a result, many tour operators, mediating between customers and tourism service-providers, now offer “ecotourism” packages designed to reduce tourism impacts while helping to protect local cultures and the natural environment and pass on the economic benefits of tourism more widely among local populations.

In addition, recent years have also seen increasing interest in tourism development as a factor in poverty alleviation, tourism typically involving financial transfers from the developed to the developing world and not necessarily requiring large-scale investment or infrastructure development. Various initiatives have therefore been designed to learn more about this aspect of tourism development in developing countries, or in regions having few other economic resources, in order to link the protection of the natural and cultural environment with the promise tourism holds out for employment creation and the alleviation of poverty.

Initiatives of this sort have included the “pro-poor tourism” movement, supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and by international agencies such as the UN World Tourism Organization (WTO), for example. The projects described in this report should also be understood from this perspective, aiming to link culturally and environmentally sensitive community-based ecotourism development with the pro-poor tourism agenda in pilot areas of Central and South Asia.

## TOURISM AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Tourism development is attractive to the pro-poor and poverty alleviation agenda because tourism is “consumed” in the same place where it is produced, the tourist visiting the destination and buying goods and services there. In addition, tourism is highly labour intensive, employing large numbers of people in different activities, including high percentages of young people and women. It can take place in remote, otherwise peripheral areas that have strong cultural traditions and largely untouched natural environments but few economic options. Tourism is also growing in the developing world, notably in least-developed countries, and it often involves, through tourist spending in tourism destinations, the direct transfer of financial resources from the developed to the developing world.

Strategies taking advantage of these features of tourism for poverty alleviation have included those focused on the direct provision of economic benefits for local

populations at tourist destinations, including job-creation, the development of small business opportunities supplying tourists with goods, such as handicrafts, or services, such as accommodation, food, transport, or with other forms of assistance, such as guides. Activities of this sort all have the potential directly to support local household incomes. In addition, the development of community-based organizations and local cooperatives can allow the benefits of tourism to be ploughed back into local development, such as through the establishment of community funds, and the sharing of economic benefits among the whole community, such as through joint management of communal resources turned over to tourist development, for example local land rented out for campsites.

Aside from poverty alleviation strategies directly designed to support local incomes, further strategies have focused on using tourism development to improve training and skills-building opportunities for local people. Other strategies have used tourism development to support local participation in planning and development issues, turning over ownership of facilities to local people and thereby building local capacities and encouraging the claiming of economic, social and cultural rights. These strategies have the advantage of working hand-in-hand with current thinking on poverty alleviation, which sees poverty as multi-dimensional and stresses the need for a “capability approach”, or one that builds capacities, to its alleviation. They also demonstrate UNESCO’s rights-based approach to poverty alleviation, discussed in Section 1.4 below.

Further information on tourism for poverty alleviation and the pro-poor tourism agenda can be found at: [www.world-tourism.org](http://www.world-tourism.org), the site of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), a specialized agency of the United Nations; [www.propoortourism.org.uk](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk), which reports on research funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID); and [www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org), site of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), a private-sector body based in the UK, among other sites.

### 1.3 Definitions of Poverty

Tourism development can contribute to the alleviation of poverty not only through direct or indirect support for cash incomes and forms of employment generation but also through the skills and capacities that it can help to build

among local populations, including among key disadvantaged groups such as young people and women. This feature of tourism development and the strategies taking advantage of it has meant that it connects well with current thinking on poverty alleviation, which sees poverty as multi-dimensional and stresses the need for a “capability approach” to its alleviation.

Much of the development literature has stressed that poverty arises not only from a lack of resources but also from a lack of access to resources, including access to opportunities, information, power and mobility. Thus, the definition of poverty has evolved from one merely stressing financial measures (such as less than one US dollar a day in PPP dollars) towards human-centered concepts that see poverty as reflecting deficiencies in capabilities, skills and access to basic services. Such thinking has been behind the UNDP’s annual *Human Development Reports*, for example, which have pioneered the use of a Human Development Index for measuring development.

In addition, Sen (1999) writes that “poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely lowness of incomes,” the forms of deprivation that characterize poverty preventing people from living the lives that they might otherwise want to lead (87-110). Similarly, Sachs (2005) writes that poverty can be characterized as being experienced by those “trapped by disease, physical isolation, climate stress, [and] environmental degradation” and being shut out from crucial determinants of human well-being, such as “rising life expectancy, falling infant mortality rates, rising educational attainment [and] increasing access to water and sanitation.” (19)

While tourism development can bring significant income-generating opportunities to those on low incomes, it can also significantly develop skills and capacities, as well as help to conserve the natural environment and cultural heritage, as indicated in Box 1 below.

## THE UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS & UNESCO STRATEGY

The approach to poverty employed in the pilot projects described in this report is in line with the Millennium Development Goals, decided upon by the UN General Assembly in 2000, notably with Goal One, *Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger*, Goal Three, *Promote gender equality / empower women*, and Goal Seven, *Ensure environmental sustainability*.

It is in line, too, with the strategy for the *Eradication of poverty, especially extreme poverty* set out in UNESCO's *Medium-Term Strategy, 2002-2007* (31 C/4), notably:

*Strategic objective 1:* To contribute to a broadening of the focus of international and national poverty reduction strategies through the mainstreaming of education, culture, the sciences and communication;

*Strategic objective 2:* To support the establishment of effective linkages between national poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development frameworks, focusing on UNESCO's areas of competence. Furthermore, to help mobilize social capital by building capacities and institutions, especially in the public domain, with a view to enabling the poor to enjoy their rights; and

*Strategic objective 3:* To contribute to an enabling national policy framework and environment for empowerment, participatory approaches and livelihood generation.

### **Community-Based Tourism, Ecotourism and Pro-Poor Tourism**

Poorly managed tourism development can have significant problems attached to it, including negative environmental effects, economic distortion through the injection of poorly managed or highly seasonal demand, and the commercialization of local cultures, leading to "staged authenticity". The economic benefits of tourism can also be passed on unequally, exacerbating existing inequalities.

Recent years have seen growing interest in *ecotourism*, many tour operators now offering packages designed to reduce tourism impacts while helping to protect local cultures and the natural environment and pass on the economic benefits of tourism more widely among local populations.

Ecotourism, environmentally and culturally aware and involving the local community, has often been linked with the *pro-poor tourism* agenda, which aims to mobilize tourism for employment creation and the alleviation of poverty.

The projects reported on in this publication have linked the ecotourism

and pro-poor tourism agendas to community-based tourism, working with and through local communities in the areas concerned. This has helped to ensure that local people achieve ownership of project activities, as well as benefit from them.

#### STRATEGIES USING TOURISM FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION INCLUDE:

- the provision of economic benefits for local populations at tourist destinations, including job-creation and the development of small-business opportunities supplying tourists with goods and services, including accommodation, food, transport, handicrafts and guides;
- the development of community-based organizations and local cooperatives allowing the benefits of tourism to be ploughed back into local development, such as through the establishment of community funds;
- the sharing of economic benefits among the community, such as through joint management of communal resources, for example local land rented out for campsites;
- the provision of incentives for environmental and cultural heritage conservation, seeing these things as assets for the community to protect and preserve instead of threats to agriculture or luxuries the community cannot afford.

#### FURTHER TRAINING AND SKILLS-BUILDING STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- training in a wide-range of skills, from language skills to those involved in the management of a small business;
- support for local participation in planning and development, turning over ownership of facilities to local people and building local capacities;
- strengthening of local community organizations, through the establishment of local associations, community funds and shared resources and encouraging the claiming of rights.

These strategies work hand-in-hand with current thinking on poverty alleviation, which does not see poverty only in economic terms. Rather, poverty is multi-dimensional, and its alleviation involves strategies for building skills and capabilities, as well as those designed to enhance incomes.



**Tourism can bring not only income-generating opportunities but also skills and enhanced capabilities to local populations**

*Fida Hussein, 37, tour guide in Chitral, North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan*

Fida Hussein lives in the village of Koghuzi, 20 km north of the town of Chitral in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Educated, but with few opportunities for employment in his home village where his family live from small-scale agriculture, he approached local NGO the Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT), a UNESCO partner organization in this programme, seeking training as a tour guide.

CAMAT, funded by UNESCO, helped Fida to develop his English-language and guiding skills, providing training in rock-climbing, river-rafting and mountain guiding and bringing his first-aid and other skills up to date. Having proved himself a knowledgeable and highly trained guide, Fida was registered under CAMAT's guide-registration scheme, allowing him to join CAMAT's network of tourism service-providers.

In his first three years as a registered local guide, Fida's annual income averaged 35,000 Pakistan Rs (approx. US\$585), a substantial supplement to his regular income in an areas where most of the population lives from subsistence agriculture. He has been able to purchase a jeep with the income he has made, allowing him to build his asset base and holding out the prospect of enhanced income in the years to come.

"After having worked for three years as a tour guide," Fida says, "I realized that I could provide both transportation and guiding services with a jeep, and I had managed to save enough from my guide work to buy one."

"As a result of my tour-guiding work I have managed to improve my standard of living. I can now send my children to better schools, and I have transport that I can use for my parents and family."

Fida now earns some 45,000 Pakistan Rs (approx. US\$752) annually from tourism. "My aim is to provide a high-quality service to tourists and one corresponding to our local traditions of hospitality in Chitral. If other tour guides provide the same high levels of service, then they can also improve their living standards and income as I have done through tourism," he says.

## 1.4 The Rights-Based Approach

The projects reported on in this publication follow the strategic objectives set out in UNESCO's *Medium-Term Strategy, 2002-2007* (31 C/4), seeking to broaden the focus of international and national poverty reduction strategies through the mainstreaming of education, culture, the sciences and communication (*Strategic objective 1*); to support linkages between national poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development frameworks and to mobilize social capital by building capacities and institutions with a view to enabling the poor to enjoy their rights (*Strategic objective 2*); and to contribute to an enabling national policy framework and environment for empowerment, participatory approaches and livelihood generation (*Strategic objective 3*).

Thus, in addition to demonstrating ways in which community-based eco-tourism development has helped to conserve the natural and cultural heritage, to improve skills and training, and to develop income-generating opportunities and jobs in the areas concerned, the programme has also helped enable *the poor to enjoy their rights* and to encourage the development of an *environment for empowerment [and] participatory approaches*, in line with the UNESCO rights-based approach to poverty alleviation.

As the United Nations Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights put it in 2001, "...poverty may be defined as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights." Rights of this sort, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), include the right to a safe environment, to health and social services, to education, decent work and to the free expression of cultural identity. But too often social, economic and cultural rights of this sort are lacking in many parts of the world, as are civil and political rights (Pogge: 2002). The UNESCO rights-based strategy for poverty alleviation aims to help communities claim such rights notably through strengthening community-based organizations, working with local communities, and offering opportunities for training and capacity building. Further details of the UNESCO rights-based strategy can be found at [www.unesco.org/shs](http://www.unesco.org/shs).

## 2. Context

### 2.1 Background

This publication reports on experiences gathered and lessons learned from community-based ecotourism development for poverty alleviation in eight countries in Central and South Asia and at ten project sites from 2002 to 2005. These sites include areas of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim in the Himalayan regions of India, Masouleh in Iran, the Phobjikha Valley in Bhutan, the Northern Tien Shen Mountains in Kazakhstan, the mountainous region around Lake Issyk Kul in Kyrgyzstan, a Biosphere Reserve of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), Humla in Nepal, Chitral and the Kalash Valleys in Pakistan and the East Pamir Mountains in Tajikistan. A full list of project areas and local partner organizations is given in Appendix 1 and a map of project sites is given on page 49.

The project sites in which the project is working, all in remote mountainous areas, were selected as much for their differences as for their similarities. Though all the sites are in remote, rural, mountainous areas, for example, often having high levels of poverty and few income-generating opportunities aside from subsistence agriculture, some have more highly developed tourism industries than others, with varying numbers of tourist arrivals and amounts of appropriate infrastructure or government support. Whereas Ladakh, for example, an ancient Buddhist land situated on a high desert plateau in the east of Jammu and Kashmir State in India, has relatively high and growing numbers of tourist arrivals, reaching 23,000 in 2003, Chitral and the Kalash Valleys in north-western Pakistan have an annual average of only 2,500 arrivals, falling in recent years, with a correspondingly lower level of tourism infrastructure and services.

Similarly, while the tourism sector in India, and increasingly also the ecotourism sector, enjoys considerable government support and is an important feature of both national and many state government development efforts, this has not always been the case elsewhere. In the Central Asian countries in which the project is working, for example, tourism development began only some years after the

break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the transition of formerly Soviet countries to market economies. Thus, while Kyrgyzstan has adopted policies broadly supportive of private-sector tourism development, for example, and of the community-based ecotourism development described in this report, this has not necessarily been the case in neighbouring Tajikistan. In the latter country, local security issues – Tajikistan emerging from a ruinous civil conflict only in 1997 – and a sometimes unfavourable policy environment have meant that tourism development has been slow to get off the ground, despite the country's significant potential, especially for ecotourism.

## COMMUNITY DESIGN & COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS

Such diverse experiences of tourism development, as well as of different local conditions and policy environments, have been a source of strength to the programme as a whole. Not only have these meant that activities have necessarily been designed to fit varying local conditions and in consultation with local communities, there having been no sense that “one size fits all” at these diverse project sites, but they have also been designed and implemented by local NGOs, supported by UNESCO technical assistance and international expertise, in consultation with local communities. In short, the needs and potentials of each local community have been closely reflected in the programme implemented at each site, needs and potentials that have been defined by the local communities themselves. This has meant that implementing agencies have been able to benefit from grassroots knowledge of local conditions and experience of them.

Moreover, the diversity of project activities supported by the programme has meant that a larger sample has been gained of ecotourism development efforts for poverty alleviation in many different environments, adding to the value of the lessons learned. It has also provided for significant opportunities for the sharing of experiences within the programme itself, allowing similarly placed local initiatives in analogous areas to learn from activities conducted under the programme elsewhere and thus significantly contributing to South-South sharing.

Indeed, this cross-pollenization between the various participating communities has been one of the programme's most innovative and successful features.

## Tourism can lead to new skills and opportunities for local people, helping to build capabilities



© ACTED

Janazak Turduculov, 26,  
tour guide in Murghab, Tajikistan

Janazak Turduculov, a native of Murghab, returned home to work with UNESCO partner organization ACTED (*Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement*) in 2001 following university studies in Osh. His first experience in welcoming foreign visitors to the area, helping to guide Swiss students in Tajikistan, made him decide that he would like to join in developing ecotourism in the Murghab region, and he attended training courses for tour guides organized by ACTED.

In January 2004, Janazak welcomed 58 foreign tourists to Murghab on behalf of the Murghab Ecotourism Association (META), a local association of registered guides and service-providers set up with help from ACTED. In the same year, he traveled to Ladakh, India, to observe the ecotourism development work carried out there by UNESCO partner the Snow Leopard Conservancy, gaining hands-on training in tourist guiding as well as new ideas and perspectives.

At first, Janazak's English-language skills were undeveloped, but he was able to improve his language skills thanks to classes provided by ACTED. Today, he speaks English fluently, and he is much in demand as a guide, earning US\$305 in 2004 and US\$900 in 2005 for his work with META in a region where most of the population lives from subsistence agriculture and has limited access to cash incomes. When working in livestock farming, Janazak was able to earn only around 100 TJS a month (US\$36), his seasonal work in tourism therefore coming as a welcome supplement.

"The role of a guide is to ensure that everything runs smoothly for the visitor, arranging everything from local transport to food and accommodation and including the necessary contacts with the authorities," he says.

Janazak particularly enjoys learning about other countries and places through his contact with visitors and his new-found language skills. However, even more than that he values the skills and opportunities that tourism has given him, as well as the opportunity to earn an important income to help support his extended family.

## 2.2 Issues

All of the sites selected for work under the project suffer from high levels of rural poverty, few economic opportunities aside from traditional or subsistence agriculture, and in many cases significant environmental degradation due to unsustainable gathering of wood for fuel, rubbish pollution, poorly managed livestock grazing, or other causes. In some cases, growing population pressures have put additional pressures on land-use, meaning that food is often now imported into what were once self-sustaining communities, and a lack of economic options has forced communities to adopt unsustainable land-use practices due to a lack of alternatives. Already endangered species around certain project sites, such as the snow leopard or the Marco Polo sheep, are also under significant further threat, whether because of livestock depredations bringing retaliation from local farmers, hunting for food, or the significant cash amounts such species can bring in through trophy hunting.

All of the project areas are in remote mountain regions, and, already difficult of access during the summer months, many are cut off almost entirely during the winter. Most of these communities do not have running water or mains electricity, making the use of solar panels or small hydro-electric installations attractive alternatives. Because of these features of the sites selected, the programme has aimed to develop community-based ecotourism activities with three main aims:

- 1) To help alleviate poverty, for example through the job creation and income-generating activities that tourism can bring;
- 2) To help reduce rural-to-urban migration and strengthen local communities by giving young people real skills and local job prospects, allowing them to stay in their villages and use their skills and knowledge; and
- 3) To help conserve the cultural and natural heritage, notably by showing how cultural and environmental conservation and protection can enhance community assets as well as identities.

A further issue common to many of the project sites was the world and regional context at the time the project started, shortly after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. This context saw plummeting international travel and forced even areas that had traditionally enjoyed substantial benefits from international tourism to identify new market segments while also looking to new tourism products. This was especially true of the remote mountain areas in which the project

is working: attention was therefore given to identifying new markets, especially domestic and regional visitors, and products and services, as well as exploring new linkages with national, regional and international travel companies and agencies.

While there is not space in this report to give details of conditions at all ten project sites taking part in the programme, three have been selected that indicate issues common, to greater or lesser degrees, across the sites selected. These three sites are:

- Chitral and the Kalash Valleys in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan;
- Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir State, India;
- Murghab in the Gorno Badakhshan region of Tajikistan.

Main features and issues of these sites are presented in summary form below.

### **Chitral and the Kalash Valleys, NWFP, Pakistan**

**BACKGROUND:** The former princely state of Chitral is situated in the extreme north-west corner of Pakistan and is part of the country's North-West Frontier Province. Access to Chitral is by daily flight from Peshawar, or by road over some of Pakistan's highest mountain passes. However, during the winter months air access is restricted, or subject to delays, and road access is impossible due to snow. Chitral has a population of some quarter of a million people, most of whom live from subsistence agriculture in small villages built of square stone houses set amid tiny terraced fields of wheat and maize. Average incomes are low, and there is a shortage of job opportunities, leading to significant out-migration.

In addition to the population of Chitral itself, the area is also noted for the neighbouring Kalash valleys of Birir, Bumburet and Rumbur, home to the people of the same name. These people, who have preserved their own distinctive culture and beliefs, are a significant minority population in Chitral, and their traditional way of life is threatened by poor economic opportunities in the valleys and the departure of younger people. Some 2,500 to 3,000 foreign tourists have visited the northern Pakistan mountainous region of Chitral and the Kalash Valleys annually in recent years, though this has been falling, and domestic visitors have also been targeted. Both Chitral and the valleys are areas of outstanding natural

beauty, having considerable potential for ecotourism development.

ISSUES: Main socio-economic issues facing the people of Chitral and the neighbouring Kalash Valleys that could be alleviated through community-based tourism development include:

- few job opportunities, especially for younger people, leading to significant out-migration;
- threats to the area's cultural heritage, due both to the out-migration of younger people and the failure to pass on ancient skills and crafts, and to unplanned development involving the substitution of concrete for traditional building materials and techniques;
- threats to the area's natural environment due to unplanned construction, poor garbage management, and the need for greater awareness of the area's flora and fauna.

PROJECT INITIATIVES: UNESCO began working with the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), a national NGO, in Chitral in 2002, in order to identify ways in which ecotourism development in Chitral and the Kalash Valleys could help provide employment opportunities for local people, protect the local culture, and help to preserve the area's outstanding natural environment.

AKRSP has many years experience working in the region, particularly on poverty alleviation and reducing rural-urban migration and the break-up of mountain communities, and an important early part of the project was to strengthen the nascent Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT), an association of local service providers, registering it as an NGO and building local skills and capacity.

Key activities undertaken by the UNESCO/AKRSP/CAMAT project in the region from 2002 to 2005 have included:

- support for the *Jashn-e-Chitral*, a traditional Chitrali sports and cultural festival, re-established in 2002 following a long period during which it did not take place. The festival, aiming to raise the profile of local traditions among local people and to organize a signature event for tourists and visitors to the region, has been a notable success and is now largely self-supporting;

- training for local people in tourism-related services, such as guiding, and in related service activities (trek cooks, trek-helpers, horsemen, drivers);
- training in local cultural skills that have been neglected or are in danger of dying out. These include the training of local musicians, music being a significant interest for visitors to Chitral, and training of younger Kalash men and boys in traditional construction techniques and wood-carving;
- identification of tourism assets and survey of key trekking trails and scenic routes; production of reliable information for tourists (in print and Web-based format), and establishment of a set of tourist information points;
- training and capacity-building of CAMAT staff and establishment of an ecotourism quality-assurance scheme, establishing standards and codes of conduct for CAMAT members;
- establishment of a local museum displaying cultural artifacts from Chitral and the Kalash Valleys.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS: Over the period 2002-2005, the following main results were obtained:

- re-establishment and management by local people of the *Jashn-e-Chitral*, which now attracts national interest and is self-financing. Festivals of this sort can raise the visitor profile of an area, as well as build local cultural pride and reinforced community solidarity, and the *Jashn-e-Chitral* is no exception to this rule: in isolated mountainous regions like Chitral, annual cultural events like this one have great importance, providing not only entertainment but also a much-needed venue for people to meet to renew old friendships and make new ones;
- support for local cultural traditions through training for musicians, Kalash wood-carvers, and the establishment of a local museum. Cultural traditions such as wood-carving and traditional building techniques are in danger of dying out owing to the introduction of cheaper alternatives, such as concrete. Tourism development has given new life to these traditions, making them a source of cultural pride;

- establishment of a local NGO, the Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT), and capacity-building for members, including guides, cooks, trek-helpers and drivers. Establishment of a quality-assurance scheme.
- production of reliable tourism information on Chitral, in print and Web-based forms, including visitor codes of conduct. Setting up of a garbage-management scheme and awareness-raising of environmental and cultural resources.

Tourism infrastructure has been considerably developed in Chitral as a result of the project, as have the skills and capacities of local people working in the tourism industry. The project has helped in giving Chitral a visitor identity through the development of local events and festivals, and it has demonstrated ways in which visitor numbers to Chitral may be enhanced, particularly domestic visitors.

The security situation in this area of Pakistan, at least as this is often perceived by potential foreign visitors, remains a significant problem, however. Foreign visitor numbers are unlikely to climb in the near future, and for this reason the project has focused on the domestic and regional tourist market.

FURTHER INFORMATION: [www.camat.org.pk](http://www.camat.org.pk)

### **Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, India**

**BACKGROUND:** Covering an area of some 90,000 sq. km at altitudes of 2,750 to 6,670m, the Ladakh region of northern India in Jammu and Kashmir State, situated between the Western Himalayas and Tibet and containing the spectacular Hemis National Park, is attracting growing numbers of tourists, up from an estimated 18,000 arrivals in 2000 to 23,000 in 2003 and growing. These visitors come for a variety of activities including trekking, white-water rafting, wildlife safaris and sightseeing. Apart from the spectacular beauty of the mountain landscape, the region is also home to a variety of cultural resources, such as local homes and ancient Buddhist monasteries, and it supports a high-altitude ecosystem of rare and endangered flora and fauna.

From the capital Leh, many of the region's surrounding white-washed Buddhist hill monasteries, or *gompas*, may be visited, including the Hemis Gompa, one of the best-known. Most tourists visiting Ladakh do so through treks organized through Delhi-based travel operators, tourism thus bringing few benefits to local communities. As a result, local people have few incentives to participate in the conservation of the area's cultural and natural resources, and there has been a lack of active policy support for sustainable tourist development or for the development of community-based tourism, such as home-stays and locally based businesses.

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES:** Main socio-economic issues facing the people of Ladakh that could be alleviated through tourism development include:

- poor economic returns to local people from tourism, despite ever-growing tourist numbers;
- loss and degradation of cultural and natural resources, and few incentives on the part of local people to participate in the conservation of those resources;
- lack of active policy support for sustainable tourism development.

**PROJECT INITIATIVES:** In 2002 UNESCO began working with The Mountain Institute (TMI), an international NGO, and the Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC), an international and local NGO, in order to identify ways in which ecotourism development could help provide employment opportunities for local people, protect the local culture, and help to preserve the area's outstanding natural environment and endangered species, such as the snow leopard.

Key activities undertaken by the UNESCO/TMI/SLC project in the region from 2002 to 2005 have included:

- establishment, in local villages, of homestay accommodation run by local people in their own homes, following an initial training programme. This programme helps local families benefit from growing tourist numbers, while also encouraging interaction between visitors and local communities;
- establishment of "parachute cafés" offering refreshment to trekkers in villages. These cafés, run by local families following a training programme,

re-use old parachutes as sun-awnings;

- training for local guides, cooks, trek-helpers, homestay operators and parachute-café managers; production of information material, codes of conduct for visitors, and promotional materials both in print form and on the Web;
- raising awareness of natural and cultural resources of Ladakh; promotion of parabolic water boilers rather than depletion of scarce wood fuel; educational programmes on the endangered snow leopard.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS: Over the period 2002–2005, the following main results were obtained:

- establishment of a network of community-run village homestays in Ladakh, bringing significant cash incomes to village households (from US\$30 to US\$100 per annum and per household, compared to average household income of US\$400). This means that household incomes, at the higher end of the scale, have increased by 25% due to the project, bringing an important cash supplement to subsistence farming activities;
- building of local capacities and skills. Now self-managed following an initial training programme and subject to continuous monitoring and visitor feedback, the homestay project has given significant skills to local village people, especially women, as well as a genuine and valuable experience for visitors; homestay providers now number 61 householders in Ladakhi villages, together with 15 practicing project-trained guides and 40 parachute café operators. Upper-level values for handicraft sales were US\$500 in 2005 per village;
- improvement of the knowledge of local guides of local cultural and natural resources, especially the endangered snow leopard, and active involvement of local people in their conservation;
- reinvestment in conservation, whereby local tourism service providers have contributed a portion of their profits to the conservation of the natural environment, reflecting a significant change of attitude, mirrored in viewing the endangered snow leopard as an asset instead of a threat.

The UNESCO/TMI/SLC programme in Ladakh has achieved notable successes in furthering the UNESCO programme goals of poverty alleviation, the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage, and

the reduction of out-migration through the provision of local income-generating opportunities from tourism. Its success is being replicated elsewhere in India in a sister project site in Himachal Pradesh, and links have been established with a further homestay-development project in Sikkim, also supported by the UNESCO programme.

This UNESCO-supported Himalayan Homestays project, implemented by SLC, won two notable international awards in 2005: a *Highly Commended* award from the London-based Responsible Tourism Awards, and the *Global Vision Award for Community Outreach* given by *Travel and Leisure* magazine in New York.

Visitor numbers are growing in Ladakh, and many of these visitors are taking advantage of the opportunities for meeting local people and directly supporting the local economy that the project helps to provide.

FURTHER INFORMATION: [www.snowleopardconservancy.org](http://www.snowleopardconservancy.org);  
[www.himalayan-homestays.com](http://www.himalayan-homestays.com)

## **Murghab, Gorno Badakhshan, Tajikistan**

BACKGROUND: The Pamir Mountains in Tajikistan, known locally as *Bam-i-Dunya* (the Roof of the World), are the range from which several of Asia's highest mountain ranges radiate, including the Karakoram and Himalayas to the south, the Hindu Kush to the west and the Tien Shen to the north, straddling the border of neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and China. Here, in a network of high, wide valleys amid mountain peaks in excess of 23,000ft, is prime hiking territory, populated by wildlife including Marco Polo sheep, rare snow leopards, wild boar, ibex and brown bears, amid deep valleys, swift-running streams and unspoilt mountain meadows.

Rural communities in the Pamirs, however, currently suffer from geographical isolation, underdevelopment and a poor knowledge and training base. This is especially the case in the area of the UNESCO project, in the Murghab area of the Gorno Badakhshan region in the Eastern Pamirs.

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES:** Main socio-economic issues facing the people of Murghab in the Eastern Pamirs that could be alleviated through tourism development include:

- poor economic returns to local people from tourism, despite potentially large tourist numbers;
- loss and degradation of cultural and natural resources, and few incentives on the part of local people to participate in the conservation of those resources; growing unemployment, especially among young people and women;
- lack of active policy support for sustainable tourism development.

**PROJECT INITIATIVES:** UNESCO began working with ACTED (*Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement*), an international NGO, in 2002 in order to identify ways in which ecotourism development could help provide employment opportunities for local people, protect the local culture and help to preserve the area's outstanding natural environment and endangered species, such as the Marco Polo sheep. The project is a component of a larger Pamir High Mountain Integrated Project (PHIP) project dedicated to regional development.

Key activities undertaken by the UNESCO/ACTED project in the region from 2002 to 2005 have included:

- identification of tourism assets, development of potential tourism products and services, liaison with local communities, tour operators and local and national authorities. Gorno Badakhshan having no previous experience of community-based ecotourism development, these activities were carried out for the first time, calling upon international expertise provided by UNESCO;
- development and official registration of an association of local ecotourism service providers, META, bringing together local people working in the industry and providing training, quality control and legal and administrative assistance;
- establishment of homestays in Murghab area, training in homestay-management and for guides, cooks, horsemen, and other ancillary service providers; English-language training;

- development and support of the Yak House, a local women's cooperative producing high-quality handicrafts to local designs for sale to visitors. *In 2004, 138 local women benefited from this programme, earning up to several hundred US dollars each in doing so;*
- training in local flora and fauna conservation; awareness-raising regarding threats to local natural and cultural environment, particularly fuel-gathering and threatened animal species including the Marco Polo sheep.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS: Over the period 2002-2005, the following main results were obtained:

- identification of regional tourism assets and development of innovative, community-run ecotourism products and services, including a camel safari taking in natural and cultural sites, the establishment of trek routes and the establishment of an open-air eco-museum designed to draw attention to and help conserve the area's ancient cultural relics;
- establishment of a network of community-run village homestays in the Murghab region, bringing significant cash incomes to village households. This income provides a welcome cash supplement to subsistence farming activities;
- building of local capacities and skills. Self-managed following an initial training programme and subject to continuous monitoring and visitor feedback, the homestay programme has given significant skills to local village people, notably women, as well as a genuine and valuable experience for visitors. The establishment of one local organization, META and the strengthening of another, the Yak House, has built project sustainability and the skills and capacities of local people;
- improvement of the knowledge of local guides of local cultural and natural resources, especially the endangered Marco Polo sheep, and involvement of local people in their conservation;
- liaison with local and national authorities in order to ease tourist regulation in Tajikistan, notably with regard to visas and internal travel permits.

The UNESCO/ACTED programme in Murghab, Gorno Badakhshan, has achieved notable successes in furthering the UNESCO programme goals of poverty alleviation, the conservation of the natural and cultural

heritage and the reduction of out-migration through the provision of local income-generating opportunities from tourism.

This UNESCO-supported project is now listed and recommended by the respected guidebook series *Lonely Planet* as a leading example of community-based ecotourism in Tajikistan (*Lonely Planet Central Asia 2004*).

Visitor numbers are growing in Tajikistan, and many of these visitors are taking advantage of the opportunities for meeting local people and directly supporting the local economy that the project helps to provide. Given the region's few other resources, ecotourism development can significantly support the local economy, on a seasonal basis, by providing additional cash incomes for local people. This project is also being taken as a model for community-based ecotourism development elsewhere in Tajikistan.

FURTHER INFORMATION: [www.acted.org](http://www.acted.org)

From these three examples, selected for detailed consideration from the ten project sites in eight Central and South Asian countries in which UNESCO is working, certain common features can be drawn:

Common problems: Among the common socio-economic problems at each of the sites are the existence of few economic opportunities and poor economic returns to local people from tourism, despite growing tourist numbers, the loss or degradation of cultural and environmental resources, and the lack of policy support that will bring the benefits of tourism to local communities. These socio-economic problems are in addition to geographical remoteness, inaccessibility due to physical distance, cost and under-developed infrastructure, and harsh winter climates;

Common strategies: While each site is significantly different in terms of culture and resources, the existence of common problems that could be alleviated through community-based ecotourism development means that common strategies can be developed and shared.

These include:

- **Strategies to provide economic benefits for local populations**, including job-creation and the development of small-business opportunities supplying

tourists with goods and services, such as accommodation (homestays), food, transport, or guides;

- **Strategies to develop community-based organizations or local cooperatives** allowing the benefits of tourism to be ploughed back into local development, such as through the establishment of community funds, or through the joint management of communal resources;

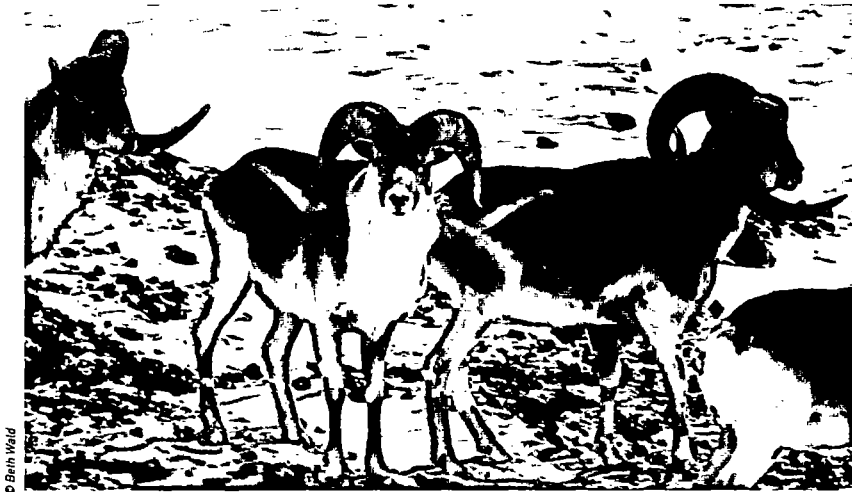
- **Strategies building local skills and capabilities**, including training in language skills to those involved in the management of a small business, support for local participation in planning and development, confidence-building, technical assistance and partnering, and the strengthening of local community organizations, through the establishment of local associations, community funds and shared resources;

- **Strategies to conserve the cultural and natural heritage**, revivifying traditional crafts and cultural events, raising awareness of conservation issues and helping local communities see the natural environment, including endangered animal and plant species, as assets, along with the cultural heritage;

- **Strategies to effect change at policy level and the claiming of rights**, including through enhanced community organization at the village and local level, helping to give communities a voice in decisions affecting their lives.

Such strategies work hand-in-hand with current thinking on poverty alleviation, which does not see poverty only in income terms. These examples show how community-based ecotourism development at these three sites has been used to help alleviate poverty, while also helping to conserve the area's natural and cultural resources.

## Community-based tourism can help protect the environment and endangered spaces



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### *Marco Polo Sheep*

One of the most endangered species in the Gorno Badakhshan area of Tajikistan, in which UNESCO is working with international NGO ACTED to develop community-based ecotourism, is the Marco Polo sheep.

Populations of this rare animal have been declining due to poaching and unregulated meat or trophy hunting, with numbers falling from an estimated 70,000 or 80,000 sheep in the 1960s to some 20,000 in the mid-1970s and half that number by the late 1980s. Current populations are not known, but they may number as few as 6,000 individuals.

An alternative to poaching and the further expansion of corruptible trophy hunting could rest with community-based ecotourism, wildlife viewing opportunities, and the development of nature stewardship among local pastoralists, with wildlife or nature viewing organized in conjunction with homestays, hiking and horse-riding treks targeting tourists.

Such tourism activities could represent an important source of income for households located in or close to wildlife "hotspots." And if local people perceived a direct connection between the protection and nurturing of wildlife and this source of income, there would be a sound basis for

establishing community-based nature and environmental stewardship  
— with long-term benefits to the pastoral livelihood system.

If suitably trained and motivated, local herders could serve as effective “wildlife watchers” — thereby reducing the number of government employees needed within the park. Herders could be deputized and trained to patrol the area, educate other local residents and discourage poaching by outsiders, at a fraction of the cost of stationing permanent government employees in the area.

Abuse of the system could be minimized by ensuring local people participate in planning from the onset, and are held accountable to both the local community and the government.

[Adapted from Rodney Jackson, *Wildlife Conservation and Participatory Monitoring for Pamir High Mountains Integrated Project*, report submitted to UNESCO/ACTED in October 2003.]

Such methods are also being used in Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir, India, to involve local communities in the conservation of the endangered snow leopard with considerable success, as part of the UNESCO/Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC) project within the UNESCO regional ecotourism programme.

## 3. Policies and Programmes

### 3.1 Current Framework

Tourism development is attractive to all the countries in which the project is working as part of national development strategies for the reasons set out in Section 1.2 above. However, poorly managed tourism development can have unpredictable effects and considerable environmental and social costs, and these should be taken into account when planning any new initiative. The regional programme reported on here has aimed to develop community-based ecotourism as an option for development in the pilot projects included in the programme, aiming to attain three main objectives: to help alleviate poverty; to help reduce rural-to-urban migration and strengthen local communities; and to help conserve the cultural and natural heritage.

These pilot projects, small-scale and managed and implemented by mostly local NGOs, have aimed to design and implement community-based ecotourism initiatives with local communities that can serve as models for replication elsewhere. It is hoped that lessons learned from them, presented to government, tourism sector actors and others, can act as a source of ideas and best practices for similar developments in the future, whether in the same regions or elsewhere.

Because of the variety of the countries and project areas included in the project, no single national policy framework is in place. Each area has its own strengths and opportunities and each its own weaknesses and threats. Whereas Ladakh, for example, described in example two above, has relatively high and growing numbers of tourist arrivals, reaching 23,000 in 2003, Chitral and the Kalash Valleys, the subject of example one, has had an annual average of 2,500 arrivals, with a correspondingly lower level of tourism infrastructure and services.

In addition, while the tourism sector in India, and increasingly also the ecotourism sector, enjoys considerable government support and is an important feature of both national and state government development efforts, this has not always been the case elsewhere. In the Central Asian countries in which the project is

working, for example, tourism development took off only some years after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the transition of formerly Soviet countries to market economies. Thus, while Kyrgyzstan has adopted policies broadly supportive of private-sector tourism development, for example, and of the community-based ecotourism development described in this report, this has not necessarily been the case in neighbouring Tajikistan, described in example three above.

In the latter country, local security issues – Tajikistan emerging from a ruinous civil conflict only in 1997 – and a sometimes unfavourable policy environment have meant that tourism development has been slow to get off the ground, despite the country's significant potential, especially for ecotourism.

However, even if there is no single policy framework in place in the areas and projects reported upon, it is hoped that such diverse experiences of community-based tourism development, as well as of different local conditions and policy environments, are a source of strength to the programme as a whole. Not only have these diverse experiences meant that activities have been designed to fit varying local conditions and in consultation with local communities, there having been no sense that “one size fits all” at these diverse project sites, they have also been designed and implemented by local NGOs, supported by UNESCO technical assistance and international expertise, in consultation with local communities. This has meant that implementing agencies have been able to benefit from grassroots knowledge of local conditions and experience of them.

## 3.2 Current Projects

Projects taking part in the regional programme, which started in 2002 and will run until the end of 2007, are managed and implemented by local NGOs in the areas concerned, benefiting from UNESCO technical advice and expertise.

The table below summarizes main features of project activities undertaken from 2002 to 2005 at the ten project sites taking part in the programme, broken down by policy objective.

## Project Countries and Areas

PROJECT COUNTRIES AND AREAS	SUMMARY OF MAIN ACTIVITIES BY POLICY OBJECTIVE
<p><b>BHUTAN</b></p> <p>Local partner: Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN)</p> <p>Area: Phobjikha Valley. Situated in western Bhutan, the Phobjikha Valley is home to the endangered Black-Necked Crane and to other wetland species. It has a population of some 5,000 people, mostly farmers living in the valley's 37 villages. The local staple is potatoes.</p> <p>RSPN joined the UNESCO regional ecotourism programme in 2003.</p>	<p><b>OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY</b></p> <p><b>OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION</b></p> <p>Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- development of local Crane Festival, employing local people and developing a signature cultural festival drawing tourists to the area;</li> <li>- setting up of village ecotourism committees for planning and management tasks, turning over control of ecotourism activities to local people;</li> <li>- development of communally owned and managed campsite facility for tourists, developing Phobjikha's attractiveness as a stop-over destination;</li> <li>- development of community fund to plough the benefits of this facility back into community development;</li> <li>- development of ecotourism products in Phobjikha, constructed and managed by local people, including trekking trails and mountain-bike hire.</li> </ul> <p><b>OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE</b></p> <p>Activities to meet this policy objective have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- development of the Crane Observation</li> </ul>

**INDIA, HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Local partner: MUSE

Area: Spiti. Building on the success of the Himalayan Homestays programme in neighbouring Ladakh, it was decided to extend this on a pilot project basis to Spiti in Himachal Pradesh, which has a similar profile.

MUSE joined the UNESCO regional ecotourism programme in 2004.

Centre in the Phobjikha Valley already owned by RSPN;

- production of educational materials on the cultural and natural heritage of the area.

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- extension of Himalayan Homestays programme, pioneered under the UNESCO regional ecotourism development programme in neighbouring Ladakh, to Spiti;

- training for local people in tourism-related services and activities, including homestay management and guiding;

- strengthening of local capacities through support to village ecotourism committees.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Activities to meet this policy objective have included:

- drawing up information materials and codes of conduct for visitors to Spiti, for example regarding the area's threatened fossil remains.

**INDIA, JAMMU & KASHMIR**

Local partners: The Mountain Institute (TMI, until 2004); The Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC)

Area: Ladakh

This project won the 2005 *Highly Commended* award from the London-based Responsible Tourism Awards and the 2005 *Global Vision Award for Community Outreach* given by *Travel and Leisure* magazine in New York.

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- establishment, in local villages, of homestay accommodation run by local people following an initial training programme. This programme helps local people benefit from growing tourist numbers, while encouraging interaction between visitors and local communities;

- establishment of "parachute cafés" offering refreshment to trekkers in villages. These cafés, run by local people following a training programme, re-use old parachutes as sun-awnings;

- training for local guides, cooks, trek-helpers, homestay operators and parachute-café managers;

- production of information material, codes of conduct for visitors, and promotional materials both in print form and on the Web.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Activities to meet this policy objective have included:

- raising awareness of natural and cultural resources of Ladakh;

- promotion of parabolic water boilers rather than depletion of scarce wood fuel.

- educational programmes on the endangered snow leopard.

**INDIA, SIKKIM**

Local partners: Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS), Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC) and Dzongu Ecotourism Committee (DEC) at village sites in Dzongu and Yuksam in north and west Sikkim

Area: Building on the success of the Himalayan Homestays programme in Ladakh, it was decided to extend this to Sikkim, a nearby state with a different geographical profile.

Local NGO ECOSS had been working for some years on similar activities and joined the UNESCO programme in 2004.

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- development of community-run village homestays at selected village sites in Sikkim;

- training for local people as homestay managers and as cultural and nature guides.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Activities to meet this policy objective have included:

- development of a code of best practice for homestay development and training in enhancing awareness of the natural environment and cultural heritage of Sikkim;

- development of educational and information materials in electronic and print form.

**IRAN**

Local partner: Iranian National Commission for UNESCO (IranNatCom), working with the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO), the Gilan provincial authorities and the Masouleh town council

Area: Masouleh, Gilan Province

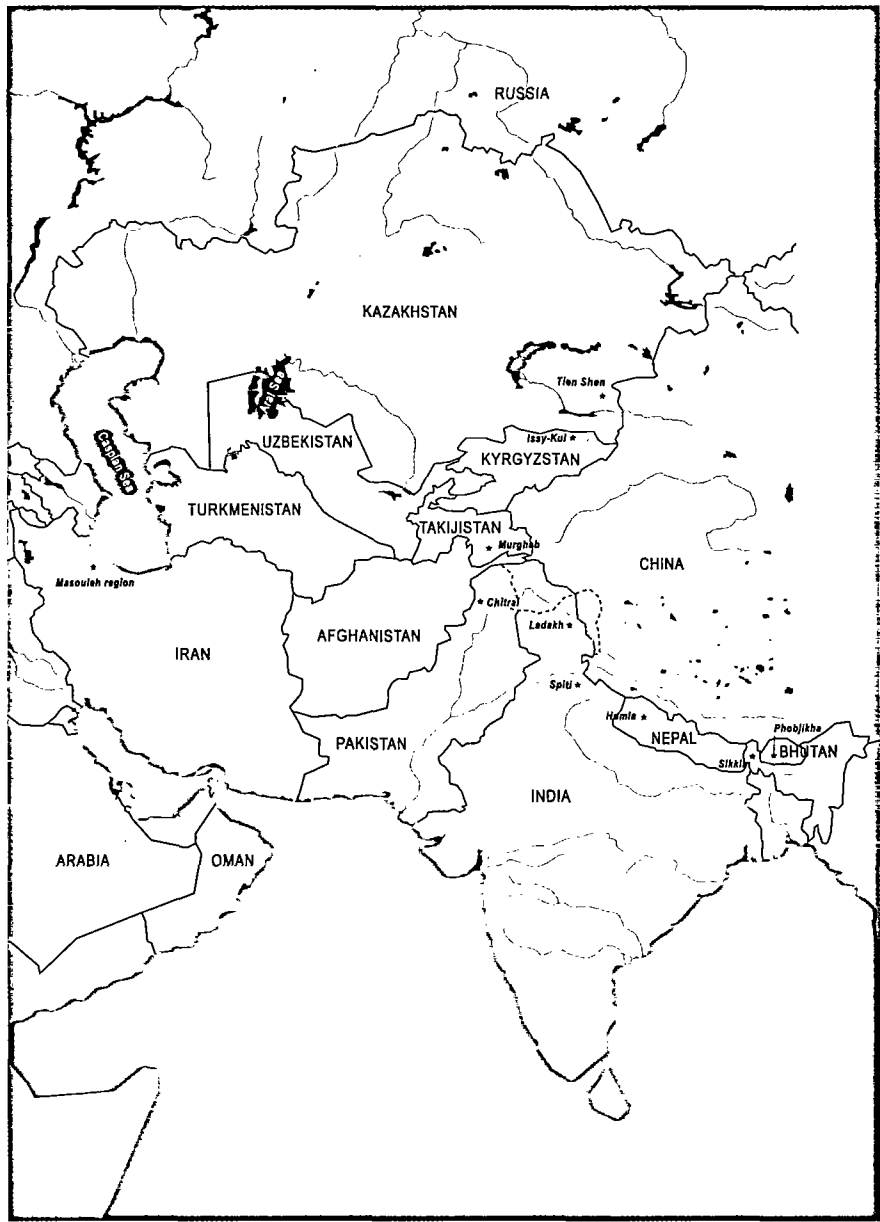
Masouleh joined the UNESCO regional ecotourism development programme in 2004.

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- development of employment opportunities and income-generating activities for local people through homestay management and development of the local handicraft industry;

### Map of Project Sites





*Traditional handicrafts can provide an extra source of income, as at this women's felt carpet-making cooperative near Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan.*

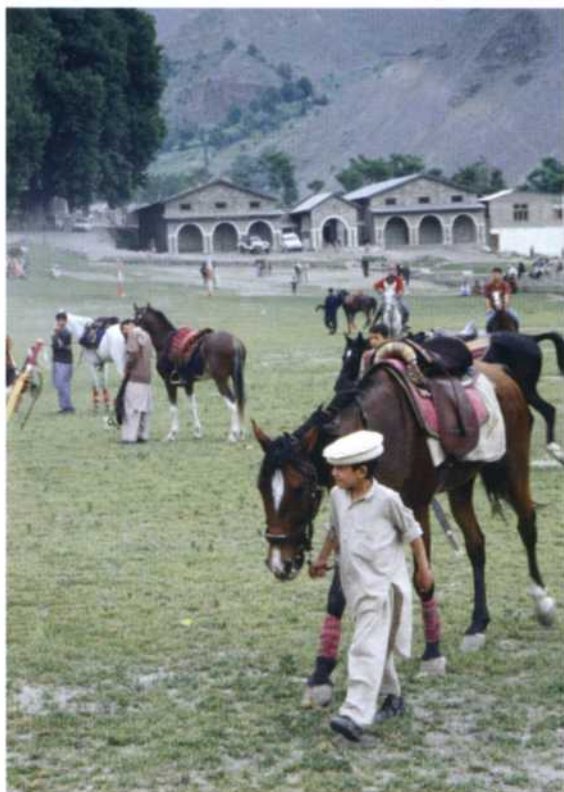
© David Tresilian



*Many villages in Ladakh, India now welcome visitors as part of the UNESCO homestay programme, inviting them to stay in local homes.* © David Tresilian



*Tourists helped preserve and restore the 1000-year old Halji Gumpa, an important Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Limi Valley, Nepal. © Wendy Lama*



*New roads and stairways built in traditional materials are transforming the village of Masouleh, Iran, part of the municipality's promotion of community-based tourism in partnership with UNESCO.*

© David Tresilian

*Even the youngest take part in weekly polo matches in Chitral, North West Frontier Province, Pakistan, a source of excitement for locals and visitors alike.*

© David Tresilian



*A view of Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir State, India. © David Tresilian*



*Clinging dramatically to the side of a high cliff, the Taktsang Monastery is one of the most important religious sites in Bhutan. © David Tresilian*

*Most of Bhutan's Buddhist monasteries host religious festivals once or twice a year, as at this festival in Paro. © David Tresilian*



*Kyrgyzstan is filled with areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as this high mountain lake, Lake Ala-Kul.*

© Anna Nobile



*Traditional crafts, as practiced here at this Tajik women's cooperative, help support the cultural heritage, as well as providing a useful source of cash income.*

© Marielle Leseur



*Areas of intense green line the Jety-Oguz River in Kyrgyzstan.* © Anna Nobile



*Nepal's cultural heritage is an endless source of fascination to visitors. © David Tresilian*



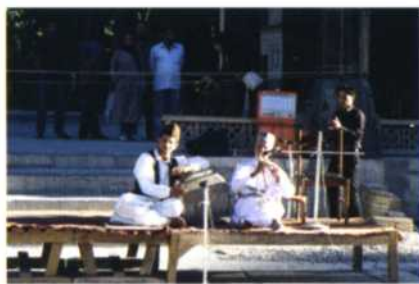
*Novice monks turn out to welcome visitors to a monastery in Ladakh. © David Tresilian*



*Trekking in Ladakh, India includes visits to many local Buddhist monasteries, while providing income for local people who work as guides. © David Tresilian*



*Tajikistan's unspoiled landscapes astonish many visitors. © Erik Engel*



*Open-air performances of traditional music draw both foreign and domestic visitors, while also supporting the cultural heritage, as at this performance in Iran. © David Tresilian*



*Mountain trekking in areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as Limi Valley, is one of Nepal's many attractions. © Nepal Trust*



*Houses in the village of Masouleh in Iran's Gilan Province are built on top of each other up a steep hillside.*

© David Tresilian



*A breathtaking view of the pass to Bazar-Dara in August in Tajikistan.*

© Erik Engel



*The yurt, a circular structure made of felt, the traditional dwelling of choice across Central Asia. Staying in a yurt camp can also be a rewarding experience for visitors.* © Erik Engel

While UNESCO's financial support for this project has been limited, the bulk of the support coming from the Iranian provincial and municipal authorities, the Organization has been able to give particular support to the project through technical expertise, notably through the organization of a regional workshop in Masouleh in October 2004.

- training for local people in homestay management, guiding skills and design and marketing of high-quality hand-crafts;

- enhancement of community participation in ecotourism development through establishment of an association of homestay operators in Masouleh and a Youth NGO;

- development of a visitor centre and of a village museum.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Activities to meet this policy objective have included:

- production of educational and information material on Masouleh and visitor codes of conduct;

- garbage-management and ecotourism plan drawn up at municipal and provincial level.

## **KAZAKHSTAN**

Local partner: the Kazakh Mountaineering Foundation (KMF)

Area: Northern Tien Shen Mountains

### **OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

### **OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- development of a Regional Mountain Guides Training Centre, managed by KMF, offering training and refresher courses in guiding and ecotourism services to village communities;

- development of curricula and materials for this Centre, and placement services for graduates, allowing them to find seasonal work from ecotourism in their

**KYRGYZSTAN**

Local partner: Novinomad Ecotourism Development Company

Area: Issyk Kul region

home villages.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- development of educational and information materials, as well as visitor codes of conduct and guide-training materials, on the region's cultural and natural heritage in both print and Web-based form.

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- development of ecotourism products and services, including local festivals, horse-riding excursions, trekking and homestays;

- training for local people as ecotourism service providers, and establishment of an Association of Ecotourism Service Providers in Issyk Kul, together with a community development fund;

- training in development of high-quality handicrafts, including design, sales and marketing.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Activities to meet this policy objective have included:

- development of Issyk Kul petroglyph site, including training local people as guides and security personnel; cooperation with local authorities and museum for on-going conservation;

## **NEPAL**

Local partner: The Nepal Trust

Area: Humla

The UNESCO/Nepal Trust ecotourism development project in Humla is the only such project in this remote area of Nepal in the country's extreme north-west.

Nepal is a UN-designated Least-Developed Country (LDC), and Humla is one of the poorest regions of this already poor country.

- development of information and educational materials on Issyk Kul, raising awareness of conservation issues.

### **OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

#### **OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- training for local people in ecotourism services, including guiding, cooking and trek helping;

- development of ecotourism products and marketing, including handicrafts;

- building capacity of village ecotourism committees and linkages with local and regional authorities.

#### **OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Activities to meet this policy objective have included:

- development of educational and information materials on Humla both in print and Web-based formats;

- development of codes of conduct for visitors and conservation training materials for local people.

## **PAKISTAN, NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE**

Local partners: Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP); Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT)

### **OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

#### **OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- support for the *Jashn-e-Chitral*, a local sports and cultural festival, raising the profile of local traditions among local people and being a signature event for visitors to the region;

- training for local people in ecotourism-related services, such as guiding, and in related service activities (trek cooks, trek-helpers, horsemen, drivers);

- training in neglected local cultural skills, including training local musicians and Kalash men and boys in traditional construction techniques and wood-carving;

- identification of tourism assets and survey of key trekking trails and scenic routes; production of reliable information for tourists (in print and Web-based format) and establishment of a set of tourist information points;

- training and capacity-building of CAMAT staff and establishment of an ecotourism quality-assurance scheme, establishing standards and codes of conduct for CAMAT members.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Activities to meet this policy objective have included:

- training in local cultural skills that have been neglected or are in danger of dying out;

- establishment of a community-run local museum displaying cultural artifacts from Chitral and the Kalash Valleys.

**TAJIKISTAN**

Local partner: *Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement* (ACTED)

Area: Murghab, Gorno Badakhshan, East Pamirs

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

Activities to meet these policy objectives have included:

- identification of tourism assets, development of potential tourism products and services, liaison with local communities, tour operators and local and national authorities;

- development and official registration of an association of local ecotourism service providers, META, bringing together local people working in the industry and providing training, quality control and legal and administrative assistance;

- establishment of homestays in Murghab area, training in homestay-management and for guides, cooks, horsemen, and other ancillary service providers;

- English-language training;

- development and support of the Yak House, a local women's cooperative producing high-quality handicrafts to local designs for sale.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Activities to meet this objective have included:

- training in local flora and fauna;

- awareness-raising regarding threats to local natural and cultural environment, particularly fuel-gathering and threatened animal species including the Marco Polo sheep.

## 4. Recommendations

### 4.1 Change Initiatives

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries, and for many countries, especially those in the developing world, it holds impressive economic potential. Not only does tourism create jobs and possibilities for economic growth, but it can also do so in regions having few other economic resources. It is estimated that tourism directly or indirectly supports 195 million jobs worldwide, forecast to rise to 210 million in 2010 (Cooper *et al.* 4). Because of the economic structure of the tourism industry, mostly consisting of small- to medium-sized businesses, tourism development can have important multiplier effects across the economy *without necessarily involving large investments or major infrastructure development.*

However, tourism development can also have significant problems attached to it, among them:

- Negative environmental impacts: Tourism can stress local food and water resources, or lead to increased sewage and rubbish pollution;

- Negative cultural impacts: Tourism can act to commercialize the expression of local cultures, leading to the phenomenon of "staged authenticity", in other words the staging of cultural practices for tourist consumption or the mass-production of cultural items;

- Heightened inequalities and local economic distortion: Tourism is typically highly seasonal and the economic benefits of tourism can be passed on unequally, exacerbating existing inequalities or injecting unpredictable demand.

For these reasons, and in response to heightened awareness of the negative impacts of poorly managed tourism development, many tour operators now offer "ecotourism" packages designed to reduce tourism impacts while helping to protect local cultures and the natural environment and pass on the economic benefits of

tourism more widely among local populations. Recent years have also seen increasing interest in tourism development as a factor in poverty alleviation, tourism typically involving financial transfers from the developed to the developing world and not necessarily requiring large-scale investment or infrastructure development.

Various initiatives have therefore been designed to learn more about this aspect of tourism development in developing countries, or in regions having few other economic resources or high levels of poverty, in order to link the protection of the natural and cultural environment, main aims of the ecotourism movement, with the promise tourism holds out for employment creation and the alleviation of poverty. This report reports on initiatives of this sort in eight Central and South Asian countries and at ten project sites, showing how ecotourism development at the community level can help to reverse the negative impacts of growing tourist numbers, while spreading the economic benefits more widely.

The aim of the programme as a whole has been to develop pilot initiatives in the eight Central and South Asian countries participating in the regional programme with a view to:

- Demonstrating ways in which community-based ecotourism development at the local level can bring real income-generating and economic opportunities to poor local people and spreading the benefits of tourism development more widely;
- Demonstrating how the development of tourism-related jobs and income-generating opportunities at village level and in often isolated rural areas having few other economic opportunities can strengthen village communities and reduce rural-to-urban migration, especially among younger people;
- Demonstrating how community-based ecotourism development can help to conserve the cultural heritage and natural environment of these regions, both by demonstrating how these things can assist in development and jobs and by creating awareness of the value of the heritage and the environment, both of which are often under threat.

## 4.2 Plans for Action

While the pilot projects reported on in this publication, listed in Section 3.2 above, are in many respects very different they share similar problems, many of which may be alleviated through community-based ecotourism development of the type described here.

In addition, the UNESCO programme's diverse experiences of ecotourism development, as well as of different local conditions and policy environments, have been a source of strength to the programme as a whole. Not only have these meant that activities have needed to be designed to fit varying local conditions and in consultation with local communities, there having been no sense that "one size fits all" at these diverse project sites, but they have also been designed and implemented by local NGOs, supported by UNESCO technical assistance and international expertise, in consultation with local communities. This has meant that implementing agencies have been able to benefit from grassroots knowledge of local conditions and experience of them, as well as fostering South-South sharing.

Features of the programme's implementation between 2002 and 2005 have included:

Building local partnerships: The 10 regional projects described in this report, working in eight Central and South Asian countries, are implemented by mostly local NGOs with many years working in the terrain concerned and close links with local communities. UNESCO, working with these local organizations through its network of regional field offices, backstopped by headquarters in Paris, has been able to take advantage of the knowledge of and deep links with local communities enjoyed by these NGOs when designing and implementing project activities, supplying technical expertise as necessary and monitoring implementation and results. Regional partnerships have been formed in turn among the participating projects, a key to programme sustainability;

The participation of local people: Because the programme is working with mostly local NGOs in the eight countries participating in the UNESCO regional programme, local people have been consulted at every stage in planning and implementing the ten country projects, to ensure that project design meets local conditions and fulfils local needs. Furthermore, there has been a strong commitment on the part of all the projects to ensure that not only do project activities meet local needs

and involve local people but that the activities themselves are locally managed and owned. The projects have in many cases built local community-based associations and funds, putting project management and responsibility in the hands of local people and thereby building sustainability;

Provision of international expertise: A feature of the programme has been the design and implementation of project activities by mostly local NGOs, working closely with local communities in order to spread the benefits of ecotourism development as widely as possible among poorer members of local communities. UNESCO's network of field offices, backstopped by UNESCO Paris, has provided international expertise in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as training opportunities to local project staff. The programme has thus had an important skills-building component, building capacity and expertise at local levels;

Identifying appropriate tourism products and markets: Many of the projects participating in the regional programme had little, in any, previous experience of community-based tourism for poverty alleviation: the identification of appropriate tourism products and their development and marketing was a key feature of the programme, this being carried out by local communities themselves, with technical assistance provided by UNESCO and in partnership with other projects in the regional programme;

South-South sharing: As part of the programme's capacity building component, international expertise has been made available by UNESCO to advise on project development and to help design, implement, monitor and evaluate project activities at the ten sites and eight regional countries participating in the programme. UNESCO has also organized a series of bi-annual regional project workshops, described in detail in Section 5.1 below, allowing local project staff and members of the communities with which they are working to gain training in project design and management, building local skills and capacities. These workshops, organized by UNESCO project partners at regional sites where the project is working, have brought together representatives of all ten projects participating in the programme in eight countries, together with representatives of government, the tourism industry, NGOs and civil society groups. They have provided opportunities for training and South-South sharing, as have the frequent opportunities for intra-regional exchange supported by the programme;

Sharing of lessons learned: The programme has been managed on an annual basis within the perspective of a six-year programme life (2002-2007). Activities proposed and results obtained have been reviewed before the working season starts each spring, with results disseminated to all the projects participating in the programme. Furthermore, at the end of each two-year period the programme as a whole has been evaluated and lessons shared with government, tourism-sector actors and the NGO community and civil society organizations in the countries concerned. The aim has been in each case to scale up lessons learned for application elsewhere, helping the projects to fulfill their aim as pilot activities and to ensure that lessons learned from them are put to the best possible use.

## 5. Operational Aspects

### 5.1 Resources

The kinds of activity described in this report, community-based and working through small, mostly locally based NGOs, do not require major resources in order to achieve striking results. Indeed, in some ways even more important than resources are technical support and expertise, helping local people to identify ways in which they can benefit from growing tourist numbers, develop capacities and skills, and achieve sustainability.

For this reason, the project made available two forms of resources: financial and in the form of expertise. Financial investment is important in that project offices and equipment need to be established and salaries and other expenses paid. The provision and sharing of expertise, however, has also been a marked feature of the programme as a whole, and a series of regional workshops has been organized, on a bi-annual basis, at selected project sites within the regional programme. These workshops, organized by local project partners in cooperation with UNESCO field offices and UNESCO Paris, have enabled the transfer of training and expertise to take place, as well as continuous project monitoring and the South-South sharing of lessons learned and developing best practices.

#### SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Financial resources made available by UNESCO to the projects participating in the regional ecotourism development programme have come from two sources: the UNESCO Regular Programme under the Organization's cross-cutting programme for the *Eradication of Poverty, Especially Extreme Poverty*, and extra-budgetary resources generously put at the disposal of the project by the Governments of Norway and of the Principality of Andorra.

## SUMMARY OF EXPERTISE

A key feature of the UNESCO regional programme reported on in this publication has been the provision and sharing of expertise. Indeed, for some of the projects reported on this feature of the programme has been almost more important than the financial resources made available by UNESCO for the support of project activities. Most of the UNESCO partner organizations involved in the programme are small, locally based NGOs with many years experience working closely with the communities concerned. Some had considerable experience in community-based ecotourism development of the sort described here, while others specialize in more traditional development work and had little or no experience in ecotourism development before the programme started in 2002. In addition, whereas some of the areas selected for the UNESCO ecotourism development projects had some experience of the kind of development work described here, others had little or none. This situation suggested that a main component of the regional programme should consist of training and technical assistance, fostering the exchange of ideas, experiences and South-South sharing.

For these reasons, two main forms of expertise were included in the programme from planning stages onwards:

- A technical assistance programme featuring planning, monitoring and evaluation visits by UNESCO international experts;

- A programme of bi-annual regional workshops, one in the spring before project activities started in the eight countries participating in the project, and one in the fall following the conclusion of that year's activities.

Main features of these two forms of technical assistance and the sharing of expertise are described below.

(1) Technical Assistance Programme: UNESCO has been fortunate in being able to draw upon the services of international experts in community-based ecotourism development, who have helped to ensure that UNESCO programme objectives of poverty alleviation, the reduction of rural-to-urban migration, and the conservation of the cultural and natural heritage are observed in their work with the local project partners and communities concerned.

Technical assistance supplied within the framework of this Technical

Assistance Programme has taken two main forms:

(a) Assistance in drawing up and implementing project activities and monitoring their results. This has been carried out through site visits, either before the working season starts to help draw up and plan activities, or following the close of the working season to monitor and evaluate that year's activities and to make recommendations for following years;

(b) Training and programme monitoring carried out at bi-annual regional project workshops. While some of the partners participating in the programme had experience in community-based ecotourism development, or were working in regions where such expertise had been built up in comparable programmes, others had little or no experience of such work and were working in areas where community-based ecotourism was entirely new. The regular workshops organized under the programme allowed the transfer of training and expertise to take place, as well as being ideal venues for South-South sharing.

(2) Bi-annual Regional Workshop Programme: Regional workshops have been organized on a bi-annual basis as part of the UNESCO regional ecotourism development programme, these workshops bringing together representatives of each of the country projects concerned as well as representatives of the tourism industry, of government and of the local NGO community and civil society. Held in each case in one of the project areas, the workshops have been an important way both of sharing experiences among programme participants and of monitoring project activities. They have also allowed the building of capacity of NGO staff, each workshop providing training in community-based ecotourism development for poverty alleviation and the conservation of the natural and cultural environment.

International workshops held within the project have included:

**April 2002: Almaty, Kazakhstan.** Organized by local partner organization the Kazakh Mountaineering Foundation (KMF) in consultation with the UNESCO Almaty Office and UNESCO Paris. Theme: *Project Planning and Asset Identification*

**October 2002: Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan.** Organized by local partner organization Novinomad Ecotourism Development Company in consultation with the UNESCO Almaty Office and UNESCO Paris. Programme presentation at the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, arranged in consultation with the Kyrgyz

National Commission for UNESCO. Theme: *First Results and Future Plans*

**May 2003: Chitral, North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan.** Organized by local partner organization the Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT), in consultation with the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), the UNESCO Islamabad Office and UNESCO Paris. Theme: *Strategies for Community-Based Cultural and Ecotourism Development*

**September 2003: Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir State, India.** Organized by local partner organization the Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC), in consultation with the UNESCO New Delhi Office and UNESCO Paris. Theme: *Capturing and Sharing Results*

**April 2004: Thimphu, Bhutan.** Organized by local partner organization the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN), in consultation with UNESCO Paris. Theme: *Building Sustainable Community-Based Cultural and Ecotourism*

**October 2004: Masouleh, Gilan Province, Islamic Republic of Iran.** Organized by local partner organization the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO (IranNatCom), in consultation with the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO), the Gilan provincial authorities, Masouleh municipal authorities, the UNESCO Tehran Office and UNESCO Paris. Theme: *Demonstrating Success in Natural and Cultural Heritage Conservation*

**December 2005: New Delhi, India.** Organized by local partners in consultation with the UNESCO New Delhi Office and UNESCO Paris. Theme: *Capturing Best Practices and Lessons Learned*

This programme of regional workshops has allowed training and technical assistance to be given, and it has fostered the exchange of ideas, experiences and South-South sharing. It has been an important component of the programme not only in terms of transferring technical resources to the participating projects, but also in building their own, skills, capacities and expertise. Indeed, many of those attending the UNESCO regional workshop programme are now ecotourism trainers in their own right in the Central and South Asian region, demonstrating the workshops' effectiveness as venues for the training of trainers and the building of regional expertise.

Full reports on each of the workshops held within the framework of the regional programme are available at the UNESCO programme Website at [www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism), along with other relevant documents, from which they can be downloaded in Word format.

## 5.2 Preliminary Evaluation

Aside from the often striking results obtained by individual projects working within the framework of the UNESCO regional ecotourism development programme, some of which are summarized in Table 2 below, the programme as a whole has also obtained significant results in the period 2002-2005, among which the following may be mentioned:

1. The establishment of a network of innovative community-based ecotourism development projects, implemented by mostly local NGOs with UNESCO support and expertise;
2. The development of project activities for community-based ecotourism development in eight regional countries and at ten project sites, these activities being managed by small, mostly local NGOs with real local ties to communities;
3. The sharing of international and regional expertise through a technical assistance programme for community-based ecotourism development and a programme of bi-annual regional workshops bringing together representatives of eight regional countries, tourism-sector actors, government and members of NGOs and civil-society organizations;
4. The development of skills and capacities among UNESCO partner organization staff, showing how community-based ecotourism development can be used as a tool for poverty alleviation, the reduction of rural-to-urban migration and the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage and providing opportunities for South-South sharing;
5. The building of a reservoir of experience and expertise, suggesting best practices for community-based ecotourism development that can be put to work elsewhere, both in the region and beyond.

In addition to these programme-wide results, Table 2 below summarizes main results by project and UNESCO policy objective. Data sets are not complete for all of the projects participating in the regional programme, and it has not always been possible to make comparisons across programme areas. For these reasons, quantitative results are given where available. These data are supplemented by qualitative data, such as international recognition received by the project, whether in the form of tourism industry prizes or otherwise, and by certain main achievements, such as the establishment of a local ecotourism association or NGO, community fund, or other main achievement.

For further details, the programme Website at [www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism) may be consulted, along with project Websites set up under the UNESCO regional programme (listed under References below).

### Main Results by Policy Objective

UNESCO PROJECTS	MAIN RESULTS BY POLICY OBJECTIVE
<p><b>BHUTAN</b></p> <p>Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN)</p>	<p><b>OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY</b></p> <p><b>OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- training programmes for local people as nature and cultural guides, as well as cooks, trek helpers and guesthouse staff; training and sales advice for local women textiles workers;</li> <li>- development of ecotourism products in Phobjikha, including sign-posted nature trails, mountain-bike hire and work on communally owned and managed campsite facility;</li> <li>-development of signature Phobjikha Crane Festival, serving to bring tourists to the area and provide employment for local people;</li> </ul>

- skills building for local people in language, management and other skills; support for local associations and village committees.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- development of information, both in print and Web-based format, on Phobjikha's culture and natural heritage;
- development of Crane Information Centre dedicated to the conservation of the Black-Necked Crane.

**INDIA, HIMACHAL PRADESH**

MUSE

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

**OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- establishment of 31 homestays in Spiti villages, run by local householders;
- on-going development of guide-training, parachute-café development and other village-based activities on the model of the programme in neighbouring Ladakh (MUSE joined the UNESCO programme in 2004).

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- on-going development of cultural and natural heritage conservation activities on model of linked activities in neighbouring Ladakh.

**INDIA, JAMMU & KASHMIR**

The Mountain Institute (TMI, until 2004);  
The Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC)

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

**OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- homestay revenue as a result of the

UNESCO/SLC programme now ranges from US\$30 to US\$100 per annum, compared to average household income of US\$400. This means that household incomes, at the higher end of the scale, have increased by 25% due to the programme;

- homestay providers now number 61 householders in Ladakhi villages, together with 15 practicing programme-trained guides and 40 parachute café operators. Upper-level values for handicraft sales were US\$500 in 2005 per village;

- civil-society institutions in Ladakhi villages have been significantly strengthened by the programme: village committees have taken over management of activities and community conservation funds established at selected sites;

- winner of the 2005 *Highly Commended* award from the London-based Responsible Tourism Awards and the 2005 *Global Vision Award for Community Outreach* given by *Travel and Leisure* magazine in New York.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- use of solar cookers and pressure-boiled water has reduced fuel wood requirements; recycling of plastic bottles has reduced rubbish pollution;

- training of local wildlife guides has increased community awareness of conservation; community conservation funds have allowed garbage campaigns, tree planting and the restoration of local monuments.

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**INDIA, SIKKIM**

Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS), Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC) and Dzongu Ecotourism Committee (DEC)

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- development of community-run homestays at village sites in Sikkim; training of homestay operators, quality-control of services offered and marketing linkages built;
- training in ecotourism service provision and in skills for nature and culture guiding;
- development of new ecotourism products in consultation with tour operators, including eco-tours, cultural and nature packages.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- development of reliable information material on the natural and cultural heritage of Sikkim in both print and Web-based formats; development of codes of conduct for visitors and ecotourism service providers.

**IRAN**

Iranian National Commission for UNESCO (IranNatCom), working with the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO), the Gilan provincial authorities and the Masouleh town council

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- establishment of 100 community-run homestays in Masouleh catering to visitors;
- registration of Youth NGO in Masouleh, involving young people in tourism-development activities and suggesting employment and skills-development prospects;

- organization of festival events on traditional cuisine, music and handicrafts; training for local women on handicraft development and for craftsmen in crafts development.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- as part of the Masouleh urban regeneration plan, renovation of old houses and of bazaar using traditional materials and techniques; establishment of municipality-supported traditional carpentry workshop;

- promotion of Masouleh traditional and oral culture through publications programme, cultural festivals and events, handicrafts development and establishment of Masouleh Museum.

**KAZAKHSTAN**

Kazakh Mountaineering Foundation (KMF)

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

**OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- development of training materials in Russian for guide training at Regional Mountain Guides Training Centre set up under the project;

- training of village young people as eco-tourism guides, cooks and ancillary service-providers and employment placement services.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- development of materials on natural and cultural heritage of the Tien Shen in print and Web-based formats.

**KYRGYZSTAN**

Novinomad Ecotourism Development  
Company

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- establishment of an Association of Ecotourism Service Providers and a Trekking Workers Association in the Issyk Kul region of Kyrgyzstan; legal, marketing and training support for the associations;

- development of ecotourism products, including a network of homestay operators and cultural and nature festivals, designed to raise awareness of local culture and nature and provide signature attractions for foreign and domestic tourists;

- training of trek guides, cooks and ancillary staff; training of homestay providers; assistance in finding employment and building links with tour operators and tourism markets abroad;

- establishment of a community-run Ecotourism Trust Fund, managed by the Association of Ecotourism Service Providers, intended to develop and finance new products and services.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- development of information on culture and nature of the Issyk Kul region in print and Web-based format; awareness-raising of cultural and natural conservation issues, especially for young people in schools outreach programmes;

- support for the Issyk Kul petroglyph site and training of local cultural guides; cooperation with Issyk Kul museum on development of cultural tours and services.

**NEPAL**

The Nepal Trust

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- training for local people in ecotourism services, including guiding, cooking and trek helping;
- development of ecotourism products and marketing, including handicrafts;
- building capacity of village ecotourism committees and linkages with local and regional authorities.

**OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- development of educational and information materials on Humla both in print and Web-based formats, and development of codes and conduct for visitors and conservation training materials for local people.

**PAKISTAN, NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE**

Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP); Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT)

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY****OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- re-establishment and management by local people of the *Jashn-e-Chitral*, building local cultural pride and community organization;
- establishment of a local NGO, the Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT), and capacity-building and training programmes for members, including guides, cooks, trek-helpers and drivers. Establishment of a quality-assurance scheme;
- identification of tourism assets and survey of key trekking trails and scenic

routes; production of reliable information for tourists (in print and Web-based format) and establishment of a set of tourist information points;

- training and capacity-building of CAMAT staff and establishment of an ecotourism quality-assurance scheme, establishing standards and codes of conduct for CAMAT members.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

- training in local cultural skills that have been neglected or are in danger of dying out, including training local musicians and Kalash men and boys in traditional construction techniques and wood-carving;

- establishment of a community-run local museum displaying cultural artifacts from Chitral and the Kalash Valleys.

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## **TAJIKISTAN**

*Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement* (ACTED)

### **OBJECTIVE 1: ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

### **OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCTION OF RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION**

- establishment of local NGO the Murghab Eco-Tourism Association (META) and registration with authorities; this organization brings together service providers, develops products, monitors quality and distributes development funds;

- development of innovative ecotourism products in Murghab and training of local service providers; products include homestays, camel safaris, jeep tours, yak tours, and Marco Polo sheep safaris;

- development and support of the Yak House, a women's handicrafts association, offering training, design, sales and marketing opportunities for local women; Yak House sales totaled US\$15,600 in 2004 and US\$12,000 by end October 2005;

- Murghab ecotourism service providers made US\$4,460 in 2005, making ecotourism, with livestock farming, the region's main source of jobs and income;

- Listing of META ecotourism services in *Lonely Planet Central Asia* (2004) and similar guides and participation in international ecotourism fairs.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

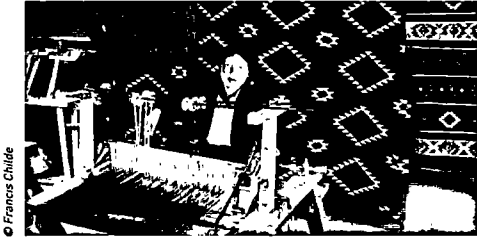
- establishment of a Nature Protection Group in Murghab organizing awareness training on threatened cultural and natural heritage, particularly the Marco Polo sheep;

- identification and protection of archaeological sites and creation of an eco-museum;

-production of reliable information on the area's cultural and natural heritage (brochures, maps, guide materials) in print and Web-based format.

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## Tourism can help preserve local skills and cultures, while providing valuable additional income



*Textile weaver, Bhutan*

Kinley Zam, a young woman from Kumbu village in Gangtey, Phobjikha Valley, Bhutan, stopped going to school at the age of ten in order to assist her family of small craftsmen. Her father is a talented carpenter who makes bamboo products to traditional designs, and Kinley herself is a talented weaver of traditional local textiles, such as *kiras* and *ghos*, traditional forms of Bhutanese clothing.

However, there were few opportunities to sell these goods until UNESCO partner in the Phobjikha Valley, the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN), began to develop the valley's Crane Observation Centre to receive tourists under the UNESCO regional ecotourism development programme.

Kinley began to bring her textiles, woven at home on traditional looms, to the Centre to be sold to tourists, and following early success she has started to design new product lines herself, based on traditional Bhutanese patterns. These include table runners and bags, as well as traditional Bhutanese clothing items, such as *keras* and *rachus*.

In 2005 Kinley earned some US\$364 from her textile products, a useful source of supplementary income in a community depending on subsistence farming. Noticing Kinley's success, other women from local villages have also been encouraged to develop their textile-weaving skills, using the RSPN-supported local Women's Association as a venue to do so.

Proud of the financial independence that her work has given her, Kinley is now a leading member of her local Women's Association, and she has also taken up her education once again, learning to read and write as a non-formal student in Phobjikha.



*Kumbu, 20, cook  
Phobjikha, Bhutan*

## Tourism can help preserve local skills and cultures, while providing valuable additional income

Kumbu comes from a large family of four brothers and two sisters in the Phobjikha Valley. His father, who used to serve in the Royal Bhutan Army, moved back to Phobjikha some years ago, where the family now lives from subsistence agriculture. However, there was not enough money to support Kumbu's education, and he had to give up school to help on his father's potato farm.

When UNESCO partner RSPN began capacity-building activities under the UNESCO regional ecotourism programme, designed to help local people benefit from the tour groups that had started to come to the Phobjikha Valley, Kumbu volunteered for cook training, and he was soon being hired by visiting tour groups.

Due to his new skills, in 2005 Kumbu was hired as a resident cook at his village guesthouse, allowing him to earn US\$90 monthly, a useful cash supplement to his family's meagre regular income from subsistence potato farming.

### 5.3 Best Practices & Lessons Learned

Tourism is growing in many areas of Central and South Asia, and this is a trend that seems set to continue with increasing tourist numbers recorded in what were, until quite recently, often remote rural areas. This tourism is welcome in that it opens up prospects for regional economic development and the jobs and income-generating opportunities that come with it, but it also brings dangers in its wake, both of increasing stress on already limited resources and the danger of exacerbating existing inequalities. The task, then, is to ensure that this growing tourism helps local communities draw the maximum benefit from their region's tourism potential, while protecting the environmental and cultural heritage of the regions concerned from negative tourism impacts.

The UNESCO regional ecotourism development programme described in this publication has tried to do these things by putting its faith both in the knowledge and potential of the small, mostly local NGOs implementing the activities described under this programme and in that of the local communities themselves, who are the owners and beneficiaries of those activities, while providing technical assistance and training opportunities as required. It has sought to address common problems suffered by the ten project sites in eight countries at which the programme is working, such as few economic opportunities and poor economic returns to local people from tourism, the loss or degradation of cultural and environmental resources, and the lack of policy support that will bring the benefits of tourism to local communities, by developing a set of strategies that include:

- **Strategies to provide economic benefits for local populations**, including job-creation and the development of small-business opportunities supplying tourists with goods and services, such as accommodation (homestays), food, transport, or guides;

- **Strategies to develop local community-based organizations** allowing the benefits of tourism to be ploughed back into local development, such as through the establishment of community funds, or through the joint management of communal resources;

- **Strategies building local skills and capabilities**, including training in language skills to those involved in the management of a small business, support for local participation in planning and development, and the strengthening of community organizations, through the establishment of local associations, community funds and shared resources;

- **Strategies to conserve the cultural and natural heritage**, revivifying traditional crafts and cultural events, raising awareness of conservation issues and helping local communities see the natural environment, including endangered animal and plant species, as assets, along with the cultural heritage;

- **Strategies to effect change at policy level and the claiming of rights**, including through enhanced community organization at the village and local level, helping to give communities a voice in decisions affecting their lives.

The implementation of these strategies through activities planned and

implemented by mostly local NGOs working closely with local communities has sought to:

- Demonstrate ways in which community-based ecotourism development at the local level can bring real income-generating and economic opportunities to poor local people and spread the benefits of tourism development more widely, thus alleviating poverty;

- Demonstrate how the development of tourism-related jobs and income-generating opportunities at village level and in often isolated rural areas having few other economic opportunities can strengthen village communities and reduce rural-to-urban migration, especially among younger people;

- Demonstrate how ecotourism development can help to conserve the cultural heritage and natural environment of these regions by creating awareness of the value of the heritage and the environment, both of which are often under threat.

In doing so, this UNESCO regional programme has developed significant regional capacity among the partner organizations and communities concerned, and it has established a regional network of expertise that can be drawn upon in similar projects in the future as well as a fund of suggestions for replication elsewhere.

Because the pilot projects reported on in this publication are in areas that are in some respects different from each other, while sharing similar problems, the UNESCO programme's experiences of community-based ecotourism development have been diverse, taking place under different local conditions and in different national policy environments. However, this diversity has been a source of strength for the programme as whole, since it has meant that activities have been designed to fit varying local conditions and in consultation with local communities, there having been no sense that "one size fits all" at these diverse project sites.

Instead, mostly local NGOs, supported by UNESCO technical assistance and international expertise and in consultation with local communities, have planned and implemented activities under the UNESCO regional strategy in order to meet the programme's three objectives of alleviating poverty, reducing rural-to-urban migration and conserving the cultural and natural heritage. These local implementing agencies have been able to benefit from grassroots knowledge of local conditions and experience of them, as well as fostering South-South sharing.

## “A LABORATORY OF IDEAS”

Indeed, the programme has become a veritable “laboratory of ideas,” thanks in part to the diversity of experiences within it, suggesting new activities, modes of implementation, and ways of sharing results across the region-wide projects.

These ideas provide a veritable “how to” of community-based tourism for poverty alleviation, conservation and development. Some of them are collected in Table 3 below.

### **Best Practices for Community-Based Tourism**

BEST PRACTICES FOR...	
CAPACITY-BUILDING	<p><b>Tried and trusted techniques</b>, including: networking and partnerships; intra-programme exchange and study tours; training programmes; affiliation with related organizations within the region and elsewhere; international expertise and programme monitoring;</p> <p><b>Innovative fundraising mechanisms</b>, including: establishment of community-based trust funds; product sales and festival events; community funds and membership fees for service-providers, funding training and other activities; tourist donations; donor support and training in grant-writing and reporting.</p>
PARTNERSHIPS & EXCHANGE	<p><b>Partnerships</b> are most likely to succeed given: relevant partners having relevant experience; clear expectations and terms of reference; sharing of tools and resources, including handbooks, manuals, training materials;</p> <p><b>Exchanges</b> are most effective if: there is good communication between host and visitor; clear objectives and goals; commitments for sharing experiences and follow-up; the use of electronic tools, including discussion groups and shared Websites and networks.</p>

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**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT  
& MARKETING**

**Product development** should: match the right product to the right market; develop products having multiple beneficiaries and options, tours employing the services of guides, cooks, homestay operators and crafts producers, for example; involve tour operators and those accessing markets; ensure quality control;

**Product marketing** should: identify market segments; understand avenues for effective communication with chosen markets; organize informational tours for tour operators; apply for awards and certification to enhance market recognition and exposure; develop well-placed and attractive marketing materials; build links with tour operators and the tourism industry; value customer testimonials.

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**BENEFITS SHARING**

**Understand benefits**, in terms of: incomes; human resources development; cultural exchanges; conservation; improvements to community and asset base;

**Share benefits** by: community funds; activities involving a range of service providers drawn from different segments of the community; develop rules for service-provider benefits, including rotation schemes; collect subscriptions and redistribute as benefits to the poorest members of the community;

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**MONITORING, DISSEMINATION  
& EVALUATION**

**Who monitors?** The community; the donor; management; the authorities;

**What to monitor and how?** Use clear, relevant, measurable indicators; use quantitative and qualitative indicators; share results

**Why monitor?** To measure progress; to keep donors and authorities informed; to gain awards and recognition;

**Disseminate results** by: radio, electronic and print media; reports; newsletters, targeting the

community; association members; donors; the authorities, in order to motivate service providers; serve as a basis for planning; learn from the sharing of experiences; achieve transparency.

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**STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**Planning for community-based tourism should include:** *a realistic vision and clear short-term and long-term goals; realistic human and financial resources; a schedule of risks and obstacles, including political instability and seasonality; alternatives; follow-up and monitoring; realistic assessment of potential and community involvement; availability of expertise.*

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**INFLUENCING POLICY**

**Examples of policy that affect community-based tourism include:** legal environment, for example governing NGO registration, community funds, banking facilities, taxation and micro-grants; national and security policy, including tourist registration, visas, and police controls; conservation policies; availability of funds and support for replicating successes elsewhere;

**Policy can be influenced by:** frequent meetings, building linkages of trust between community and government; invitations to inspect field activities; reporting and transparency; helping the government to achieve its own objectives in conservation, cultural heritage protection and skills training and demonstrating ways in which this might be done.

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**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**Community involvement can be built by:** *building trust and relationships through village meetings, accountability and transparency, and working with established community organizations or village committees; balanced participation, including broad involvement of women and young people; options for involvement according to strengths and needs; equity in benefit sharing; dialogue and advice; organizing village exchanges; keeping promises and making realistic commitments.*

## 5.4 Policy Recommendations

Policy lessons can be learned from the implementation of the UNESCO regional ecotourism programme, and pilot projects initiated under the project have already been successfully replicated elsewhere, for example in India and in Tajikistan. Policy environments will differ by country and by development objectives, but broad policy lessons for the development of community-based tourism include the need for:

1. A Receptive Policy Environment: Though major investment is not necessary for the development of community-based tourism, the policy environment can affect its success or failure, particularly in areas such as legal regulation, fund management, availability of micro-grants or loans and policy regarding tourist registration, visas, and controls. UNESCO projects have sought to build linkages between community and government, showing how the development of community-based tourism at grassroots level can help governments to achieve their own objectives in poverty alleviation, environmental conservation and cultural-heritage protection, while doing so with the full participation of local communities;

2. Local partnerships: The 10 pilot projects described in this report, working in eight Central and South Asian countries, have been able to take advantage of the knowledge of and deep links with local communities enjoyed by the mostly local partner NGOs in the areas concerned when designing and implementing project activities, UNESCO supplying technical expertise as necessary and monitoring implementation and results;

3. Participation: Local people have been consulted at every stage in planning and implementing the country projects, in order to ensure that project design meets local conditions and fulfils local needs. Furthermore, there has been a strong commitment on the part of all the projects to ensure that the activities themselves are locally managed and owned. The projects have in many cases built local community-based associations and funds, putting project management and responsibility in the hands of local people and thereby building sustainability;

4. International expertise: UNESCO's network of field offices, backstopped by UNESCO Paris, has provided international expertise in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as training opportunities to local project staff. The programme has thus had an important skills-building component,

building capacity and expertise at local levels;

5. South-South sharing: UNESCO has organized a series of bi-annual regional project workshops, allowing local project staff and members of the communities with which they are working to gain training in project design and management, building local skills and capacities. These workshops have brought together representatives of all the projects participating in the programme, together with representatives of government, the tourism industry, NGOs and civil-society groups. They have provided opportunities for training and South-South sharing, as have the opportunities for intra-regional exchange supported by the programme;

6. Regional networking and sharing of lessons learned: The programme has been managed on an annual basis within the perspective of a five-year programme life (2002-2007). Activities proposed and results obtained have been reviewed before the working season starts each spring, with results disseminated to all the projects participating in the programme. Furthermore, at the end of each two-year period the programme as a whole has been evaluated and lessons shared with government, tourism-sector actors and the NGO community and civil society organizations in the countries concerned. The aim has been to disseminate lessons learned as widely as possible, making the programme a veritable “laboratory of ideas” for the projects participating in it and suggesting new activities, modes of implementation, and ways of sharing results.

Further ideas are contained in the reports made available by the programme on the UNESCO Website at [www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism), notably in reports on the regional workshops held under the programme. It is hoped that the activities and results described in these documents, as well as those reported on in this publication, will be of value to policy makers and project managers working on similar issues elsewhere, as well as to government, members of the tourism industry and NGOs and international organizations concerned with similar issues.

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- Sen, Amartya (1999), *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

### Electronic

UNESCO documents available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/index.html> include:

- UNESCO Programme and Budget (31C/5, 32C/5, 33C/5)
- UNESCO Medium Term Strategy 2002-2007 (31C/4)

UNESCO Poverty Programme and the Rights-Based Approach:

- [www.unesco.org/shs](http://www.unesco.org/shs)

UNESCO ecotourism programme Website:

- [www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ecotourism) (includes programme reports arranged by country and detailed project documents in downloadable format)

Project material by UNESCO partner organizations:

- Bhutan: RSPN: [www.rspn-bhutan.org](http://www.rspn-bhutan.org)
- India: ECOSS: [www.sikkiminfo.net/ecoss](http://www.sikkiminfo.net/ecoss)
- India: SLC: [www.snowleopardconservancy.org](http://www.snowleopardconservancy.org);  
[www.himalayan-homestays.com](http://www.himalayan-homestays.com)
- Iran: <http://itto.org/index.asp>; [www.masooleh.ir](http://www.masooleh.ir)
- Kyrgyzstan: Novinomad: [www.novinomad.com](http://www.novinomad.com)
- Kazakhstan: KMF: [www.kazakhstan-ecotourism.org](http://www.kazakhstan-ecotourism.org)
- Nepal: Nepal Trust: [www.nepaltrust.org](http://www.nepaltrust.org)
- Pakistan: CAMAT: [www.camat.org.pk](http://www.camat.org.pk)
- Tajikistan: ACTED: [www.acted.org](http://www.acted.org)

Community-Based Tourism, Ecotourism and Pro-Poor Tourism

- World Tourism Organization (WTO): [www.world-tourism.org](http://www.world-tourism.org)
- Pro-Poor Tourism: [www.propoortourism.org.uk](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk)
- World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC): [www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org)

## Appendix 1: Project Areas and Partner Organizations

### **BHUTAN: THE PHOBJIKHA VALLEY**

#### **UNESCO PARTNER: THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE (RSPN)**

Bhutan's Phobjikha Valley is home to the endangered Black-Necked Crane and to other wetland species. Phobjikha has a population of 5,000 people, mostly farmers living in the valley's 37 villages, and it is a prime site for the development of culturally and environmentally responsible cultural and ecotourism. UNESCO partner the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature was founded in 1987, becoming a registered Bhutanese NGO in 1997. Benefiting from the patronage of HRH the Crown Prince of Bhutan, RSPN today assists the Royal Government of Bhutan in pursuing the country's conservation and sustainable development goals.

### **INDIA, LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR**

#### **UNESCO PARTNERS (UNTIL 2004): THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE (TMI) AND THE SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY (SLC)**

Covering an area of some 90,000 sq. km at altitudes of 2,750 to 6,670m, the Ladakh region of northern India in Jammu & Kashmir State, situated between the Western Himalayas and Tibet and containing the spectacular Hemis National Park, is attracting growing numbers of tourists, up from an estimated 18,000 arrivals in 2000 to 23,000 in 2003 and growing. UNESCO worked with partner organization The Mountain Institute, an international NGO committed to the preservation of mountain environments and advancement of mountain cultures around the world, until 2004 in Ladakh, as well as with the Snow Leopard Conservancy, a California-based Indian NGO dedicated to demonstrating grassroots measures that lead local people to become better stewards of the endangered snow leopard, its prey and its habitat.

### **INDIA, SPITI, HIMACHAL PRADESH**

#### **UNESCO PARTNER: MUSE**

Spiti, a high mountain valley area of the north Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, is sometimes called "Little Tibet" because it shares almost the same terrain, vegetation and climate as neighbouring Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir and Tibet. Covering an area of some 4,800 sq. km, Spiti is prime trekking country and is characterized by scattered village communities living from subsistence agriculture and

many Buddhist monasteries or gompas. The UNESCO/TMI/SLC Himalayan Homestays project, pioneered in Ladakh, was extended to Spiti in 2004 under the management of local partner organization MUSE.

**INDIA, SIKKIM**

**UNESCO PARTNERS: ECOTOURISM AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF SIKKIM (ECOSS), KHANGCHENDZONGA [VILLAGE] CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (KCC) AND DZONGU [VILLAGE] ECOTOURISM COMMITTEE (DEC)**

Sikkim is a small, mountainous Indian state bordering Nepal, China and Bhutan, offering many opportunities for trekking, mountain biking, mountaineering and yak safaris, with its lush green mountain trails, high mountains and spectacular mountain rivers. In addition to its spectacular natural heritage, Sikkim also possesses a fascinating cultural heritage and is home to large Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha speaking communities. It is a major centre for biodiversity, due to its variety of landscapes and climates ranging from tropical to alpine. UNESCO partner the Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim works with village committees, notably in Khangchendzonga and Dzongu, to develop employment opportunities and income-generating activities for local people through home-stays and guide training.

**IRAN, MASOULEH, GILAN PROVINCE**

**UNESCO PARTNER: THE IRANIAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO (IRANNATCOM), WORKING WITH THE IRANIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM ORGANIZATION (ICHTO), THE GILAN PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES AND THE MASOULEH TOWN COUNCIL.**

Located in a scenic valley surrounded by snow-capped mountains in north-eastern Iran, the village of Masouleh is noted for its traditional wooden buildings, clustered on the valley's northern slopes. Masouleh is registered as National Cultural and Natural Heritage in Iran, and the village is rich in tangible and intangible heritage. UNESCO partner organization, the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, working with the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, the Gilan provincial authorities and the Masouleh town council, is promoting community participation in the area's tourism development, notably by helping to generate employment opportunities and income-generating activities for local people.

**KAZAKHSTAN, NORTHERN TIEN SHEN MOUNTAINS****UNESCO PARTNER: THE KAZAKH MOUNTAINEERING FOUNDATION (KMF)**

Kazakhstan, the ninth-largest country in the world and half the size of the continental USA, offers a variety of ecotourism activities, including nature tourism amid the country's vast steppes, and trekking, rafting and climbing in the dramatic Tien Shen Mountains, Chinese for "Celestial Mountains," that lie along the country's south-eastern fringes. UNESCO partner the Kazakh Mountaineering Foundation, a national NGO based in the country's former capital, Almaty, is working particularly on guide training for poorer members of village communities in the Tien Shen.

**KYRGYZSTAN, ISSYK KUL REGION****UNESCO PARTNER: NOVINOMAD ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT COMPANY**

Tourism in Kyrgyzstan is increasing by 15-20% annually, tourists being attracted by the country's magnificent and unspoilt scenery, which includes Lake Issyk Kul, a Biosphere Reserve of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and area of the UNESCO project. Located 1600m above sea level among the mountain peaks of the Tien Shen Mountain range, Lake Issyk Kul is some 170km long and 70km wide, making it the second-largest alpine lake in the world after Lake Titicaca in South America. UNESCO partner the Novinomad Ecotourism Development Company is working particularly in building skills and capacities for ecotourism development in the Issyk Kul region.

**NEPAL, HUMLA****UNESCO PARTNER: THE NEPAL TRUST**

Humla is the highest, most remote and most northerly region of Nepal lying on the border with Tibet, the region's main town of Simikot being reachable only on foot or by plane in the absence of paved roads. The area has particularly high levels of poverty in this already poor country, designated a UN Least Developed Country (LDC). UNESCO partner The Nepal Trust, a Nepal-based British NGO, has been working in the region since the early 1990s, pioneering ecotourism activities in the region. While more than 200,000 tourists have visited Nepal annually in recent years, most stay in the Kathmandu Valley or in areas already developed for trekking. The UNESCO/Nepal Trust project, emphasizing local participation and employment opportunities, has helped to put Humla on the Nepal ecotourism map.

**PAKISTAN, CHITRAL AND THE KALASH VALLEYS**

**UNESCO PARTNERS: AGA KHAN RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME (AKRSP) AND THE CHITRAL ASSOCIATION FOR MOUNTAIN AREA TOURISM (CAMAT)**

The former princely state of Chitral is situated in the extreme north-west corner of Pakistan and is part of the country's North-West Frontier Province. Chitral has a population of some quarter of a million people, most of whom live from subsistence agriculture in small villages built of square stone houses set amid tiny terraced fields of wheat and maize. The area is also noted for the neighbouring valleys of Birir, Bumburet and Rumbur, the Kalash Valleys, home to the people of the same name. These people are a significant minority population in Chitral, and their traditional way of life is threatened by poor economic opportunities in the valleys and the departure of younger people. The UNESCO/AKRSP/CAMAT project in Chitral is working to provide income-generating opportunities through community-based tourism development, as well as helping to conserve the area's outstanding natural and cultural heritage.

**TAJIKISTAN, MURGHAB, GORNO BADAKHSHAN**

**UNESCO PARTNER: *AGENCE D'AIDE À LA COOPÉRATION TECHNIQUE ET AU DÉVELOPPEMENT* (ACTED)**

The Pamir Mountains in Tajikistan, known locally as Bam-i-Dunya (the Roof of the World), are the range from which several of Asia's highest mountain ranges radiate, including the Karakoram and Himalayas to the south, the Hindu Kush to the west and the Tien Shen to the north, straddling the border of neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and China. Rural communities in the Eastern Pamirs suffer from geographical isolation, underdevelopment and a poor knowledge and training base. The UNESCO/ACTED project in Murghab, Gorno Badakhshan, is capitalizing upon the spectacular natural environment, using it to the benefit of all while promoting environmental protection and awareness.

## Special Thanks

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Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries, and for many countries, especially those in the developing world, it holds impressive economic potential. Not only does tourism create jobs and possibilities for economic growth, but it can also do so in regions having few other economic resources.

Part of a UNESCO programme which began in 2002, the project on the *Development of Cultural and Ecotourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central and South Asia* has developed ways in which local people living in remote mountain areas in selected Central and South Asian countries can benefit from increasing tourism, and in doing so it has forged partnerships with local organizations, mostly local NGOs, in eight regional countries working at ten project sites.

Project activities include training and skills building focusing on young people and women, the establishment of community-based homestay accommodation, and the production and sale of high-quality crafts items, as part of a strategy for skills and capacity building, contributing to the development of sustainable employment and the alleviation of poverty in poor, isolated mountain areas. Through this project, these communities are learning how their cultural and natural resources can contribute to local socio-economic development through community-based tourism, ensuring that the benefits are shared as widely as possible, and underlining the need to protect and preserve these resources for future generations.

The project has benefited from generous grants from the Governments of Norway and the Principality of Andorra, in addition to funds supplied from UNESCO. Its aim has been to develop pilot activities in the countries concerned, drawing lessons and best practices from them. This publication reports on these pilot activities and the thinking behind them in the hope that lessons learned from them will be of use to policy makers and project managers working on the development of similar issues and initiatives in these regions or elsewhere.

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## About the Author

David Tresilian was project manager of the UNESCO project for the Development of Cultural and Ecotourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central and South Asia from 2002 to December 2004. During this time he co-organized and attended project workshops on behalf of UNESCO in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, India, Bhutan and Iran, and was responsible for the day-to-day management of the project at UNESCO Headquarters.