

Chapter 1

Introduction

This report and training modules are submitted in response to the terms of reference issued by the Sarhad Tourism Corporation (STC). The STC, in collaboration with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), intends to establish capabilities in environmentally sound tourism in the mountain areas of Pakistan. With this in mind, ICIMOD launched Phase-1 of a NORAD-funded project, 'Mountain Tourism for Local Community Development', in 1994. The objective of the project was to review the status of mountain tourism in selected regions of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan ranges, identify the key issues with respect to mountain tourism and economic and environmental development of local communities, undertake location-specific, in-depth investigation of key issues, and develop a framework for Action Plans for sustainable mountain tourism and local community development in the case study areas. Methodologically, a participatory method of enquiry and Action Plan preparation were to be pursued and documentation of the process was to be undertaken. The case studies for Pakistan were carried out in the Kalam Valley, in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), and Hunza, in the Northern Areas.

The project was extended into a second phase in 1996 in order to further the understanding of key issues and problems developed in Phase 1. The three regions selected for investigation in Pakistan are Chitral and Gilgit in the Northern Areas and the Galiyat, which includes areas in the NWFP and Punjab. The present report includes a micro-case-study of Raikot Valley (Fairy Meadows), situated in the Gilgit District and an Action Plan for community development of the area, as well as for mountain tourism development. The training modules, under separate cover, draw upon these components and have been specifically prepared for use by the STC to impart training to various levels of government officials, to entrepreneurs, and to members of the community.

Raikot Valley leads up to the Raikot glacier on the north face of Nanga Parbat. The principal village in the valley is Tato, and the area of tourist interest is commonly known as Fairy Meadows, a name given to the area by German climbers. The location presents interesting possibilities for illustrating and enlarging upon the basic themes of the ICIMOD-STC project and could provide analyses and insights that will be widely applicable to the glacial valleys typical in the Northern Areas of Pakistan.

During the initial stages of investigation, it became apparent that the sociopolitical dynamics in the valley are extremely complex, and that a study on tourism which ignored this aspect would only do so at its own risk. Specifically, two clear aspects emerged. First, tourism in and of itself represents a positive force in the valley. It conforms to the dictates of carrying capacity in that it is environmentally sustainable, economically beneficial, and culturally unobtrusive. The present thrust and orientation of tourism is sound; with appropriate management interventions and training, the carrying capacity of the valley can be increased to accommodate a much larger inflow of tourists.

Second, and on the other hand, the obvious environmental destabilisation, social divisiveness, and economic exploitation of the community can be attributed to a triumvirate of timber contractors, private developers, and the government. Their depredations, through both commission and omission, are already in an advanced stage. Only by directly addressing the environmental and socioeconomic manifestations of their actions can a measure of stability be restored to the valley. In other words, implementation of a tourism action plan must proceed concurrently with a number of key interventions aimed at infrastructural rehabilitation, area and sector development, effective policy implementation, and sustained advocacy.

This report is organised as follows: Chapter Two provides baseline data on the valley's physical, demographic, socioeconomic, cultural, and gender characteristics. Chapter Three examines logging and its environmental consequences, while Chapter Four looks at the practices and potentials of tourism in the area. Chapter Five analyses carrying capacity concerns and Chapter Six presents an approach and a two-part Action Plan for the valley. The plan includes activities, institutional context, training requirements, financing modalities, monitoring indicators, and process documentation.

Supporting annexes are appended. In particular, Annex Three depicts the key valley characteristics pictorially.