



Report on Celebration of
International Mountains Day 2005
Under Theme
“Sustainable Peace for poverty Alleviation in Mountain Areas”
in
BALTISTAN PAKISTAN

A joint Venture of: IUCN & AGHE



Report Submitted By
Association of Global Humanists and Ethics (AGHE)
Northern Areas Pakistan

To
IUCN Office Gilgit Pakistan

This Report sheds light on three activities undertaken by AGHE in Two Districts (Sakardu & Ghanche) of Northern Areas Pakistan on special occasion of International Mountains Day 2005.

Acknowledgement

AGHE would like to extend thanks the following people, organizations and institutions for their untiring support during celebrating and undertaking the activities of the event without which it would not have come to a successful completion.

Mr. Haider Raza and Mrs. Mehbooba Nisa, for thier overall guidance and support throughout the activities.

Mir Aslaam Sher President Bazama Ilum o Fun and his fellows for their help to organize the Mehfil a Mushaira and to mobilize the key politicians, high government officials and other writhers and important personalities of the Sakardu city

Mr. Syed Asad Zaidi Deputy Speaker Northern Areas Legislative Council for heading the poetry session and making it more interesting by presenting his worthy Kullam.

Deputy Director Education Sakardu and his team for selection of schools and allowing AGHE to held Poster and Speech competitions in Shigar Valley.

Syed Muhammad Raqi acting principal Govt. High School Sighar for his cooperation for providing logistical facilities to conduct the speech and poster competitions.

The Deputy Commissioner, The Assistant Commissioner of Ghanche and chairman municipal committee khaploo and the Head Field Education Office of AKES,P for their leading role in the walk and for their moral support to mobilize the community.

Mr. Wazir Jaffer Shigri Representative for Baltistan of Alpine Club Pakistan who made the poster and speech competition more informative by his speech.

All the representative of Print and electronic media for their coverage of the event especially to the local news paper Baadaar, K2, and Ciachen and Mr. Nisar Abbas the representative of JEO TV and The Radio Pakistan Skaradu.

To all the members and volunteers of AGHE in Baltistan for their efforts to mobilize the community at such a mass level to celebrate the day.

Introduction:

Mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery. In an increasingly industrialized world, blighted by stress, noise and pollution, mountains beckon as an oasis of spiritual calm and peace, a place to commune with nature and to rediscover the simple pleasures of life. More than 50 million tourists visit mountain regions each year, attracted by their majestic beauty.

Tourism is now the world's largest growth industry, with annual earnings of more than US \$ 500 billion and annual increases of an average 9 percent over the past 16 years. And mountain regions account for a sizeable slice of the cake, some 15 to 20 percent of total turnover. Together with cities and coasts, mountains have become the world's top tourist destinations.

Globally, revenue from mountains is now put at a figure of between US\$ 70 and \$90 billion per year. Such is the growth that earnings from tourism have become a source of revenue for many mountain areas. In 1999, there were 663 million tourists arrivals worldwide; generating \$453 billion in revenues (source: WTO). It is estimated that the total global tourist arrivals would reach one billion by 2010.

Regarding tourism in Pakistan, although there are no official statistics available especially for Northern Areas of Pakistan however according to the Ministry of Tourism estimate, around 37 million domestic tourists traveled within Pakistan during 2000. It is obvious from the statistics that tourism can make a major contribution to the economic development of a country like Pakistan which has great potential for cultural and nature-based tourism.

Mostly International tourists visit Northern Areas of Pakistan. The tourism in Northern Areas is to a large extent based on the natural resources and environment, therefore the protection and preservation of environment and making all tourism activities `sustainable` is of paramount importance for poverty alleviation in the region.

IUCN take initiative to celebrate the International Mountains Day on December 11, 2005. Many local NGOs were invited to celebrate the day with IUCN Northern Areas as a joint venture. So the Executive Body of Association of Global Humanists and Ethics (AGHE) decided to undertake the celebration activities in two districts of Northern Areas Skardu and Ghanche. Although it was a challenging job to mobilize the mass in such an extreme and harsh weather which fall minus 14 in Baltistan yet it is great achievement of the members and volunteers of the AGHE to make the event successful in every aspect.

Aims/Objectives:

The Association of Global Humanists and Ethics (AGHE) Northern Areas of Pakistan was committed to celebrate International Mountains Day with to heighten awareness about the perils and potentials of tourism in the area and to appeal for sustainable tourism amongst a wide audience (government, NGOs, private-sector organizations, the public and the media).

Highlights of the Activities:

Activities in District Skardu:

a) Mahfil-i-Mushaira:

A *Mushaira* (Poetry Session) was organized in Skardu city with the collaboration of Bazaam-a- Ilum o Fun, a well reputed and active association of local poets and intellectuals of Baltistan. The aim to organize this activity was to bring together intellectuals, government officials, politicians, and members from private sector and media representatives to explore and shares their thoughts under the theme. This activity contributed not only in promoting mountains' friendly literature but also focused on paradigm shift with reference of sustainable tourism and poverty alleviation. Some interesting highlights of the Mushaira are:

- The chief of Mushaira was Deputy Speaker Northern Areas Legislative Council, Syed Asad Zaidi who himself is a well known poet and has his own written and published poetry book.
- The prominent poets of the Baltistan Ghulam Hassan Hasni, Prof. Hasmaat Kamal Ilhami, Mir Aslam Shar, Zeeshan Haider, Asiq Hussain Asiq and sixteen others poets from the region presented their Kalaam (Poetry) which was under the theme “Pasahani a Zameen Kaa Jhoomar Mera Pahad” (My Mountains are the real beauty of the earth).
- High Govt. Officials like Superintendent of Police (SP) , College Professors, Local Writers and Historians like Hasan Hasrat, Yousaf Hussain Abadi and Abass Kazmi, local Politicians, Social Workers and Students were among the audience.
- At the end of the session Mr. Ijaz Hussain, president AGHE and Mr. Syed Asad Zaidi and Mir Aslam Shar delivered speeches under the theme and highlighted importance of the day and thanked to IUCN for taking initiative to celebrate the Day.
- After the session all the audience took dinner and Deputy Speaker NALC recorded his interview regarding significance of the Day for JEO TV and Radio.

b)Poster and speech competitions:

The poster and speech competitions was arranged for four schools of government and private sector with equal number of boys and girls schools in Shigar valley. Prior to the main event the school authorities were mobilized to hold the competitions under the theme “*Sustainable Tourism for Poverty Alleviation in Mountain Areas*” An exhibition of the Posters and speech competition was held on International Mountain Day in Government Boys High School Shigar. The aim to organize these events in schools was to raise awareness and providing opportunity to the young people to raise their voices, share their thoughts and enhance their understanding regarding mountain

areas development and its potentials for sustainable tourism. Some noteworthy highlights of the event are as following:

- About six hundred students with sixty teachers were present in the venue to celebrate the Day. Near about hundred of the parents and community members also joined the ceremony.
- Fifty students participated in poster competition and displayed their paintings for the spectators.
- Ten students participated in speech competition and delivered their speeches after the poster exhibition.
- Six Judges were selected to finalize winners for the both competitions for 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions.
- When the competitions were over, the guests; Principal govt. high school Shigar, Mr. Wazir Jaffer Shigri Representative for Baltistan of Alpine Club Pakistan and president AGHE delivered speeches and communicated messages of the day.
- At the end before having refreshment, prizes were distributed among the position holders of the competitions.
- Vote of thanks was presented by the acting principal Mr. Syed Muhammad Raqi of govt. high school Shigar.

Activity in District Ghanche:

Mountain Day March (Walk):

A mass level mobilization was undertake to motivate opinion leaders, politicians, high government officials, schools and colleges' staff, students and business community to participate in the walk on the Day. The rally started from Inter College Khaploo and was ended up on Bus Stand main Bazaar Khaploo with speeches of dignitaries with dissemination of message under the theme. Some fascinating highlights of walk are:

- Deputy Commissioner Ghanche Mr. Fida Hussain lead the march. More than five hundred people including govt. officials, politicians,

members from The Municipal Committee Khaploo, Businessmen, Teachers and Students were the participants of the walk.

- Students and leading persons of the walk were bearing placards, posters and banners with messages of the day and about mountains.
- Flyer developed especially under the theme and for the walk participants was distributed in quantity of five hundred.
- The ended walk ended up with speeches of dignitaries (The DC, The Head FEO and The President AGHE)
- Most interesting item of the walk which gained more attraction and appreciations of the participants was the Poem which was read by a local poet Muhammad Hunifaa.

Note:

All the above mention activities were organized in two days 11th and 12th of December 2005.

Overall Successes

Following were overall success of celebration of the Day:

- It was first time in the region that any organization/s take initiative to celebrate the International Mountains Day.
- More than one thousands people got direct exposure to celebrate the Day.
- Thousands of the people of Baltistan and overall the Northern Areas were able to got messages of the day indirectly through the newspapers, the Radio and the TV.
- It was also great success that participants demonstrated enthusiasm, motivation and were eager to learn more about importance of the mountains and tourism in the region. Majority of them also suggested increasing such activities in the region.
- It was great achievement of members and volunteers of the AGHE that they able were to mobilize community at such a boarder and mass level as it was first formal interaction of AGHE and the community in Baltistan.

Overall Challenges:

While celebrating the day and carrying out the activities following challenges were faced:

- As it was first activity which was carried out by AGHE in Baltistan, so the organizers faced boarding and lodging and community mobilization problems as mostly the hotels and educational institutions were closed due to harsh winter of the Area.
- Females could participate the activities due to contextual norms and customs in spite of the fact that they were invited and motivated to participate in the events.
- Harsh winter of the region was the main hurdle for mobilization at mass level and also it was the main barrier for people to participate in the celebration activities as the temperature remained minus 14 to 15 through out the week.
- Diverse needs of the activities and people also proved a challenge as some of the participants were intellectuals, high govt. officials and politicians and others were students and more younger.

Recommendations:

Based on the overall successes and challenges encountered and after critical evaluation and reflections of the people about the event, the organizers put following recommendations:

- Keeping in view the contextual realities IUCN and AGHE must encourage separate programs and events for females as they do not feel comfortable working with males because of cultural norms and values.
- The organizers felt need that events like International Mountains Day must advertise well before time so that people might prepare themselves mentally to celebrate it.
- The organizers also experienced that presence of senior intellectual persons, politicians, Govt. officials in the activities counted a lot. The participants not only demonstrate seriousness but also take greater part in

the activities. So if possible, in future presence of such personalities in the activities must be ensured.

- As we are developing country as well as developing region, so we must request (with full moral and official support of Pakistani Government) to the UN authorities to change the Date of the event as life in Northern Areas wither in the month of December due to unkind winter and lack of necessary facilities. In this regard, the organizers suggest to start a campaign at high official and organizational level to celebrate International Mountains Day in Summer season which is suitable to the remaining world as well third world countries especially to the Northern Areas.

For Further Details

please Contact:

Association of Global Humanists and Ethics (AGHE)

Office # 105 Dar Plaza, Nabi Bazaar Gilgit.

Phone # 92 5811 51511

Web Address:

www.aghepakistan.org

or

info@aghepakistan.org

International Mountains Day 2005

(Some images)

Mehafila Mushaira (Poetry Session):



Deputy Speaker Northern Areas Legislative Council Mr. Syed Asad Zaidi with other poets and participants of Mushaira on IMD 2005 at Skaradu.

Poster Competition



A teacher is evaluating the paintings of the students made for poster competition on IMD 2005 in Shigar valley Skaradu.

Speech Competition



Mr. Wazir Jaffir Shigiri of Alpine Club Pakistan is presenting 1st Prize to the position holder for speech competition on IMD 2005 in Shigar valley Skardu.



Participants of Speech & Poster Competitions at Shigar Skardu

Mountains Day March (A Walk)



Deputy Commissioner Ghanche Mr. Fida Hussain along with others is leading the mountains Day March on IMD 2005 in Khaploo Ghanche.



Participants of Mountain Day March are listening the message of the Day