

Mountain Forum Bulletin

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Sustainable Tourism for Poverty Alleviation in Mountain Areas

Making Partnerships for Sustainable Gorilla Tourism in Mgahinga, Uganda
Periyar Eco-Project in Kerala, India
Traditional Rural Landscape or "Wilderness" in the Alps?
Mountain Greenways in Mexico
Sustainable Tourism in the Ecuadorian Andes



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Dear Mountain Forum friends,

This is the first issue of the Bulletin in 2006, the 10th year since Mountain Forum came into being. As we complete the first decade of Mountain Forum, we hope that the sense of kinship and closeness that exists in this unique and special community - linked by its deep concern for mountains and their peoples - will only grow in the decades to come. A prime example of the way in which we can collectively act came to the fore in a manner both heart-warming and reassuring in your response to the appeal for support for the people who were affected by the earthquake that hit South Asia late last year. Thank you for your generosity.

In this special 10th anniversary year, we welcome you to this second issue of the re-launched Mountain Forum Bulletin, which we hope has been further improved thanks to your feedback. Many of you have given us helpful tips and suggestions on how to make this Bulletin an even better source of information on mountain issues.

The Bulletin will be published twice a year, in January and July, and will feature thematic regional perspectives on a variety of issues related to sustainable mountain development. The thematic focus of the January issue will be synchronised with the International Mountain Day (11 December) theme for the preceding year. The July issue will feature a special on results and topics from the annual meetings of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), held in New York every spring.

For this edition we have chosen the theme "Sustainable Tourism for Poverty Alleviation in Mountain Areas" as this has become an important concern for highland rural communities everywhere, due to the increasing number of tourists in hills and mountains around the world.

As the tourism industry struggles with the ever-evolving needs of travellers, more innovative forms of tourism have been developing. Mountain tourism has equally gained popularity and acceptance as a term simply used to describe any form of tourism activity in the mountains. For people vacationing in these highlands, the lure of the mountains has always been a compelling mystique.

Hill and mountain people, who rely on thousands of years of first-hand experience in living and working in their awe-inspiring environments, share a symbiotic relationship with their natural surroundings. Cultures long tucked away by their rugged terrain and isolation have become "object matter" for camera-toting tourists. The knowledge and skills refined over generations by mountain peoples could lose value in the face of high-tech mountain sports and the demand for luxurious holidays. The potential for environmental degradation from unsustainable tourist practices and flow, and the erosion of local values and cultural identity could lead to increased social problems and to the degradation of community values and religious practices that once held indigenous societies together.

However, even though tourism is often considered a threat to local cultures and their natural environment, it also opens new opportunities to many local communities. Tourism economies depend on people visiting from other places for a limited amount of time - visitors come, move around and leave again, but their footprints are often left for good. It is important for local mountain communities relying on tourism to remember that tourism is ephemeral as it depends on many factors such as season, weather, global economy and the country's political situation, among others.

We hope this issue of our Bulletin will provide you with some helpful stories and case studies concerning tourism and its impact on local traditions and environments. We are confident that these examples may support others with their own initiatives to improve the coupling of local cultures and temporary visitors. Mountain Forum will continue to provide a lively arena in which to share opinions and experiences about tourism in mountain regions. We hope that all of us together can help restrain tourism's exploitative aspects and instead render it a positive and constructive experience for both - those who are living in the fragile environments of the mountains, and those who visit them.

With best wishes for the next 10 years of Mountain Forum!

Sincerely,



Billi Bierling



Jacopo Pasotti

Your feedback is precious to us. Please write in with your comments to bulletin@mtnforum.org. You can also write to us by regular post at the address given on the back cover of the Bulletin.

Making Partnerships for Sustainable Gorilla Tourism in Mgahinga

Moses Musinguzi



Photo: Getty Images

In the Central African jungles of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Rwanda, lies the home of the world's last mountain gorillas, an endangered species that are threatened by extinction. It is estimated that there are only 650 mountain gorillas alive today. Mgahinga Gorilla National Park is the destination for international tourists who visit Uganda for gorilla tourism. The park covers the northern slopes of the three northernmost Virunga Volcanoes: Mt. Muhavura (4,127 m), Mt. Gahinga (3,474 m), and Mt. Sabinyo (3,645 m). The park is near the Kisoro district in Uganda and is bordered to the south by Rwanda and to the west by the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Gorilla tourism provides Uganda with a unique form of wildlife tourism that other East African countries cannot provide. It is estimated that more than 90 percent of foreign tourists come to Uganda to see gorillas. For this reason it is very important for the tourism industry to further develop in order to bring in considerable funds to the economy, which are highly needed for poverty eradication.

Since the 1950s, tourists have occasionally been taken up to Mgahinga Forest Reserve and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest to see gorillas. However, many tourists were disappointed because they did not see any gorillas or, in the worst cases, were even attacked by the animals. A new, unregulated industry was to blame. The Ugandan government grew concerned over the haphazard approach to gorilla tourism and in May 1989 banned the practice completely, pending the introduction of tourism management policies. In a bid to promote ecotourism, official gorilla tourism in Uganda started at the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in 1991. In 1993, the Mgahinga Forest followed suit. Since then, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of tourists destined for Uganda.

Conservationists have warned about the dangers of the large number of tourists on the gorillas and the environment. They also argue that over-emphasising income generation from gorilla tourism is likely to lead to the extinction of the remaining gorillas and hence destroy the tourism industry. The authorities have responded by instituting conservation-related restrictions. For example, they have limited the maximum group of people permitted to see gorillas at any one time to eight, and the maximum viewing duration to one hour.

Promoters of tourism on habituated, free-ranging gorillas have managed to convince politicians, donors, the public and conservationists that gorilla tourism has the potential to generate revenue that could be used to benefit the gorilla and ecosystem conservation. This appears to strike a balance between the need to generate essential income in a poor country while at the same time preserving the environment. However, such a claim is only justified if a substantial part of the income generated from gorilla tourism is given to support the gorilla and ecosystem conservation. But experience in Mgahinga and other parks has shown that a substantial part of the income does not go to the conservation of the ecosystem.

Local communities adjacent to the park play a big role in managing the ecosystem. However, forging a partnership between the controlling authority and the local communities is not easy. Many local people do not appreciate the direct link between conservation and sustainable development, especially if there are no direct tangible benefits to them. In the case of Mgahinga, communities neighbouring the park traditionally depended on the forest for firewood, timber, meat and medicinal herbs. After it had been declared a National Park, strict regulations had to be enforced to prevent poaching and to control disease transmission from animals to humans. The minister in charge of wildlife gave out an order that empowered park rangers to 'shoot to kill' anyone trying to poach or kill wild animals in the gazetted areas. The directive demonstrates the level of protection that the government has put on gorilla tourism, which is directly linked to the income that the industry generates. This approach addresses the problem of poaching but may not entirely eliminate the need to involve locals in the conservation effort. For example, apes sometimes loiter in people's gardens outside the park, which exposes them to danger. But if people are educated about the benefits of conservation and receive some benefits from the conservation effort, then the danger to animals will be reduced.

The government of Uganda passed a law that requires the park authority to contribute 20 percent of the proceeds from park entrance fees to local communities adjacent to the park. The government did this in an effort to help locals appreciate the benefits of the park and gorilla tourism. In addition, communities near the park have had conservation training from some non-governmental organisations such as CARE. Grants have also been given for building primary schools, health clinics and improving roads. Studies show that people's attitudes generally improved after these initiatives were implemented. This could be seen through friendlier relations between local people and park employees, decreased illegal activity and a greater participation by community members in park meetings and projects.

The studies further revealed that attitudes at the household level depended on a resident's distance from the park boundary and thus his or her exposure to crop-raiding by wildlife. Most community members still believe that individuals who have suffered as a result of conservation efforts, such as eviction from parkland or crop-raiding, should receive a larger share of revenue-sharing benefits. They see community-based projects as benefiting all the members of the community including many who do not have direct losses resulting from the conservation effort. Despite these complaints, local people are getting more and more involved in the conservation of the park and the efforts are slowly showing positive results, which is the right and only way to achieve sustainable gorilla tourism.

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Additional material compiled from the Gorilla Journal:
<http://www.bergorilla.de/english/frame.html>



Mountain women in Bundibugyo, Uganda. Photo: ICRAF

Periyar Eco-Project in Kerala, India

Dr. Santhosh P. Thampi



Backwaters, Kochi, Kerala, India. Photo: Prashant Sharma, MFS

Mountain dwellers in many parts of Asia-Pacific's mountainous regions are among the world's poorest people and hence major development efforts are required to bring them into the mainstream of economic development. Substantial opportunities for economic development in mountain areas are offered by tourism in general, especially by ecotourism. In developing mountain tourism, it is particularly important to make sure that tourism supports and strengthens local cultures and traditions, and does not destroy them. International organisations should increase their support for research, development and promotion of ecotourism consistent with environmental conservation and livelihood objectives.¹

Ecotourism in Kerala

Kerala, located in the southern part of India, is replete with tourism locales where the natural beauty of the destination itself is the key attraction. About six per cent of the total geographical area of the state is covered by two national parks, twelve wildlife sanctuaries and one biosphere reserve coming under the category of protected areas. This is higher than the national average of five percent. The forest cover of Kerala is largely spread over the Western Ghats that border the state. The Western Ghats represent one of the world's eighteen hot spots of biodiversity and are considered to be a repository of endemic, rare and endangered flora and fauna.

Kerala's ecotourism is a multifarious and diverse product. There is something for everyone. The government of Kerala has developed a vision and strategy for the management of forest resources through ecotourism initiatives. Kerala's wildlife sanctuaries and two national parks form the base for planning ecotourism activities. The India Eco-Development Project at the Periyar Tiger Reserve is an ecotourism initiative in Kerala with the dual objectives of conservation of protected areas and poverty alleviation of people living in and around the reserve.

The India Eco-Development Project at Periyar Tiger Reserve

The India Eco-Development Project (IEDP, which is a World Bank funded participatory biodiversity conservation programme) was implemented at the Periyar Tiger Reserve in Thekkady, Kerala, India, in 1998. It also has an ecotourism component, the 'Thekkady Tiger Trail'. The inception and implementation of the project made the managers of the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) think seriously about identifying sustainable tourism activities that ensure local participation in its fullest sense and the reduction of human dependence on the forest for their livelihood. This was done by addressing the economic needs of those living in and around the park (about 250,000 people) by finding out viable and innovative livelihood alternatives for them.²

The objectives of the project at Periyar are to manage protected areas and to get the involvement of local people in it, thereby giving them an opportunity to get an alternative livelihood. To implement the project initially, local communities living off the forest were organised in Eco-Development Committees (EDCs). Basic objectives of the EDCs were to reduce the negative impact local people have on the sanctuary and to involve encroachers in conservation instead of exploitation. So far, around 40,000 people have benefited from the project.

People who were involved in the illegal debarking of cinnamon trees (*Vayana*) as well as in sandalwood smuggling and poaching, formed an Eco-Development Committee in 1998. The initial project fund was USD 8,000. Several other EDCs were formed with local communities under IEDP and 23 smugglers came forward to begin life anew. They pledged to protect the forests they had plundered in the past and

in return the forest department withdrew all the cases against them. They initiated a bamboo rafting programme for tourists in November 2002 with a major part of the earnings going to a community development fund. The Tribal Trekkers Eco-Development Committee, a group of 20 tribal youth, and the Periyar Tiger Samrakshan, a group of 70 members who were earlier employed by the forest department as watchers, are involved in sustainable tourism activities. They provide services like leading day treks through the forest, arranging nature camps, horse riding and special programmes for tourists. The earnings from these sources go into a community development fund.

Local women have formed a body called Vasanta Sena to look after the Periyar Tiger Reserve. The Vasanta Sena comprises 100 women belonging to eight different EDCs who form groups of seven and patrol the forest on a rotation basis every day. Carrying bags with the logo of Periyar Tiger Reserve, members of the Vasanta Sena come from nearby villages. The women do not get any salary for tending the forests. They do it in reciprocity for benefits accrued through the India Eco-Development Project that gave each family a loan of USD 300 at the start of the project through their respective EDCs. The repaid loans went into the Community Development Fund, which in return helped to set up self-help groups, benefiting the community.



Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala, India. Photo: Prashant Sharma, MFS

A major part of the earnings from the bamboo rafting programme goes to the Community Development Fund from which members earn a monthly wage of USD 90. The earnings from various activities and services also go into a Community Development Fund. In some of the tribal villages on the fringes of the park, Eco-Development Committees have been formed focusing on enhanced agricultural activities. These tribal families were helped in clearing their debts, improving the yield of their pepper crop, and procuring a fair price for their produce in the market by eliminating middlemen³.

There are 72 EDCs in Periyar and the EDCs working for the Periyar Tiger Reserve are of three types, as follows.

- ▶ Neighbourhood-based EDCs: constituted in hamlets with 50 to 80 households. The investment went towards building community assets such as schools and provision stores and for generating livelihood.
- ▶ User group EDCs: for people who depend on a particular resource within PTR, such as graziers and fuel wood gatherers. These EDCs are meant to reduce the adverse impact on PTR by providing such groups with an alternative source of livelihood.
- ▶ Professional group EDCs: for groups who have acquired specific skills in tourism.

These EDCs have been able to generate a regular monthly income from the forests itself and forest protection is one of their objectives. The Periyar Tiger Reserve has four professional EDCs - the Ex-Vayana Bark Collectors, Tribal Trekkers, Tribal Heritage and Periyar Tiger Samrakshana. Each EDC gives 10 percent of its earnings through ecotourism schemes to PTR, five percent is spent on office maintenance, 10 percent goes for their own EDC welfare and the rest is donated to the Community Development Fund.⁴

In the Mannakkudy and Paliyakudy tribal settlements, there are four EDCs and 385 families, whose financial status has significantly increased in the past five years. One hundred and fifty-two families, which relied on black dammer for their income, stopped collecting it since the EDC was implemented. In Sathram, 64 families which had been regularly collecting cinnamon bark for sale have also stopped doing so. The opportunities of employment to the members of EDCs in various protected area management activities such as habitat improvement, fire protection and tourism have increased. Realising the necessity for financial support in the future, all EDCs are generating their own funds known as Community Development Fund. Most of the EDCs have collected reasonable sums that are being reused for the welfare of its members.⁵

With the government giving priority to sustainable and long-term tourism, there is little doubt that ecotourism could play a leading role in poverty alleviation of people living in the mountain areas of Kerala.

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Traditional Rural Landscape or “Wilderness” in the Alps?

Case studies in the Val Grande National Park and the Strona Valley, Piedmont, Italy

F. Höchtel, S. Lehringer, W. Konold

In many mountain valleys of the Italian Piedmont region, agriculture and forestry are in steady decline. Many people have left the region, which in turn has affected the rural landscape. Such changes, including the ecological and social consequences of the population shift were the subject of a research project funded by the Bristol Foundation in Zurich entitled: “Changes in Alpine landscapes resulting from a decline in land use in the Val Grande National Park and Strona Valley: From rural landscape to wilderness”.

In two study areas, the village of Premosello Chiovena in the Val Grande National Park and the upper Strona Valley, the research focused on the landscape changes that have taken place, their effects on vegetation and structural diversity, the perception of landscape change by local populations and tourists, and the social and ecological effects of land abandonment. Our main goal was to discuss “wilderness” as a nature conservation strategy as well as to propose future development prospects. This issue required a trans-disciplinary approach combining methods of historical landscape analysis, ecological inventories and empirical-social research.

The historical landscape analysis made clear that both research areas were shaped by 700 years of continuous agro-silvo-pastoral use. The traditional rural landscape was characterised by chestnut groves, vineyards, forests, pastures or meadows and was used intensively until World War II. With the arrival of industrialisation, a process of emigration and abandonment began, which is at present complete in the upper Strona Valley as well as in the inner parts of the

national park. Meanwhile, summer residents and tourists have found their way into the villages.

As a result of land abandonment, the floral richness of the area is decreasing rapidly and, depending on the altitude, the structural diversity of the landscape is changing. Wildfires in the communities pose threats to neighbouring villages. Nevertheless, many rural and cultural landscape characteristics persist, and past uses continue to have a significant impact on future landscape development. The main impacts on the inhabitants are psychological and economic in nature. Around the villages, local people regard the effects of abandonment in a negative light whereas tourists judge the consequences of land abandonment differently. While they regard the resulting landscape's wilderness positively, they also regret the cultural losses suffered by rural communities.



Alpine Pasture, Switzerland. Photo: Ana Maria Ponce, MFS

To protect the Premosello Chiovenda community, the implementation of a park zone concept, as stipulated in the national park statutes, could be a viable option. On this basis the research area could be an example of the co-existence of areas which develop without control or interference alongside areas, where the rural, anthropogenic landscape is conserved. To reach this goal, traditional and innovative land uses around the villages and pre-alps should be encouraged. Therefore an outer "economical and social" development zone is proposed, which combines green tourism and sustainable agro-silvo-pastoral land uses. Uninhabited areas - especially in the inner Val Grande - could be left unmanaged to allow for unregulated landscape dynamics.

There are various reasons why "wilderness" should be rejected as a management strategy for the whole national park territory. The land use history of the Ossola/Val Grande area during the centuries is contradictory to the criteria which underlie this principle. In the research area,

wilderness would inevitably lead to inaccessibility, so most people would be unable to experience nature in this area. Consequently, the national park would not be able to fulfil its mandate of providing recreation and education for the people. Uncontrolled landscape development would endanger settlements by increasing the risk of fire and blocking watercourses. As a result of uncontrolled landscape dynamics, the diversity of plant species as well as the landscape-based cultural knowledge would decrease. Ultimately, the landscape would lose its value as a homeland for the local population.

Decisions concerning the designation of areas in the Alps, where nature should develop unhindered, must be based on regional and local studies that include the direct input of local residents. In a professional discussion of nature conservation, the term "wilderness" needs to be more clearly defined and objectively discussed. Since wilderness is linked to notions which European rural landscapes can not fulfil, this term should no longer be used in scientific, conservation-oriented discussions. Rather, the term "nature-development-area" is proposed for areas in which landscape is allowed to develop without any human control.

Reasonable prospects for the upper Strona Valley's future can arise from the planned creation of the biosphere reserve "Walser territories around the Monte Rosa", which is proposed in the framework of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme. Wide protected and unprotected areas could be integrated within the nearby Sesia and Anzasca valleys to create a large model region to test strategies for sustainable development and the protection of abandoned areas in the south western Alpine region. On the one hand, large areas are experiencing the process of natural succession in the valleys around Monte Rosa. On the other hand, essential elements of the traditional culture and its landscape have been sustained. An appropriate concept for the coexistence of agricultural areas and areas of uncontrolled landscape development is therefore proposed for this exemplary region.

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Mountain Greenways in Mexico

Antonio Suarez



Ciclovía de la ciudad de Mexico at Ajusco, Distrito Federal, Mexico. Photo: Antonio Suarez

From cities to mountains, hikers and bikers are building real ecotourism. Is it strange to see mountain bikers on city streets, or people that look like explorers carrying trekking poles through urban spots? No, it is not, especially if you are in a city's outskirts where mountains and urban areas meet. This scene has been very common in some European Alpine countries for decades, as well as in several mountain resort cities. But now this phenomenon is spreading to Latin American countries and cities, including Mexico City.

Are they tourists? No, they are local residents, and most of them are fast becoming assiduous mountain visitors. Their city has not planned for nature recreation, there are few instruments and little money to preserve land reserves, and many other social priorities come before conservation. These "urban explorers", however, are the future force that will build sustainable links between mountains and cities. They will do this by walking and riding their bicycles through a green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure includes a variety of natural landscapes, restored ecosystems and landscape features that make up a system of "hubs" and "links". "Hubs" anchor green infrastructure networks, providing origins and destinations for wildlife moving to or through them while safeguarding ecological processes. "Links" are the connections tying the system together, making the infrastructure of the network work.

Along origins and destinations we find a very valuable social link in which people get to know each other, even in societies characterised by huge economic and social disparities. If green infrastructure can make a more liveable community elsewhere, in the mountains of Mexico green infrastructure has the potential to create a more democratic society, where everyone has access to both life in nature and in the city.

Mexico's most visited natural attraction is around the capital city, where most Mexicans have their first encounter with nature. As in other countries, many "ecological dreams" usually come from the city and arise through travels and destinations, and in not just a few cases, from travels to the surrounding green belts, forests, reserves, mountains and natural spaces. Regardless of whether such mountain sites have a conservation plan that includes recreation, people will continue to visit them in greater numbers. This trend is growing much faster than green infrastructure, and it is fuelled by the romantic and unsustainable ecotourism idea of visiting remote areas.

This is also happening, or will happen, in many biodiversity hot spots and important mountain ecosystems. Traditional conservation often involves space preservation efforts that are site-specific only and not linked to a greenway concept where willing people build green spaces into their daily lives - where mountains are the hubs, sidewalks and trails are the links, and neighbourhoods as well as parks and mountains are becoming destinations.

The effectiveness of smart conservation practices like mountain greenways is that they promote conservation through an equitable social-exchange practice. So, visitors and locals can accomplish their different needs by the same means. While some climb to encounter nature, others go down to reach urban facilities. In addition to these multifunctional effects of green infrastructure, there are significant positive economic effects as well. For example, by creating a physical link between mountains and cities, some of the activity of urban economies can flow up to the mountains, not only in terms of visitors' money but also in terms of government investment.

Often, talking about mountain poverty we refer only to economic issues, but in many cases, for mountain inhabitants, poverty appears to be more the result of isolation. Isolation creates a social fracture which disables decision making, equity, and democracy. This is due to the fact that urban populations barely recognise the importance of mountain communities. In some cases, even policy makers do not give mountain populations the chance to pursue reasonable exchange opportunities. If sustainable mountain tourism is to exist, it must start by sharing spaces equitably between mountain residents and visitors, and by finding similarities instead of differences. A clue to finding these might be in the development of sustainable tourism that does not divide urban and rural ecotourism, but recognises the sharing of common spaces.

Of course there are critical and controversial economic and cultural implications of integrating cities with rural mountain places. Also, it is very likely that the majority of mountain regions would not fit into a green infrastructure model since they are far away from cities. However, if we talk about mountain tourism we must bear in mind that this is, more often than not, an urban phenomenon.

In many mountain ecosystems the lack of well-integrated planning between grey and green infrastructures is already creating cultural and economic disruptions. This is the case in many cities surrounded by mountains - where urban sprawl continues rapidly with no end in sight - and conventional planners tend to react instead of interact. This lack of planning is also seen when the average town turns into a resort within a few years. It has become increasingly important to start creating a balance between the important points where urban and rural spaces meet.

Thinking about the origins and destinations concept in terms of green infrastructure we must imply that, in addition to creating a community landscape, there is also a significant cultural change being built in and around mountains.

At present, the most visited mountain destinations are not in remote areas but are close to the city, in places where people are educating themselves for future mountain adventures. We can only hope that planners will put people and landscapes on equal terms, hopefully through some kind of sustainable tourism instead of exotic, extreme or real estate experiences, which is how many mountain destinations are marketed now.

Everything, ultimately, is affected by how we view things; by the approach we take. Nature can be viewed as something to be used and abused, or it can be viewed as a deeply integral and important aspect of who we are. Indeed, it is who we are, for we and nature are all made up of the same stuff. The trick is in finding balances that best sustain and enrich both.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT...



Island of Rab, Croatia. Photo: Morguefile

... Croatia does not have any mountain that is higher than 2,000 metres, whilst the highest top (Mount Dinara at 1,831 metres) is situated in the Sibenik-Knin County.

The highest and most beautiful Croatian mountains lie near the coast: Ucka and Cicarija in Istria, Obruc and Snjeznik in the Croatian Littoral, Biokovo, Kozjak, Svilaja, Promina, and Mosor in Dalmatia. Velebit puts itself forward with its magnificent beauty and magnitude. Since Croatian mountains are easily accessible and offer a lot of attractive destinations there are countless opportunities.

Those interested in scaling the highest Croatian mountain, Dinara, can visit the recently reconstructed climbers' lodge at Brezovac. The top is only a three-hour hike away from the hut which sleeps 40 people. A bus goes from Knin or Guga to Brezovac's parking lot called "Grob", from where it is a pleasant 80 minute walk to the climbers' lodge.

Source: <http://www.infoadriatic.com/>

Sustainable Tourism in the Ecuadorian Andes

Claire Catherine Nicklin



Birdwatching led by local guide, Ecuador. Photo: Yunguilla Lodge

Ecuador suffered a severe economic crisis in the late 1990s and currently has a poverty rate of 45 percent, which has led to high levels of migration to cities and foreign countries. (World Bank, 2001.) Tourism and travel is an important source of income for Ecuador, bringing in revenues of over USD 700 million annually or 2.3 percent of the gross domestic product. About 100,000 people are employed in the sector, representing two percent of total employment in 2005, according to the World Tourism and Travel Council. The average salary for employees working in tourism is USD 372 per month, which is well over the minimum wage of USD 130. Tourism has the ability to decrease poverty in Ecuador in a manner that is potentially less damaging to the environment and more sustainable than other revenue generating enterprises such as export agriculture and petroleum extraction.

Many of the tourist operators in the Andean region of Ecuador promote indigenous cultures and the beauty of the area. But only a few classify themselves as ecological or try to meaningfully engage in conservation and community awareness. By examining the case studies of pioneering eco-lodges, it is possible to discern themes that are important for successful tourism such as conservation and community development.

Community Development

Yunguilla Lodge, located in the biologically rich Chocó-Andina eco-region, is a community-run tourism and agro-forestry project. The families in the village of Yunguilla were allotted plots of approximately 50 hectares during the land reform programme in the 1960s. Previously, the land was divided among a few haciendas and was mostly used for cattle. After the land reform, most of the families depended on small-scale logging and the production of carbon for their livelihoods. Fundación Maquipucuna, an Ecuadorian NGO, began working with the community of Yunguilla in the 1990s to develop economically viable alternatives to deforestation. With the help of grants from the Swiss government and the United Nations, national NGOs began an ecological training programme in Yunguilla as well as a re-forestation project. Both these programmes improved the tourism potential of the area.

In 1997, the first tourists arrived in Yunguilla, and their positive reaction to the beauty of the land and the indigenous people led community members to change the way they thought about their situation. Instead of seeing themselves as poor, they discovered the rich natural resources of their region. This subtle shift in outlook motivated more people to join the cooperative, and from 1995 to 1998 membership grew from 18 to 48 families. Only two families in the area did not join the cooperative. In 2004, 1,200 tourists visited Yunguilla, half of which came from abroad.

Community leaders stress that while ecotourism has been rewarding, it has not been easy and is certainly not “a golden egg”. However, fortunately the community does not depend on tourism as its sole means of income; it also grows crops and raises livestock. There have been other projects, such as the production of cheese and marmalade, which support sustainable agriculture. However, there is still some illegal extraction of wood from the land. Although most of the land in Yunguilla is protected forest, the landholders receive no compensation for their stewardship. The cooperative is also struggling as they want to be independent from external funds but want to conserve their land at the same time. They view tourism as their most sustainable form of economic development. Before the ecotourism project was implemented, the community cut down 70 hectares of forest per year. This number has now been reduced to about one hectare per year.

Another model for development promotes privately owned tourist operators to participate directly in the community. The Casa Mojanda Mountainside Inn and Farm near the market town of Otavalo is one such example - its lodge and farm follow organic principles. The founders of Casa Mojanda set up the Mojanda Foundation in order to direct funds and volunteers toward community projects. Neighbouring communities of over 1,200 residents received help in forming a medical clinic, a kindergarten and a community library.

The foundation has also encouraged tourism as a strategic way to increase employment in the area. One important tourist attraction is the area around the Lagunas de Mojanda, where glacial lakes are nestled in the Andean Paramo. There have been some problems with security in the area,

and environmental neglect around the lake has affected tourism. The Foundation is working on conserving the lakes and significant areas of high mountain cloud forests surrounding the lakes. It has also worked to improve security. A comprehensive bi-county conservation plan was developed by the Foundation for the Mojanda Lakes and Paramo, which should create more jobs in tourism, security and guiding. In order to protect the area effectively, the Foundation works with 50 communities on the lower skirts of the mountain.

The Mojanda Foundation, like the Yunguilla Lodge, is largely dependent on the efforts of volunteers, which has contributed significantly to its success. The Mojanda Lodge employs volunteers, who stay for a minimum of 10 months and have specific skills in education, agriculture or environmental conservation. They also employ short-term volunteer medical doctors and nurses, who can provide special equipment and expertise.

Sustainability and Conservation

One leading example to promote environmental conservation is the Black Sheep Inn in the mountain area of Chugchilan. By using a rigorous system of reducing, reusing and recycling waste, the inn manages to produce less than one ounce of non-recyclable trash per person each day. It has a dry composting toilet, which generates no "black water" or sewage, and is located in an outhouse with skylights and an indoor garden. All of the "grey water" that is produced from washing is collected in a settling tank and put through a charcoal/rock filtration system. The filtered water is then channelled through a reed bed for further nutrient absorption. The reeds produce fodder for guinea pigs, llamas and sheep and the water is used to irrigate the extensive gardens. The inn aims at becoming energy self-sufficient by using solar and wind power. The owners of the inn learned about sustainable technologies and perma-culture largely through internet-based resources such as <http://www.planeta.com> and the Mountain Forum Bulletin. The inn itself teaches the local community the principles of sustainable technologies through workshops and the global community through a website.

Community Activism

The community of Mindo in the tropical cloud forest on the eastern flank of the Andes is an example of the synergies between tourism and community activism. In a relationship that is seen in many other successful ecotourism destinations, the connections between environmental conservation, tourism and community development are tightly linked. Mindo is popular for its wide variety of rare birds, beautiful waterfalls and proximity to Quito, Ecuador's capital. It has seen a significant increase in tourism over the past decade as its reputation has grown and a new paved road has made it accessible by bus and car.

Due to environmental pressures, which often come with tourism, the people of Mindo have fought to maintain the environmental integrity of their town. The owners of eco-

lodges in the area have contributed knowledge and resources to stimulate conservation in the area. The Foundation Puntos Verdes, which also runs a hotel called Finca Mindo Lindo, established the town's trash separation and recycling program. The eco-lodge El Monte has a programme to train local guides in bird watching and botany while the town has implemented an anti-littering campaign featuring hand painted signs and strategically placed trash receptacles. Furthermore, hotel owners along a dirt road leading up to a popular waterfall have formed a petition to close the road to car traffic in order to decrease the impact of noise pollution on wildlife. These local level conservation issues sometimes achieve international status, as did the Mindo-based group "Accion por la Vida", which successfully organised mass protests against the construction of an oil pipeline through the Mindo-Nambillo Reserve in 2002. It is also taking on the Ecuadorian government and multinational oil companies.

Supporting Sustainable Tourism

Most tourist operators recognise the importance of sustainable practices but do not have sufficient technological or financial resources to engage in them. One model for encouraging sustainability is through outreach programmes by NGOs. The Ecuadorian NGO Conservación y Desarrollo has implemented a programme called Smart Voyager, which is aimed at training and certifying operations in sustainable tourism.

The Smart Voyager Programme is based on the following principles: upholding national laws, conserving natural ecosystems, reducing negative environmental impacts, decreasing the risk of introducing and extracting species, treating workers fairly, providing staff training, generating participative strategies for socio-economic development, controlling the use of inputs, reducing and recycling waste, making tourists aware of respecting natural resources, guaranteeing security and monitoring the situation.

The Smart Voyager programme increases the efficiency and profitability of tourism, which provides an economic incentive for operators to become certified. Certification helps ensure that growth in tourism has a positive impact on workers, communities, poverty and the environment.

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Revamping Tourism in the Land of the Thunder Dragon - Interview with Dr. Martin Uitz

Billi Bierling

Travelling in Bhutan could soon become more flexible and less expensive as experts have proposed a new master plan for tourism in this Himalayan kingdom. If the government accepts the proposal, tourists, who are currently bound to an all inclusive package holiday, will have more freedom in designing their holiday.



Laya, Bhutan. Photo: David Uitz

Those who want to experience the beauties of Bhutan have to fork out USD 200 per day. Ten percent of this amount goes to the external foreign travel agent, 35 percent to the government and the rest to one of the 33 Bhutanese tour operators, who organise the trip. This rigid pricing policy has given the country an image of exclusivity as tourists are not able to come for a quick and inexpensive visit.

The first tourists arrived in Bhutan in 1974, the year when King Jigme Singye Wangchuck was formally crowned in a coronation noted

for inviting foreign dignitaries, which signalled the end of the long isolation of the country. That year, a mere 287 people visited the country.

Since then, there has been a 20 percent increase in tourist arrivals but the number of holidaymakers is still very modest by international standards. From 1995 to 2003, an average of 5,000 tourists visited the Himalayan country per year; however, experts estimated this figure to rise to about 12,000 for 2005.

Up until now, Bhutan's experience with tourism has been positive as the kingdom has learned from the mistakes other developing countries have made. This small Himalayan kingdom has tried to limit the extent to which tourism can damage its natural and cultural base.

Billi Bierling from Mountain Forum talked to Dr. Martin Uitz from Austria, an advisor to the Bhutanese government and author of the new master plan.

Mountain Forum (MF): Do you think tourism has changed Bhutan since it first arrived in 1974?

Dr. Martin Uitz (MU): I think tourism has changed Bhutan less in the past 30 years than television has in the past five years. From the very beginning, the Bhutanese have been very concerned with keeping the number of tourists down by offering a high yield product aimed at a handful of internationally experienced travellers. They want tourists who do not only bring a considerable amount of money to the country, but also have experience and respect for Bhutan's culture and nature.

In the case of television there is no control as once a cable network has been established there are 40 channels to choose from. The Bhutanese government can do very little to tell these channels to promote cultural heritage and protect the national environment.

MF: Why is tourism in Bhutan so exclusive?

MU: First of all, the price of USD 200 a day is often misunderstood as this is the price for an all inclusive package. Out of that amount one third goes directly to the government as tourism tax. I think this is well-spent money because Bhutan has a record of good governance, provides free education and health care for everyone, and offers much better roads than you would usually expect in such a mountainous country. As a visitor to Bhutan, I wouldn't mind paying such a tax as I know that it goes to a government that takes good care of its people.

The other two-thirds go to the local tour operator and out of this roughly USD 120 is spent on an all inclusive full board service, which includes hotel, local guides and transportation.

MF: Do the local people benefit from this income?

MU: Not as much as is wanted. One of the key objectives of the master plan is to come up with a proposal to spread the benefits of tourism more evenly. Currently, cultural sites and the national festivals are the main attractions. About 80 percent of tourists come for a cultural holiday and they mainly stay in big hotels. At the moment, small and medium-sized enterprises do not really benefit from tourism.

One of the key proposals of the master plan is to abandon the system of an all inclusive package system because as long as every meal, transport and entrance fee is included there is little room for development for smaller operations.

MF: Will Bhutan ever become a holiday destination for backpackers?

MU: First of all, tourists are totally free to move in Bhutan with the exception of some restricted areas. The only condition is that you book your tour through a Bhutanese tour operator, but it is not like in the former communist countries where a guide was watching you 24 hours a day. However, backpackers do not normally seek the services of a tour operator.

Bhutan is such a peaceful and calm country, where everything is small and beautiful. A big group of tourists is a contradiction to the lifestyle of the Bhutanese. So we propose to encourage individual travel with the support of local tour operators.



Talo, Bhutan. Photo: Martin Uitz

MF: Is there a worry that a sharp increase in tourism will spoil the country?

MU: I have not really encountered such concerns. Bhutan has never limited the number of tourists allowed into the country. The leading politicians and tourism bureaucrats say that tourism needs development to reach a certain critical mass.

One of our aims is to further develop Bhutan's north-eastern region, which is very poor and far away from the main tourism areas. At the moment no local would invest in a hotel or infrastructure there as there are not enough tourists.

We also want to encourage people to stay longer in Bhutan, which would give them more time to travel to the more remote areas. For many tourists this is currently financially impossible and most of them only stay for one week. It would be good if they spend two to three weeks there and pursue some outdoor activities. Bhutan has great potential for trekking but only about five percent of all the tourists come for hiking in the mountains. We propose to increase

the tariff for the first seven days, plus a tax of USD 700, and decrease it for anyone who stays more than two weeks.

If I compare the all inclusive price with the price of a skiing holiday in Austria, Bhutan is not that expensive. If you go on a skiing holiday in Austria you would easily spend more than USD 200 per day.

MF: Will the new master plan change the lives of mountain people?

MU: I hope that with this new plan Bhutan's mountain people will get a better share of the benefits of tourism. In the past, tourism did not at all focus on outdoor activities. Seventy percent of the Bhutanese live in rural areas and most of them are farmers. Coming from an Alpine country myself, I know that there is a permanent threat of migration to the urban areas. The only way we managed to stop that migration in Austria was to develop tourism. Sustainable development in mountain areas will be for the benefit of the people there. There are hundreds of recommendations in the master plan on what to avoid.

MF: Even though mountain people might benefit - what about the mountains?

MU: I think Bhutan has a unique chance to control tourism development through government rules and regulations and make sure the mountain population and the economic sector will benefit from it and the mountains will not suffer.

It will be different than in Nepal, for example. If in Bhutan the number of beds per location is 25 or 30, it means that it is impossible to have more than 30 tourists in one place. Whereas if there is an increased demand in Nepal you can be sure that 50 new lodges will be built in the area.

MF: What is the next step?

MU: The final draft will be submitted to the cabinet where it will undergo several discussions before it is approved.

MF: What is your biggest wish for Bhutan?

MU: My biggest wish is that the benefits of tourism will go to a broader base of people.

Dr. Martin Uitz is the founder of Ecohimal, an Austrian international non-governmental organisation. He has lived in the Bhutanese capital Thimphu for four years.
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Lake Ohnami, Japan.

The Legend of Lake Ohnami

A long time ago a village headman lived at the foothills of the mountains. He was the wealthiest man in the village but he was sad that at his age he still did not have a child. One day he and his wife climbed up the mountain to pray to the mountain gods for a child.

Soon afterwards they gave birth to a beautiful daughter and raised her with much love and affection. They called her Ohnami, a name that gave a sense of softness and kindness. Because her beauty and heart was so pure, everyone showed love and affection towards her. As she was the most beautiful thing ever seen in the village, the people thought she was the reincarnation of a goddess.

During the spring of her 18th birthday, the kind and thoughtful Ohnami began to receive tons of marriage proposals. However, she always fell into deep silence whenever her parents talked about marriage. Seeing the parents' deep consideration towards her feelings, Ohnami could not do anything but cry. Soon she turned into a silent maiden.

Ohnami became ill and her father was in a frenzy to find the best doctor and medicine for her, but she was not getting any better. One night when the moon was shining upon Kirishima's dense forest, Ohnami told her father that she wanted to go up the mountain.

Her father tried hard to change her mind but she would not listen. Soon there were two shadows walking up the mountain. With the faint sound of their footsteps, they went deeper into the silent forest. Eventually, they reached the entrance of the lake.

Suddenly Ohnami's eyes shined. She let go off her father's hand and jumped into the lake. When only small ripples were left, the father suddenly realised that he had lost his daughter.

He called out her name and his voice echoed throughout the forest. He continued to do so as he was walking around the lake until sunrise. However, he did not succeed and Ohnami's beauty was never to be seen again.

As it turned out, Ohnami was the incarnation of the dragon that lived in that lake and because of the strong feelings of the village headman's wishes, she became his daughter for a while.

Since that time the lake became known as "Lake Ohnami".

Source (text and photo): <http://www.town.kirishima.kagoshima.jp/en/09/09-01/en09-01-d.htm>

African Mountain Forum



Uganda. Photo: R. Faidutti, FAO

Collaboration for Sustainable Mountain Development in Africa

A summit on high mountains concluded that mountains play a vital and unique role in Africa as their resources are essential to sustain mountain peoples' livelihoods.

The High Mountains Summit, which was held in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi in May 2002, was organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with the help of the Global Mountain Programme, African Mountain Forum, and African Mountains Association. The conference brought together representatives of mountain communities, governments, non-governmental organisations, researchers and civil societies from different mountain areas of the continent.

But despite the fact that mountains play a vital role in people's lives, the meeting also concluded that mountain areas are often degraded due to poor and unsustainable agricultural practices. Another problem is that numerous government policies, protocols and conventions do not really consider ecosystems at national and regional levels, and there are only few institutions in Africa that bring mountain issues to the attention of policymakers. The summit recommended a broad based partnership of all local and regional stakeholders in Africa such as the African Mountain Association, the African Mountain Forum, the African Highlands Initiative, the UNEP Mountain Programme and other initiatives.

Observations and recommendations similar to the above were not new. When the African Mountain Forum was inaugurated in Nairobi

in August 1999, similar observations were made. The African node of Mountain Forum was supposed to help find a solution for bringing together all the different but scattered mountain development initiatives that were going on in the African region. However, due to logistical problems the activities of the node came to a standstill. This is not to say that mountain development activities had stopped in Africa. Several organisations continued to work independently and many of them are still involved in mountain-related activities. Such organisations include the African Highlands Initiative, the African Mountain Association, agricultural research centres and the World Agroforestry Centre. However, as these groups are not always aware of the other groups' activities, efforts are often duplicated, which inevitably leads to a waste of resources.

The African node has been revived to spearhead the recommendations of the above summits. The major challenge is to see that the generated information among the different institutions and individuals can be brought to a wider audience for sharing. Within the first few months of operation, we have noticed that one of the main stumbling blocks hindering the implementation of the recommendations of the two Nairobi summits is the lack of a vibrant membership base. The most important activities for the node in the initial stages will therefore include:

- ▶ Reviving and strengthening membership
- ▶ Facilitating member collaboration through information dissemination
- ▶ Providing information services to members considering all possible and effective channels of information

African Mountain Forum currently manages a discussion list on African mountain issues. Members are encouraged to forward all their views, ideas, news and announcements to this discussion list. At the moment, the discussion list is only available for people with access to email. However, we are trying to find a way of reaching mountain people with no access to email. We welcome any ideas on how to improve information sharing between mountain development stakeholders in Africa.

Proceedings of the summit can be accessed from the Mountain Forum Online Library on <http://www.mtnforum.org/rs/ol.cfm>

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Asia-Pacific Mountain Network

APMN Election

The Asia-Pacific Mountain Network (APMN) held an email and web-based election in May to elect a regional representative from among its membership to serve on the Mountain Forum Board of Directors. APMN carried out the election in two steps: nomination and voting. APMN had two candidates, Mr. Muhammad Ismail Khan from Skardu, Pakistan, and Mr. Benedicto Sanchez from the Philippines - both of whom had dedicated their professional lives to the cause of sustainable mountain development in their respective countries. The bio-data and statements of interest of the two candidates were made available online and were also sent to the members electronically. A total of 281 votes were cast in this election: 249 individual votes and 32 organisational votes. Mr. Khan secured a total of 511 points, a good 100 points more than Mr. Sanchez, to become APMN's regional representative on the Mountain Forum Board of Directors. He attended his first annual Mountain Forum board meeting in Chambéry, France, in June 2005.



Conference on ICT4D, Sussex, UK. Photo: Wilton Park

E-conference on Biodiversity Conservation in the Hindu Kush Himalaya

As one of the co-organisers, APMN invited Mountain Forum organisational members from the Hindu Kush Himalayan region to participate in the one-month e-conference on "Biodiversity Conservation in the Hindu Kush Himalaya", from 22 August to 2 October 2005, to further the Cusco Plan of Action of the HKH initiative of the Mountain Partnership. Details on this e-consultation can be accessed at: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rs/ec.cfm>

E-conference on SARD-M Initiative

APMN mobilised the regional input in the e-conference to follow up on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountains (SARD-M) by Mountain Forum in the frame of the SARD-M initiative of the Mountain Partnership from 17 to 28 October 2005. Details of the e-consultation can be found at: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rs/ec.cfm>

APMN Website Revamp

APMN is currently in the process of revamping and updating

its website to make it more accessible, dynamic and user-friendly. We are presently working on the content of the website and will announce the launch of the new website once it is up and running.

Change of Staff at the Asia-Pacific Mountain Network Office

We wish Mr. Ujol Sherchan, who managed APMN for the last four years, good luck as he moves on to his new position at the Mountain Forum Secretariat. He adeptly guided APMN through thick and thin. With Ujol's move to the Secretariat as Programme Officer in charge of information services and content development, Ms. Sugam Nepal replaces him as the new APMN node manager. Sugam is a highly qualified professional with an academic background in social work as well as experience in carrying out research activities in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region. She is deeply passionate about issues related to mountains and mountain people, and is very excited about working closely with the Mountain Forum community in the coming years.

Conference on Information Technology for Development

The new APMN node manager attended a conference on "The Role of New Information Technologies in Development: Becoming an Information Society", which was organised by Wilton Park in cooperation with ICT4D Collective at Royal Holloway, University of London, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Bern, Global Knowledge Partnership, Kuala Lumpur and Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER), Stockholm in October 2005. The conference was extremely useful as it discussed both the challenges and opportunities of ICTs in developing countries. It opened up avenues for partnerships between ICT developed countries and ICT developing countries through networks, where APMN has scope for contribution. The examples given during the discussions helped APMN identify ways in which members can benefit from the services provided by Mountain Forum. The new node manager, Ms. Sugam Nepal, was able to bring fresh ideas and lessons from the conference to her work.

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InfoAndina - Latin American Mountain Forum

InfoAndina is Mountain Forum's Latin American Node and the information network of the Consortium for Sustainable Development in the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN), hosted by the International Potato Center, in Lima, Peru.

Principal Activity of the First Semester

Second phase of the FAO-led Mountain Products project and creation of an informative website

In 2005, collaborative ties between InfoAndina and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN, were strengthened thanks to the participation in the second phase of the FAO led Mountains Products Project.



During the second phase (December 2004 - March 2005) - after the mountain products inventory was carried out with the collection of more than 40 successful cases - the selection criteria for strategic sub-sectors were determined. The final report for this phase was submitted to FAO on 23 March 2005. This cooperation aimed to develop capacities in the selected sub-sectors and implement programs for long-term training. In order to make this information available to thousands of CONDESAN-InfoAndina users, a website with the updates on the project was set up.

Web: <http://www.condesan.org/products/index.htm>

Principal Activity of the Second Semester

Successful Experiences Competition: Livestock activity in high Andean areas of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia

In the framework of the collaboration with CONDESAN's regional initiative "Breeding and Policies in the Andes", InfoAndina carried out the Successful Experiences Competition from January to May, 2005.



This competition sought to encourage managers of successful programs and projects - including private and public; national and local - to disseminate information on their experiences. The competition also pointed out that despite adverse conditions, it is possible to achieve progress in livestock development in High Andean areas. Indeed, livestock development is one of the most important business activities for low-income populations living in the High Andean areas of Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador.

The objective of the competition was to recognise, disseminate and reward development projects concluded in December 2004 (or under way with verifiable up-to-date results), and/or policies that have contributed to the reduction of High Andean poverty through livestock development. The winners of the competition were as follows:

In Peru

1. Development of capabilities, production increase, and marketing of milk and dairy products in communities of the High Plateau, Caritas of Peru (Puno)
2. Successful experience of the natural resources project MARENASS and CC of Tahuapallcca, MARENASS (Cusco)
3. Comprehensive livestock development project Manallasacc, MINAG (Ayacucho)

In Bolivia

1. Community module of processing and marketing of meat products of camelids, PRORECA (La Paz)
2. Increase in livestock production and in household income through the conservation and management of productive natural resources, CIPCA (La Paz)

Web: <http://www.condesan.org/propoor/concurso05/index.htm>

Staff Changes

During the month of July 2005, the selection process for the recruitment of the new leader of InfoAndina was carried out and Mr. Miguel Saravia was appointed to the post of Node Manager. Mr. Saravia is a librarian, with almost 14 years of professional experience in the field of information systems and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development. He has also carried out postgraduate studies on Management of non-profit organisations (Open University, UK). During his professional life, Mr. Saravia has advised several public, private and non-profit organisations on the design of information systems. With many years of experience in the fields of communications for development, ICTs for rural development and ICT policy and rural telecommunications issues, Mr. Saravia joined CONDESAN-InfoAndina in October 2005.

The evaluation of the candidates was carried out by an evaluation committee formed by members of the International Potato Center (CIP) and CONDESAN. The selection process also took into account the opinions of the participants who attended the proposal presentations of the candidates.

The other members of the InfoAndina team are Musuq Briceño, InfoAndina Assistant, and Ruth Hidalgo, Junior Web Assistant. Both Musuq and Ruth are Systems Engineers.

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**Only after the last tree has been cut down,
 Only after the last river has been poisoned,
 Only after the last fish has been caught,
 Only then will you find that money cannot be eaten.**

- Cree Native American Proverb

North American Mountain Forum



The Banff Centre, Alberta, Canada. Photo: Scott Rowed

Project Updates

2005 Banff Mountain Summit: Cultures at Risk, 19-21 August 2005, Banff, Alberta, Canada

This four day event, organised by Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre, featured nine speakers and eleven performers from fifteen different mountain cultures. Summit guests and members of the public explored indigenous and traditional mountain cultures and discussed the future of these cultures in the face of global change.

Highlights of the event included Ecuadorian music by César and Luz Cotacachi, a special reading by celebrated Appalachian writer Sharyn McCrumb, and an extraordinary performance combining the musical traditions of Tibetan recording artists - Gompo Dhundup and Jamyang Yeshi - with Native American flute and drumming by Joe Starlight.

Web: <http://www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture/festivals/summit/2005>

Bow Valley Mountain Forum

Thanks to a small grant from the Mountain Forum Secretariat, the North American regional node of Mountain Forum developed a prototype of this online community portal. In turn, The Calgary Foundation has graciously provided significant start-up funding for this project. Further funding efforts are ongoing. A fully operational portal will be launched and tested in 2006.

Planeta.com: Ecotourism Emerging Industry Forum

In November 2005, Planeta.com and EplerWood International hosted the Ecotourism Emerging Industry Forum - an online conference which explored funding for and investment in small and medium sustainable tourism enterprises (SME) in developing countries. With the growth of tourism in mountain areas, SMEs are becoming more common in mountain ranges around the world.



Cultures at Risk event, Canada. Photo: Joe Starlight

Conference outcomes will be prepared by Planeta.com and EplerWood International, in collaboration with a small editorial board. The results of the Forum will be delivered to development agencies and key individuals involved in donor policy development. For more information, contact Planeta.com at editor@planeta.com.

On The Web**Aspen Global Warming Website**

This comprehensive website aptly illustrates what a municipality can do about a global problem, if it sets its mind to it. Aspen Global Warming is the official website of the Global Warming Alliance in the City of Aspen, Colorado - a group of businesses and not-for-profit organisations dedicated to helping Aspen address the challenge of climate change. The Alliance and the website are outcomes of the city's Canary Initiative - a resolution passed by Aspen City Council in March 2005 recognising that Aspen, and other mountain communities, are fragile ecosystems that are especially susceptible to the effects of global warming.

The Canary Initiative calls for actions to be taken to reduce Aspen's greenhouse gas emissions, create a plan to educate political leaders and the public about global warming, secure renewable energy for the city, and set an example for other municipalities. This is an inspiring example of local action addressing a global problem.

Web: <http://www.aspenglobalwarming.com>

Open Science Conference: Global Change in Mountain Regions

In collaboration with Sonic Foundry, the Mountain Research Initiative provided a free webcast of the Open Science Conference on Global Change in Mountain Regions, held in Perth, Scotland, in October 2005. The entire conference is now available online. Webcasting is an increasingly popular process that allows viewers to watch simulcast video of an event over the internet. In this case, the webcasts are still available online, showing video of the speaker while his or her slides appear in a special window on the right side of the screen. Viewers can also scroll through the presentations and slides at will (something many of you may have been tempted to do while actually attending a conference). The webcast of the Open Science Conference on Global Change in Mountain Regions is an accessible example of how new communications technology is broadening the scope of information-exchange for mountain supporters.

Web: <http://fp3demo.mediasite.com/fp3demo/Viewer/?cid=6249802f-a08b-4899-a021-4614351da527>

Appalshop Front Porch

This is a site for all lovers of mountain music and history. Appalshop explains: "Front Porch is an interactive, online multimedia database that documents, records, and shares profiles of traditional musicians in the central Appalachian region. Each profile contains the musician's photograph, biographical information, a brief oral history interview in both audio and text formats, and video clips of a song or two. Front Porch is designed to be used by musicians, scholars, students, and all others interested in exploring the world of traditional Appalachian music, from bluegrass to old-time and everything in between. You can search for profiles by name, Kentucky county, or year of birth, or search the oral history database by keyword." What more can we say? Visit the site to learn more.

Web: <http://www.appalshop.org/frontporch/>

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Mountain Forum Secretariat

Mountain Forum Board and Node Managers Meeting, 21-24 June 2005, Chambéry, France

Every year the Mountain Forum Secretariat (MFS) organises its annual meetings (Board and Node Managers') with the purpose to update its main governing body, the Board of Directors, on the progress of activities carried out at Mountain Forum's various offices around the world, to exchange ideas for future collaboration, and to envision new projects for the near future. Last year's annual meeting was held from 21 to 24 June 2005 in the city of Chambéry, France, to which goes our sincere thanks for the hospitality and support provided.



Chambéry, France. Photo: Mountain Forum

The Board meeting was attended by all Mountain Forum Board members, observers from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and by the recently elected Board representatives from Asia-Pacific and Latin America, Mr. Ismail Khan and Dr. Sonia Salas, respectively. At these meetings, the Board re-elected Dr. J. Gabriel Campbell as the Mountain Forum board chairperson for the next two years, and elected Dr. Hugo Li-Pun as Vice-Chairperson of Mountain Forum.

The Node Managers meeting this year was attended by all node managers from the five continents, including Mr. Moses Musinguzi - the recently appointed node manager of African Mountain Forum (AMF) - and Mr. Jose Borrás, coordinator of the newly established Mediterranean sub-node of the European Mountain Forum. Over four days, twenty-five people from five different continents gave presentations, papers and speeches as a way to share information and exchange ideas.

Renewed Collaborations

The Mountain Forum Secretariat and the Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS) - hosted at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in Rome, Italy - started a new phase of collaboration to support Mountain Partnership initiatives. This collaboration will include the organisation of regional and global e-conferences, the development of a communications resource kit for Mountain Partnership members, shared databases, and website development. In this new phase, support from Mountain Forum Secretariat to the regional nodes towards ICT-related training and regional events related to the Mountain Partnership initiatives is also envisaged.

The Mountain Forum Secretariat strengthened its ties with the Mountain Research and Development (MRD) journal by planning a joint agenda for 2006. A joint publication similar to the Mountain Agenda series produced in preparation for the celebrations of the International Year of Mountains (IYM) in 2002 is being planned in view of the upcoming IYM+5, in 2007. Moreover, the Mountain Forum Secretariat in collaboration with the regional nodes, will facilitate contributions to MRD from Mountain Forum members, and subsidised subscriptions to the journal for members of Mountain Forum.

Contributions to Partners' Publications

Staff at the Mountain Forum Secretariat has contributed articles to publications of a number of stakeholders in the field of sustainable mountain development and information technology for development, such as the Mountain Research and Development (MRD) journal, i4d magazine, ICIMOD's newsletter, and Mountain Partnership's Peak-to-Peak newsletter.

The contributions are listed below:

- ▶ "Mountain Forum: Network of Networks", i4d, Vol. III No. 8, August 2005, by Ujol Sherchan
- ▶ "IESA-AL VI Latin American Symposium for Farming Systems Research and Extension", Peak-to-Peak, August 2005, by Ana Maria Ponce
- ▶ "Knowledge Networking for Development", ICIMOD Newsletter, No. 47, Spring 2005, by Ujol Sherchan
- ▶ "Partnerships for Development: The Mountain Forum Experience", i4d, October 2005, by Prashant Sharma
- ▶ "Climate Change in the Himalaya: Views of Mountain Forum Members Voiced on the Mountain Forum Global Discussion List", Mountain Research and Development, Vol. 25 No. 4, November 2005, by Ujol Sherchan and Prashant Sharma

E-conferences

With Dr. Pralad Yonzon (Chair of the Resources Himalaya Foundation) as the overall moderator, Mountain Forum conducted a six-week regional e-consultation (22 August to 2 September) on Biodiversity in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) for the members of Mountain Partnership's HKH Initiative, and other interested organisations.

A second e-consultation was conducted for the Mountain Partnership in collaboration with Mountain Forum's regional nodes from 17 to 21 October. This e-consultation - moderated by Dr. Peter Trutmann, Coordinator of the Global Mountain Programme - was held for members of the SARD-M thematic initiative of the Mountain Partnership as a follow-up on their first meeting in Cusco, Peru (2004).

Representation at International Events

Mountain Forum Secretariat staff represented Mountain Forum at several international events, including the following:

- ▶ "Latin American Farming Systems Symposia, IESA-AL-IV", Manizales, Colombia (19 - 22 July 2005)
- ▶ "Congress of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists", Thun, Switzerland (31 August - 4 September)
- ▶ "World Summit on the Information Society", Tunis, Tunisia (14 - 18 November)
- ▶ "Society for Conservation Biology Asia Section Conference", Kathmandu, Nepal (17 - 20 November)
- ▶ "Sharing the Experience - Capacity Building on Legal Instruments for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in South Eastern Europe", Bolzano, Italy (12 - 13 December 2005); this event was organised by UNEP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Territory and hosted by EURAC

At these events, Mountain Forum disseminated information on its services and initiatives and established contacts with global, regional and national organisations in the field of sustainable mountain development and ICT for development.



Foothills in the Himalaya, Nepal. Photo: Agustina Barros

Appeal for the South Asia Earthquake

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that shook the mountains of South Asia on 8 October 2005, Mountain Forum - with the support of its partner institutions, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and The Mountain Institute (TMI) - endeavoured to help alleviate the suffering of the victims of such unprecedented disaster. On 24 October, Dr. Gabriel Campbell - Mountain Forum Chairperson and ICIMOD Director General - appealed to members of Mountain Forum to donate for the earthquake's survivors. As of January 2006, Mountain Forum members' generous contributions amounted to over USD 38,000. For more information on this appeal, please visit: <http://www.mtnforum.org/news/special.cfm>

Information Services

The New Mountain Forum Website

The Mountain Forum website, <http://www.mtnforum.org>, was recently revamped. The new website now features an improved visual design, better site navigation and enhanced security features, such as industry standard SSL technology, which protects all information sent to the website from being intercepted by spammers and hackers. While making these changes, it was our utmost consideration to make the site more accessible for users with limited internet access. In order to make downloading the site easier, we did not include many images. However, if users still find it difficult to download, we recommend the use of <http://www.loband.org> through which a text-only version of our (and any other) website can be browsed.

Restructuring the Online Library

In order to provide world-class services to members, the Mountain Forum Online Library is also in its last stages of redevelopment. The new library will be searchable by a variety of parameters, and feature standard formatting for all documents, bibliographic information for every entry, searchable annotated bibliographies, and well-organised web resources. We anticipate that the new Mountain Forum Online Library will go public in March 2006.

Important Changes to the Membership System

As of January 2006, some Mountain Forum services including the discussion lists, the online library and membership directory will be fully accessible to members only. Membership will remain free, of course. The reason for these changes is that, until now, discussion list subscribers and members have been divided into different categories within Mountain Forum. This meant that discussion list subscribers have not enjoyed the same benefits as members have, even though many of them have contributed a great deal to Mountain Forum. Moreover, we have been unable to accurately tell our funders about who is using Mountain Forum, and from where, as discussion list subscribers have been hidden participants. As members, you will help Mountain Forum to report more accurate statistics to current and future funders, who will help us secure the long-term stability of Mountain Forum for everyone. In addition, the new system is based on a secure platform, providing better protection for your contact details, including your email address.

As a member, you are now entitled to:

- ▶ Represent and/or choose representatives on the Board of Directors of Mountain Forum.
- ▶ Individual profiles on the Mountain Forum website. People and organisations seeking information on who's who in mountain development use the Mountain Forum's searchable database to network and build alliances.
- ▶ The option of joining several geographical and thematic discussion lists moderated by Mountain Forum.

- ▶ Preferential access to Mountain Forum publications, including the bi-annual Mountain Forum Bulletin and Annual Report.
- ▶ Preferential rates for e-conference services managed by Mountain Forum.
- ▶ Full access to the Mountain Forum Online Library and the membership directory.

If you have any questions or need clarification, please contact us at membership@mtnforum.org or write to us at the following postal address: Mountain Forum Secretariat, c/o ICIMOD GPO Box 3226, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Your feedback is critical to us. Please let us have your comments on the facilities we offer so as to continue providing you with world-class services. You may send us your feedback at feedback@mtnforum.org or at the above postal address.

Staff Changes

In June 2005, the Mountain Forum Secretariat staff regretfully bid farewell to Ms. Agustina Barros who was part of the information services team at the Secretariat. Agustina returned to her home country, Argentina, after serving at the Secretariat for 20 months. Agustina was responsible for the moderation of several discussion lists, and was deeply involved with the management of the Online Library and the publication of the Bulletin. She was an incredibly valuable member of our team, and all of us deeply appreciate her contribution to Mountain Forum during a very demanding transitional period.

The Secretariat's team has been very fortunate, however, to find someone extremely competent to build upon Agustina's work, Mr. Ujol Sherchan, who has been the node manager of the Asia-Pacific node of Mountain Forum (better known as the Asia-Pacific Mountain Network - APMN) for the last four years. Ujol has been a part of the Mountain Forum family for many years, and his wealth of experience will ensure that the Mountain Forum community becomes stronger in the coming years.

With Ujol's move to the Secretariat as Programme Officer in charge of information services and content development, the position of the APMN became vacant. We have again been fortunate to find a very competent person, Ms. Sugam Nepal, to take over from Ujol. Sugam is a highly qualified professional with an academic background in social work as well as experience in carrying out research activities in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region.

Mountain Forum Secretariat staff also bid farewell to Ms. Suzy Conway and Ms. Bandana Shakya this past summer. Ms. Conway, who had joined as external consultant, provided invaluable support in planning and kick-starting the restructuring of the Mountain Forum Online Library. Her work has been crucial to the development of the new system, the results of which will be available to you soon. Ms. Bandana Shakya, who had joined us as an intern, also

provided precious support to MFS' information services. She left MFS to join ICIMOD as a full-time staff. After a rigorous selection process, Mr. Tek Jung Mahat was chosen to carry out an internship at Mountain Forum Secretariat and take over Bandana's duties. Tek holds a Masters Degree in Environmental Science from Tribhuvan University, Nepal, specialising in Mountain Environment Management and Environmental Economics. He started his career in the environmental sector as a student in 1998 and built his expertise in this field through subsequent work with the Nepal River Conservation Trust and ICIMOD, before joining Mountain Forum.

Finally, it is a great joy to announce that Mr. Moses Musinguzi has joined Mountain Forum as the node manager of the African Mountain Forum (AMF). Moses is from Uganda, and is currently completing his PhD studies at Uppsala University in Sweden with a focus on Spatial Data Infrastructures in GIS. With Moses on board, we are looking forward to the African Mountain Forum taking its rightful place as a strong and active community working towards sustainable mountain development in Africa.

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Himalayas, Nepal. Photo: Agustina Barros

Mountain Voices Website

Panos London

The Mountain Voices website, <http://www.mountainvoices.org>, has recently been updated with the addition of its tenth and final interview collection, creating a unique online archive of over 300 interviews from mountain communities in ten countries. The launch of the new collection comes four years after the first set of interviews with mountain people was uploaded, and it coincided with the International Mountain Day, which took place on 11 December 2005.

The website, which was developed by the international non-governmental organisation Panos London, contains in-depth interviews with men and women from mountain communities in the Nepal Himalaya, the Peruvian Andes, the Mount Elgon region in Kenya, the Highlands of Ethiopia and Lesotho, the Sudety Mountains in Poland, the Western Himalayas of India, the Sierra Norte range in Mexico, the Southwest and Northeast of China, and the Karakoram Range in Pakistan.

"Our aim has been to make the mountain development debate more inclusive by communicating the perspectives of those experiencing development and change at first hand", says Siobhan Warrington, director of Panos London's Oral Testimony Programme. "Each collection is a snapshot and doesn't claim to be representative for entire mountain groups. But the range of individual voices, full of personal detail and accumulated experience and knowledge does provide a rich and vivid picture of highland societies."

The new testimony collections now available online at <http://www.mountainvoices.org> are listed below.

- ▶ Mexico: Interviews with men and women from four Zapotec communities in the Sierra Norte Mountains of Oaxaca.
- ▶ China: Interviews with women of several minority groups of mountainous Southwest China and with Han Chinese women of the Taihang Mountains in Northeast China.
- ▶ Pakistan: Interviews with men and women from Shimshal, a Wakhi community in the Karakoram Mountains of northern Pakistan.



Visitors to the website can search for testimonies by location and themes, which include migration, education, social change, tourism, environmental knowledge, culture and custom, economics and identity.

Conducted by local people in local languages and translated into English, the unedited interviews offer an important opportunity for mountain people to represent themselves in their own words, rather than have their lives interpreted by outsiders.

"Our community, Shimshal, was isolated from the rest of the world for centuries. Foreign people wrote about us and misrepresented us. Now, it is the time for us to tell the world about the reality of Shimshal", says Khalik, a community activist from the Karakoram Mountains in Pakistan.

The website also offers local/national language publications available to download in PDF format, including booklets in Amharic (Ethiopia), Polish, Hindi (India), Nepali, Sesotho (Lesotho), Saboat (Kenya) and Spanish (Mexico and Peru).

"Good oral testimony records not just events and practices but provides clues as to their meaning and significance for people. We hope readers of these interviews will gain insight, not just information. These personal and individual accounts should deepen our understanding of mountain development", Siobhan Warrington adds.

For more information and to download PDF versions or order hard copies, please visit: <http://www.panos.org.uk>

For more information on the website or Panos' Oral Testimony Programme, please contact:

Mr. Siobhan Warrington
 Email: info@mountainvoices.org
 Web: <http://www.panos.org.uk/oraltestimony>

From Kalashnikov to Ice Axe; From Burqah to Climbing Helmet

Mountain Wilderness International

Young Afghans are now given the chance to become liaison officers for mountaineering expeditions, guides for trekking groups or rangers in National Parks in dedicated mountain areas. Six instructors from Italy and one from the Netherlands held the first Course of Environment-Friendly Mountaineering in Afghanistan teaching a group of keen young Afghans the theoretical and practical skills necessary for these jobs.

The course, which took place from 16 July to 4 August 2005, was organised by Mountain Wilderness, an international organisation working for the preservation of mountains and their wilderness. It was held in the upper Panjshir Valley at the foot of the 6,000-metre-high Mount Mir Samir and was deemed a complete success. Some observers said it was an important symbolic step in the development of a new Afghanistan, and the very positive accomplishment of the course has shown that this mountainous country is more varied and richer in positive surprises than is understood by the West.

In 2003, Mountain Wilderness had already organised an international mountaineering expedition to the 7,500-metre-high Mount Nushaq, Afghanistan's highest peak that had been forgotten for 25 years. The aim of this initiative, which was dubbed OXUS Mission - Mountains for Peace, was to show the world that it is again possible to carry out ascents and trekking tours in Afghanistan without being faced with political instability or attacks by bandits.



Chamar Valley, Afghanistan. Photo: Valerio Gardoni

Among the 22 trainees were two brave girls, Rohina and Siddiqa, who were admitted on the condition that a close relative - in this case the father and the brother - would accompany them. Both girls brilliantly passed all tests on rock, snow and ice and during the final ceremony Rohina told the press: "Three years ago the Taliban government did not allow me to leave the house on my own. Now I have climbed a mountain, I have learned to use crampons, ice axes and ropes. It's like a dream!". Eight former mujaheddins also took part in the project. They were selected by the Development Demilitarisation Reintegration (DDR) - an American agency responsible for the reintegration of local militiamen in peaceful activities.



Chamar Valley, Afghanistan. Photo: Valerio Gardoni

The first set of theoretical lessons was held in the Kabul headquarters of UNEP-NEPA, while the practical exercises were carried out in the Upper Panjshir Mountains in the Paryan District. The theoretical lessons included geology, environmental studies, geography, archaeology, and medicine, whereas the practical part dealt with the use of ropes, camp installation, anchoring, climbing on rock, ice and snow, rescue operations etc. Twenty-three packhorses were hired for the practical part as two tons of material and foodstuff had to be carried to base camp (4,100 metres), which was set up in the Chamar Valley at the foot of Mount Mir Samir.

It is most likely that the newly qualified young people will find work in the mountain valleys, thus contributing to the improvement of the economic situation in the less privileged areas of the country. In 2006, more courses for mountaineering and basic management of adventure tourism will be organised by the Italian Cooperation (Italian Foreign Ministry) and Italian Institute for African and Oriental Studies (IsIAO). The organisers hope that the courses will attract villagers living in remote and less favoured valleys of the country. They are also planning to offer another course for beginners. This plan, involving different trainees every time, should be repeated for at least three successive years, so that the trainees can reach full autonomy. It is also essential for the best graduates to develop the skills necessary to become trainers, who will then be able to teach new recruits for this successful project.

For further information, contact:

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European Park Observatory - OPE

Elizabeth Fox

The European Park Observatory (OPE) was officially established in March 2005 in the Cinque Terre National Park, Italy. The observatory quickly found the support of Federparchi (the Italian Federation of Parks and Nature Reserves), who promoted it at international seminars in Riomaggiore in 2003 and 2004.

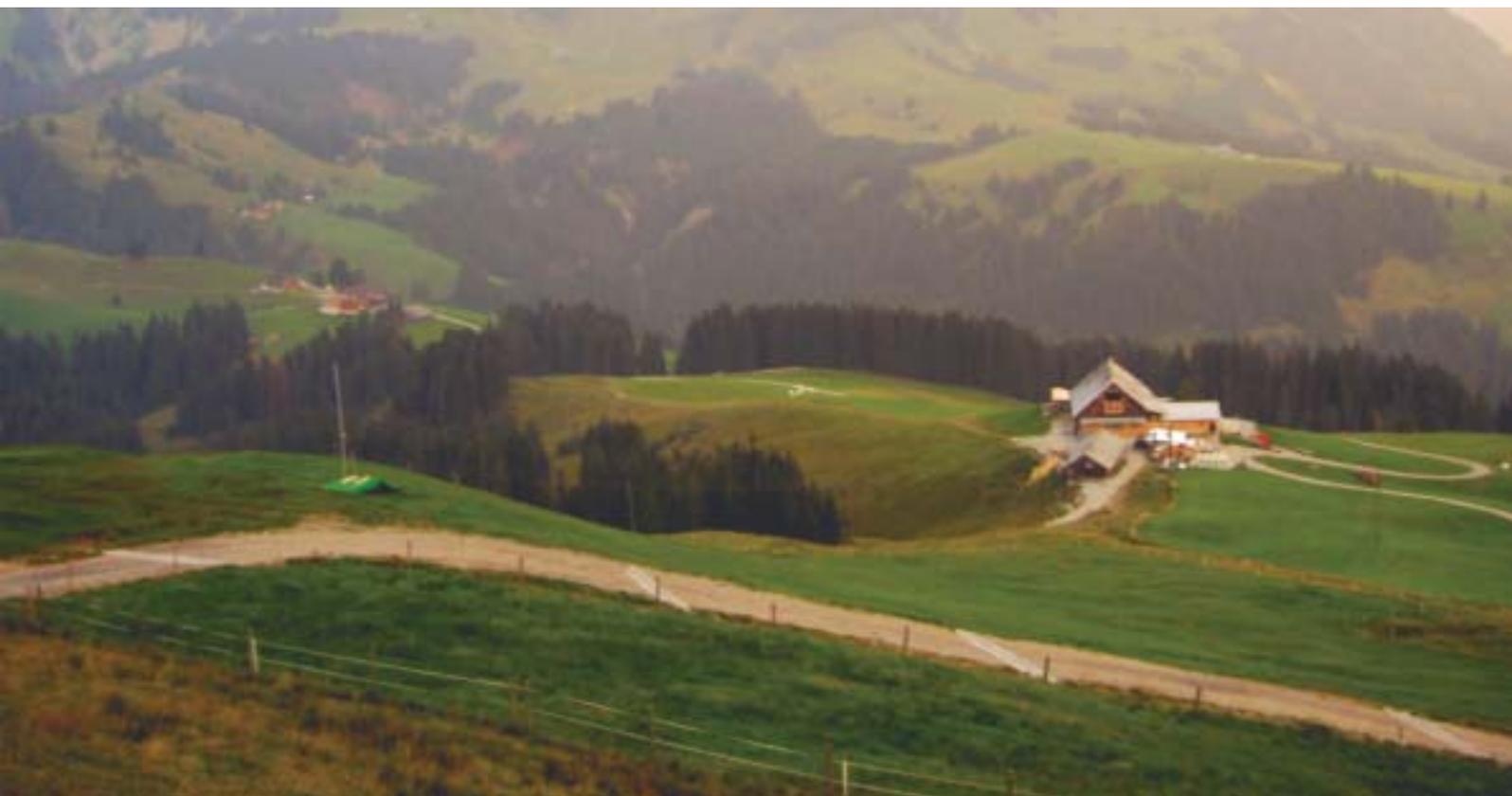
One of the declared objectives of the OPE is undoubtedly building (sometimes optimising or enhancing relevant on-going experiences) an “active network” among different protected areas in Europe in order to foster a continuous, critical discussion on common and salient issues as well as exchanging good practices. Although parks are considered the laboratories of sustainable development, it is evident that only by initiating a system policy the real inspirational principle of the OPE, which is to pursue positive enduring and large-scale results, can be visualised.

Although highly important, the overall involvement of European parks and protected areas in the Observatory is not only aimed at implementing the network mentioned above, it is preliminary to the objective of increasing the weight of protected areas in decisions made by supranational authorities. Using European Union projects and programmes is normal practice for all protected areas, which is part of the reason why the OPE intends to identify the best ways of dealing with supranational bodies by harmonising objectives as well as elaborating proposals to be supported in the relevant European Union offices.

The OPE is proposed to become the headquarters of an authentic European forum for protected areas, and through seminars, workshops, a website and traditional and online publications, it will endeavour to provide global answers to the park issue, avoid fragmentary perspectives and foster the adoption of organic policies for protected areas.

The OPE obtains its scientific knowledge from the European Natural Park Planning Documentation Centre (CED PPN), an institute of Turin Polytechnic that undertakes research activities on protected areas in Europe, and boasts a network of 700 references and a computerised thematic archive.

Elizabeth Fox is a consultant on ecotourism and an environmental journalist.
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Alpine Pasture, Switzerland. Photo: Ana Maria Ponce, MFS

Aspen, Colorado: The Canary Initiative

Amy Krause

Mountain Forum member, Dan Richardson, has been a very busy man since the City of Aspen, Colorado, USA, hired him to implement its Canary Initiative. This inspiring and progressive programme will make the renowned resort community an international municipal leader in combating climate change.

The Canary Initiative

On 16 March 2005, the City Council of Aspen, Colorado, adopted the Canary Initiative - a resolution that recognises Aspen and other mountain communities as fragile ecosystems and especially susceptible to the effects of global warming. It also calls for the City of Aspen to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, inform political and business leaders and the public about global warming, commit to the environment and to sources of renewable energy, and set an example for other municipalities that wish to combat climate change.

To address these goals, Aspen's city manager set up a quantified greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory for the city, which is now being used as a baseline to measure progress or lack of progress toward the reduction of greenhouse gases. With this baseline data, GHG reduction goals were set and Aspen committed to two major projects to help it meet those targets - explore the construction of a second hydroelectric plant on a local creek (Maroon Creek) and increase wind-power purchases by 16.5 percent before the end of 2006. Aspen is also seeking membership in the Chicago Climate Exchange - the world's first legally binding, rules-based GHG emission reduction and trading system.

To bolster support, Aspen is also seeking scientific evidence to document the long-term value of the Canary Initiative by preparing a scientific Climate Impact Assessment. The assessment will analyse and quantify the likely consequences of global warming on the resort community of Aspen, its ecosystems and the economy.

Aspen Global Warming Alliance

Naturally, the lofty goals set out by the Canary Initiative could not be accomplished

without expertise and support. The Aspen Global Warming Alliance was designed to serve as an advisory board to the Canary Initiative and its members, who now help guide its implementation with their expertise.

The Aspen Global Warming Alliance also has an excellent web portal. The site features climate change facts, information about how Aspen is affected, and details on what the city is doing about it, as well as Western Colorado climate data, CO₂ emissions calculators and action items for the concerned public. Web: <http://www.aspenglobalwarming.com>



The Aspen Recreation Center at night, Colorado, USA. Photo: City of Aspen

Members of the Aspen Global Warming Alliance are listed below.

The Canary Coalition: The Aspen Global Warming Alliance and the Canary Initiative have already created interest among towns and businesses from around the state of Colorado. To harness that interest a new organisation called the Canary Coalition was to bring newly committed stakeholders together to learn from one another. Members of the Canary Coalition commit to reducing their carbon emissions and to building awareness about climate change.

Mountain Forum Member - Dan Richardson was hired to assist, coordinate and direct all of the activities launched under Aspen, Colorado's Canary Initiative. He is hoping to hold a major international conference on Global Warming and Resort Communities in coordination with the Aspen Institute.

For more information about the Canary Initiative or Aspen Global Warming, contact your fellow Mountain Forum member, Dan Richardson at +1-970-920 5071 or email: danr@ci.aspen.co.us.

The Aspen Global Change Institute (AGCI) works to further the understanding of earth systems and global environmental change by organising interdisciplinary science meetings, publications and educational programs.

The Aspen Institute, founded in 1950, hosts conferences and seminars on significant national and international issues. It works with leading policymakers and practitioners to host fifteen programmes exploring policy on topics such as international peace and security, democracy and citizenship, and social innovation through business.

Aspen Skiing Company manages four ski resorts covering a total of 5,200 acres or 2,200 hectares. Its environmental management programme has been awarded ISO 14001 standing for initiatives such as bio-diesel powered snowcats, snowmaking systems that generate electricity, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified architecture, and a grants programme that awards USD 105,000 annually to local environmental causes.

The Rocky Mountain Climate Organisation is dedicated to raising awareness of the consequences of climate change and advocating action. It is an eclectic coalition that includes local governments, the Aspen Skiing Company, a pharmaceutical company, a supermarket chain, a water engineering firm, a publishing company, a community hospital, a regional association of independent farmers and ranchers, and some of the state's largest conservation organisations.

The Community Office for Resource Efficiency (CORE) promotes renewable energy, energy efficiency and green building techniques in western Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley. CORE's innovative programmes, which are run in conjunction with local governments and utilities, are expected to keep one billion pounds of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere in coming years.

The Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) is an entrepreneurial non-profit organisation that fosters the efficient and restorative use of resources to make the world "secure, just, prosperous, and life-sustaining." It inspires business, civil society, and governments to design integrative solutions that create "true wealth."

Holy Cross Energy is a cooperative corporation with more than 43,000 member-owners served by 165 employees. It provides energy and services to major ski resorts located in the Aspen and Vail areas, as well as farms, ranches and rural communities that provide people and resources for the tourist and outdoor recreation industries.

The New Century Transportation Foundation is a non-profit organisation created to advance resource-efficient mobility choices in the Roaring Fork Valley and beyond. Its partnerships with citizens, the private sector and other organisations aim to create a better transportation future, economic prosperity and a healthy environment.

Susan Joy Hassol is a freelance writer.

Climate Mitigation Services is a consultancy firm specialising in greenhouse gas emissions inventories and reduction strategies.

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Connecting Mountain Regions for Change

Jane Ross

We live in an era of global communication but many mountain regions, particularly in the developing world and countries in transition, still have inadequate or no access to communication infrastructures, services and facilities. Yet, modern communication technologies, when applied and adapted to local conditions in mountain areas, can act as catalysts for sustainable development and social change. Low-cost information and communication technologies, such as the internet, promote political and community participation, increase working opportunities, disseminate information and share knowledge and skills. Just as importantly, satellite technology provides social services, such as health care and education, on a cost-effective basis.

The costs of communication technologies have steadily fallen while their performance has improved at a phenomenal rate. So how do we tap the potential of these communication technologies to connect and develop the world's mountain regions?

Members of the Mountain Partnership have recently joined together to assess the potential of broadband connection to provide rapid, cost-effective and efficient connectivity for the world's mountains. Broadband is the common term for a high bandwidth internet connection, which can transmit or download information up to 40 times as fast as a standard telephone line. It can be applied to a variety of communications including broadcast and cable television, video communication systems, wireless phones, web access, instant messaging for real-time communication, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) - a technology that allows telephone calls using the cheaper broadband internet connection instead of a regular or analog phone line - information sharing (including the exchange of data and multimedia files), and email.

Mountain Partnership member EasyLan is a satellite telecommunications company, based in Italy. It plans and develops digital integrated systems that allow communities to benefit from bandwidth telecommunications and services at

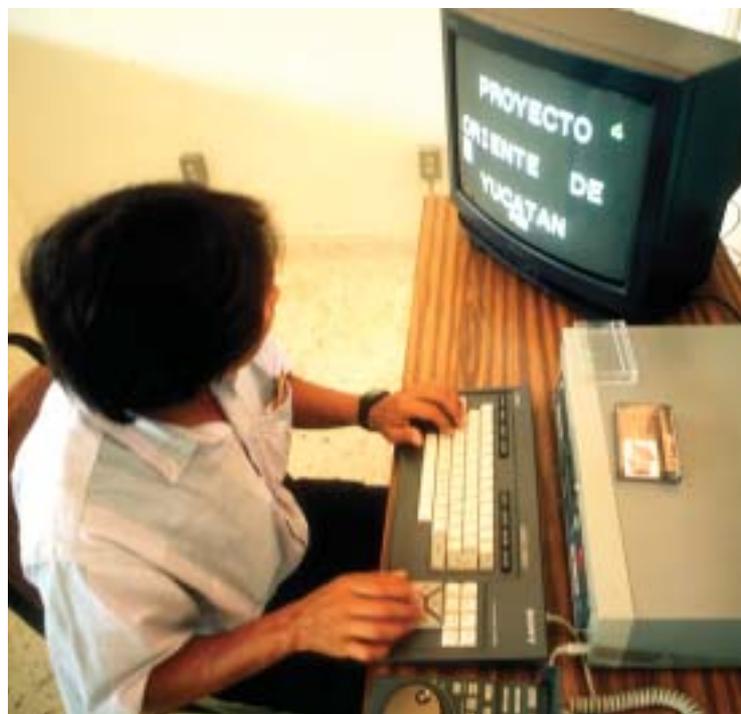
reasonable prices throughout the world. EasyLan has teamed up with Italian academic institutions (University LUISS Guido Carli, and the University of Tor Vergata), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Interim Secretariat for the Carpathian Convention at UNEP, and the Mountain Partnership Secretariat to prepare a feasibility study to explore the potential of using broadband technologies for sustainable mountain development.

The study aims to understand the economic and technical prerequisites for broadband application in mountains, to find out to what extent broadband technologies could be supported, and to assess the priorities and main needs of mountain communities in terms of information and communications. The research also focuses on what FAO and other UN agencies are doing to promote such communication technologies in the mountain areas of the world.

One important aspect of the study is the assessment of the constraints and potential market trends in applying broadband communication technologies in one of Europe's largest mountain regions, the Carpathians. Encompassing seven countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia and Ukraine), the Carpathians is a major geographic feature in the heart of Europe. In recent years, the mountain people of the Carpathians have experienced profound changes and challenges due to their countries' recent transition to a market economy, the increasing integration of civil society and dynamic economic development. It is clear that access to adequate broadband communication technologies, facilities and services could boost sustainable development of these mountain communities (See box below).

Broadband technologies in mountain areas can...

- generate knowledge about successful development strategies
- improve access to a variety of information, training, research and educational resources (including distance education)
- provide access to critical technical information for professionals in mountain areas (e.g. doctors, healthcare workers, technicians and engineers, so they may be less inclined to migrate)
- be used as marketing tools to sell mountain products and promote rural tourism
- enable local NGOs and groups to gain a global presence and interact with potential donors and supporters; and
- sensitise decision-makers to the needs and concerns of mountain populations



Mexico. Photo: G. Bizzarri

The Mountain Partnership, a voluntary alliance of countries, international governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and the private sector, acts as a framework for joint activities, facilitating contacts between countries and organisations and creating conditions for technical cooperation and resource mobilisation at the national, regional and global levels. This research activity into broadband technology for connectivity in mountains is a follow-up to a special roundtable discussion on the subject at the Second Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership (Cusco, Peru, 28-29 October 2004) and is just one of the many joint activities on common areas of interest currently being undertaken by members of the Mountain Partnership to improve the lives and livelihoods of mountain people and protect mountain environments around the world. The broadband study is also related to the Millennium Development Goal (8.6), namely: 'to develop a global partnership for development... in cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies - especially information and communications technologies'.

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To find out more, please visit:
<http://www.mountainpartnership.org> and subscribe to the Mountain Partnership monthly newsletter, 'Peak to Peak' at info@mountainpartnership.org



My home is still standing but my soul is buried in the rubble...

Dr. Farooq Ahmad

In the morning of 8 October 2005 a powerful earthquake registering nearly eight on the Richter scale shook Kashmir on both sides of the "Line of Control" between India and Pakistan, and also affected the neighbouring country, Afghanistan. The earthquake brought destruction and death to countless poor mountain people of Kashmir on both sides of the border and also affected the inhabitants of Hazara and other mountain districts of the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan.

On hearing the news, I planned a visit to the affected areas in Pakistan to see and evacuate my family and assess the damage and loss to my hometown, Muzaffarabad - its people, its infrastructure and the cultural and religious sites. I reached the area on foot and found a town ruled by ghosts. Most of the city streets were filled with debris and the stench of the dead buried underneath the rubble.

I had a camera but did not have the heart to take a single picture, nor to stay longer as is expected in our culture. All government buildings except for the Secretariat, the Legislative Assembly, the Supreme Court and the High Court had collapsed. Schools, the university and all the colleges in the area had crumbled to the ground. In most of the cases, the people working in these buildings and institutions were dead, buried under the debris. Mortality among children was highest as children were trapped in school buildings.

Lack of open spaces contributed to raising the death toll, and large numbers died from being hit by falling rubble. Merely viewing the television coverage does not even begin to assess the actual loss of property, human lives and shattered souls.

I felt I had lost everything I had built in my life: dear friends, teachers, mentors, doctors, neighbours and 23 relatives from my extended family. It was amazing to see my house, which I had built in 1986, still standing, miraculously sheltering and saving my elderly father, my brother and his family, as they had been unable to leave the house during the height of the earthquake. This might have been a miracle.

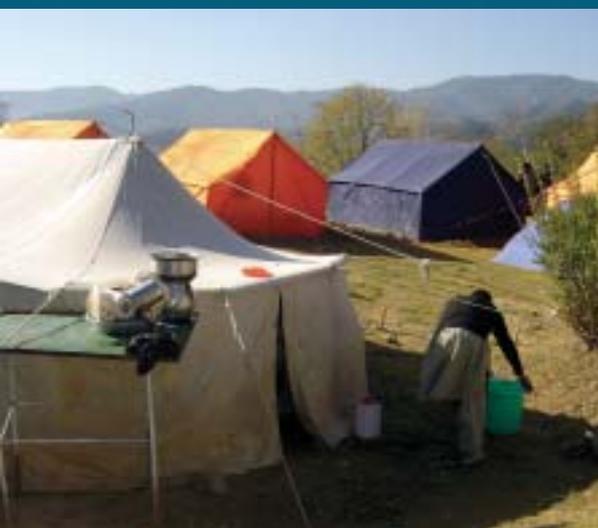
However, I see it from another perspective - from the perspective of the quality of structure design and materials used to build it. Here is a message to mountain people: to rethink and reinvent the designs of their homes, roads, bridges and infrastructure.

I thank my colleagues and friends and the management of ICIMOD for their moral and financial support to our mountain people. The victims of the earthquake deeply value this support and will remember it for a long time.

Even though part of me feels buried in the rubble with my esteemed friends, relatives and colleagues in Muzaffarabad, I am nevertheless encouraged and I am very grateful for the strength I find in the sympathy offered by work colleagues and friends. They inspire me to move on and begin the difficult task of helping rebuild my town and leaving behind every misery I had just, in horror, witnessed.

Farooq Ahmad, PhD, is a sustainable agriculture expert at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu, Nepal. Email: fahmad@icimod.org

All photographs on the Earthquake Special pages are credited to ICIMOD.



South Asia Earthquake: Appeal for Support

Dear Mountain Forum members and friends,

Thank you for the immense generosity that you have shown in supporting the appeal for buying tents and heaters for our mountain kin who suffered terribly in the earthquake that struck South Asia in October 2005. Thanks to your contributions, more than USD 38,000 has been raised so far, with which 130 tents and several hundred heaters have been bought and despatched to the affected areas. Thousands of people have directly benefited from your generosity, and this is tangible proof of how people across the world respond so very positively in times such as these.

A team of people, including one of us, was in the affected areas recently, and through our meetings with various communities there, it came to light that the need of the hour has now shifted to apparatus which can provide heat and light, and be used inside tents for cooking as well. Fortunately, there is a neat and inexpensive kit locally available which comprises of a gas cylinder along with three changeable attachments - one to heat, another to cook, and a third one to provide light. Such a kit does not cost very much - USD 20 per kit (including transportation charges) and it affects the lives of people directly and immediately. Importantly, refilling facilities exist in all these areas, including the very remote ones.

In view of this situation, we have stopped the order for manufacturing any more tents and have now started using the money coming in for buying and distributing these devices which can be used to heat, cook, and provide light. These devices are being distributed through the PARDYP project staff of the Pakistan Forestry Institute who have a project office in one of the most heavily destroyed villages (Hillkot) in Mansehra District of the North West Frontier Province. This is a long standing project that has been supported by ICIMOD, IDRC (Canada) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). As we enter the new year, we would also like to appeal to all of you to continue to contribute to keep families warm, and with hot food and light. The Mountain Institute (TMI) and ICIMOD are pleased to continue supporting this effort through arranging for the fund transfer, account audit and logistics of purchase and distribution without charge. Please note that this appeal will be ongoing until end of March only.

With many thanks once again for your generosity so far, and with best wishes for the new year.

J. Gabriel Campbell, Chair, Mountain Forum, and Director General, ICIMOD, Nepal
Bob Davis, President & CEO, The Mountain Institute, USA
Ana Maria Ponce, Executive Secretary, Mountain Forum Secretariat, Nepal

If you wish to contribute to alleviate the suffering of the victims of this devastating earthquake, please make your donation before end of March 2006 using one of the following options.

1. To contribute using a credit card, click on the following link
<http://www.mountain.org/howtohelp/donate.cfm>
Fill out the form and select "Heaters for Himalayan Earthquake Victims" in the field "Program to donate for" found in the "Other Information" section of the form.
2. To contribute by check
Write a check in favour of:
The Mountain Institute (Heaters for Himalayan Earthquake Victims)
Send to:
The Mountain Institute, 1707 L Street NW, Suite 1030, Washington, DC 20036 USA
3. To send your contributions by wire/electronic transfer, please contact us at earthquakeappeal@mtnforum.org for banking information.

For any question or further assistance on this appeal, kindly email us at earthquakeappeal@mtnforum.org

February

2 - 8 February 2006

Training on Rights-Based Approach to Community Forest Management

Nawalparasi, Nepal

Contact: forestaction@wlink.com.np

March

7 - 9 March 2006

International Symposium Towards Sustainable Livelihoods and Ecosystem in Mountainous Regions

Chiang Mai, Thailand

Contact: uplands@loxinfo.co.th

Web: http://www.troz.uni-hohenheim.de/research/SFB564_2/Symposium2006

17 - 19 March 2006

29th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference Both Ends of the Road: Making the Appalachian Connection
Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio, USA

Contact: Phillip Obermiller, solotso@aol.com

Web: <http://www.appalachianstudies.org/conference/>

30 March - 1 April 2006

5th ICA Mountain Cartography Workshop
Bohinj, Slovenia

Contact: lojze.miklavcic@geod-is.si

Web: http://www.mountaincartography.org/cm-workshops/pdf/workshop_slovenia.pdf

April

2 - 7 April 2006

EGU CR9 Mountain Climatology and Hydrology: Present State and Future Scenarios

Vienna, Austria

Contact: dejong@giub.uni-bonn.de

Web: http://www.cosis.net/members/meetings/programme/view.php?m_id=29&p_id=199

4 - 6 April 2006

Symposium on Climate Change: Organizing the Science in the American Cordillera (CONCORD)

Mendoza, Argentina

Contact: mri@scnat.ch

Web: <http://www.ires.ubc.ca/projects/concord/>

17 - 20 April 2006

2006 Western Snow Conference: Advancement of Snow Science

Las Cruces, New Mexico, USA

Contact: Al Rango, alrango@nmsu.edu

Web: <http://www.westernsnowconference.org/2006.htm>

23 - 26 April 2006

International Seminar on Rural Territorial Development
Santiago de Chile, Chile

Contact: seminarioDTR@rimisp.org

May

24 - 25 May 2006

13th Annual Conference on the Adirondacks
Lake Placid, NY, USA

Contact: wayne@AEDCOnline.com

Web: <http://www.adkresearch.org>

29 May - 2 Jun 2006

VII Inter-American Congress for Conservation of Private Land
Cartagena, Colombia

Contact: congresotierrasprivadas2006@natura.org.co

Web: http://www.wwf.org.co/colombia/mostrat_convocatoria.php?lang=es&cid=co15c

30 May - 1 June 2006

Multidisciplinary Approaches to Recovering Caribou in Mountain Ecosystems

British Columbia, Canada

Contact: office@cmiae.org

Web: <http://www.cmiae.org/conferences.htm>

#Multidisciplinary_Approaches_to_Recovering_Caribou

June

20 - 23 June 2006

World Mountain Bike Conference 2006
British Columbia, Canada

Contact: info@imba.com

Web: <http://www.bicyclenewswire.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showrelease&cid=14&id=124>

24 - 28 June 2006

Conservation Without Borders
San Jose, USA

Contact: 2006@conbio.org

Web: <http://www.conservationbiology.org/2006/Index.cfm>

August

7 - 9 August 2006

Asian Conference on Permafrost
Lanzhou, China

Contact: ymlai@ns.lzb.ac.cn

Web: <http://www.casnw.net/permafrost>

27 - 31 August 2006

Whitebark Pine: A Pacific Coast Perspective (High Elevation Pine)

Ashland, Oregon, USA

Contact: egoheen@fs.fed.us

Web: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/nr/fid/wbpine/index.shtml>

28 August - 1 September 2006

12th Conference on Mountain Meteorology
Santa Fe, USA

Contact: durrand@atmos.washington.edu

Web: <http://ams.confex.com/ams/SantaFe2006/oasys.epl>



September

12 - 15 September 2006

4th World Congress on Mountain Ungulates
Munnar, Kerala, India
Contact: hrwepa.munnar@tatatea.co.in
Web: <http://www.wmcu2006.org/>

14 - 22 September 2006

9th International Symposium on High Mountain Remote Sensing Cartography
Graz, Austria
Contact: viktor.kaufmann@tugraz.at
Web: http://www.kfunigraz.ac.at/geowww/hmrsc/hmrsc_9/

19 - 22 September 2006

MTNCLIM 2006: CIRMOUNT Annual Conference
Timberline Lodge, Mt. Hood, Oregon, USA
Contact: CIRMOUNT, cmillar@fs.fed.us
Web: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/cirmount/meetings/mtnclim2006.shtml>

October

2 - 6 October 2006

Managing Forests for Poverty Reduction: Capturing opportunities in forest harvesting and wood processing for the benefit of the poor
Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam
Contact: patrick.durst@fao.org
Web: http://www.apfcweb.org/events/events_workshops.html

11 - 15 October 2006

14th International Festival of Mountain Films
Poprad, Slovakia
Web: <http://www.mfhf.sk>

24 - 27 October 2006

Bear Conservation in a Fast-Changing North America
Revelstoke Community Centre, Revelstoke, B.C., Canada
Contact: Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology, office@cmiae.org
Web: <http://www.cmiae.org/>

26 October - 5 November 2006

2006 Banff Mountain Film & Book Festivals
The Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, Canada
Contact: The Banff Centre, mountainculture@banffcentre.ca
Web: <http://www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture/2005/festivals/>

November

13 - 19 November 2006

First International Workshop on "Ecosystem Services in the Neotropics"
Valdivia, Chile
Contact: neotropicsworkshop@forecos.net
Web: <http://www.forecos.net/neotropics/>

Please update your contact information!

Dear Mountain Forum member,

Please update your contact information by visiting <http://www.mtnforum.org/rs/mem/update.cfm> OR by notifying the regional office nearest to you as per the list below:

Africa

Node Manager
African Mountain Forum
c/o African Highlands Initiative
ICRAF Uganda
Plot 13, Binyayomba, off Luthuli, Bugolobi
PO Box 26416
Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256-41-220 607/2
Fax: +256-41-223 242
Email: amf@mtforum.org
Web: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rn/amf.cfm>

Asia-Pacific

Node Manager
Asia-Pacific Mountain Network
ICIMOD
GPO Box 3226
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-552 5313
Fax: +977-1-552 4509
Email: apmn@mtforum.org
Web: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rn/apmn.cfm>

Europe

European Mountain Forum
Email: emf@mtforum.org
Web: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rn/emf.cfm>
To contact the European Mountain Forum by post, fax or phone, please contact the Mountain Forum Secretariat at the address provided on the back cover of this Bulletin.

Latin America

Node Manager
InfoAndina/CONDESAN
International Potato Center (CIP)
Apartado Postal 1558, Lima 12, Peru
Tel: +51-1-349 6017 ext. 2056
Fax: +51-1-317 5326
Email: infoandina@mtforum.org
Web: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rn/infoandina.cfm>

North America

Node Manager
North American Mountain Forum
Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre
107 Tunnel Mountain Drive
Box 1020, Banff, Alberta, Canada T1L 1H5
Tel: +1-403-762 6477
Fax: +1-403-762 6277
Email: namf@mtforum.org
Web: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rn/namf.cfm>



Supporting Institutions



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation



Syangboche, Nepal. Photo: Celine Curi, MFS

Host Institutions and Partners



Bellanet



Consortio para el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Ecorregión Andina



European Mountain Forum



International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development



International Potato Center



The Banff Centre



The Mountain Institute



World Agroforestry Centre



1996 - 2006 A decade of sharing

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