





## What is SEED?



**FRAMEWORK:** Pakistan-Italian debt for development SWAP agreement

**DONORS:** Government of Italy, Government of Pakistan

**PERIOD:** 2009-2014



**FOCUS AREA:** Central Karakorum National Park, Gilgit-Baltistan Region

**BUDGET:** 1,018,934,981.05 PKR

**IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION:** Ev-K2-CNR Committee in collaboration with the Karakorum International University



**COLLABORATIVE AGENCIES:**

- AKRSP Baltistan
- Central Karakorum National Park Directorate (CKNP)
- Alpine Club Pakistan (ACP)
- WWF Pakistan
- Mountain Glacier and Protection Organization (MGPO)
- International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
- Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD)
- ISIAO,
- POLITECNICO MILANO
- OTHERS ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTION



**GOAL:** The SEED project aims at an integrative development of CKNP region through supporting the implementation and management of CKNP, improving well being and livelihood options of local people.

**OVERALL OBJECTIVES:** Achieving poverty alleviation, community development, livelihood improvement and conservation through an integration of intrinsic, scientific, ecosystem-management oriented research, indigenous practices for natural resource management and eco tourism principles to support the development and implementation of the Central Karakorum National Park (CKNP), Northern Areas, Pakistan and it's surrounding area.

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE:**

- Local people's well-being is carried by secure, and environmentally sustainable livelihoods, building on intrinsic potentials and indigenous practices, supported by contemporary technologies and techniques
- Endogenous development of CKNP takes place, building on intrinsically generated and managed knowledge and the involvement of educated organized local communities
- CKNP directorate implements effectively the management plan using a contemporary, participatory approach backed by scientific expertise
- High quality services support an equitable, culturally sensitive eco-sustainable tourism industry in CKNP and Bufferzone.

**STRATEGY:**

PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

- environmental and social research and monitoring
- Implementation of the Central Karakorum National Park management plan



- livelihood options and community development in the buffer zone
- Eco-sustainable tourism; visitor facilities and cultural heritage

**METHOD:** A key feature of the project's approach is it's strategy to integrate research (and capacity building for intrinsic knowledge generation) with community development and ecosystem management. Thematically, the SEED project will focus on three main interconnected areas, which can be considered the main pillars of an integrated development of CKNP from the perspective of different prevailing approaches in the fields of macro-economic development, protected area management/entitlements, livelihood development and well-being.

## Context and Background

Gilgit-Baltistan, the northernmost district of Pakistan is one of the most mountainous landscapes on earth, situated where 3 of the world's largest mountain ranges converge: Himalaya, Hindu Kush and Karakorum and encompassing the world's largest glacier outside of the Polar Regions. Most elevations are above 1500 m a.s.l. and more than half of the area is well above 4500 m a.s.l., including K-2, Nanga Parbat, Gashbrum-I, II, and Broad Peak.

Central Karakorum National Park, the largest protected area in Pakistan is situated in the northeast of Gilgit-Baltistan, stretching across 10,000 square kilometers. It falls into the administrative districts of Gilgit, Skardu, and Ghanche. Approximately 230 villages, 97,608 people and 13,159 households are located in areas adjacent to CKNP. It borders northwards with China and eastwards with Ladakh and Kashmir. With its majestic glaciers, such as Baltoro and Biafo, its unique wildlife and floral diversity, Central Karakorum National Park's breathtaking beauty is wild and untouched.

*Central Karakorum National Park Boundaries as ratified by the Government of Pakistan in 1993*



Although the population of Gilgit-Baltistan is relatively small, it is linguistically and ethnically very diverse. Twelve different languages tell us about the long, turbulent and rich history of the area, which manifests itself in numerous important cultural heritage sites.

However, for the people making a living in this part of Pakistan, remoteness of important education and health services and centers of commerce are the downside of the wild and untouched beauty of the region. Cash income sources are rare and in this harsh and dry mountain climate even subsistence agriculture is a feat and sickness can easily lead to serious chronic illness or death. All of these characteristics make people from Central Karakorum National Park living constantly at the brink of poverty.

No surprise that the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of the Pakistan Government, developed in 2004 lists rural regions in Gilgit-Baltistan district as having the 3rd highest poverty rate in the country, just after FATA and NWFP.

Gilgit-Baltistan has a unique and critical role to play in the sustainable development of Pakistan. Although the district spans a relatively small geographical area, it hosts the vital catchment of the Indus River, a key water source for Pakistan's irrigated agriculture and hydroelectricity production. Gilgit Baltistan also hosts the nation's most important natural forests, extensive mineral reserves, and a wealth of biodiversity. The dramatic scenery, some of the world's highest mountains and the rich cultural and archaeological heritage make Gilgit-Baltistan one of the most visited tourist destinations in the country.

The Central Karakorum National Park (CKNP) was officially notified as National Park in 1993. There is a tremendous pressure on the natural resources due to traditional usufruct rights of the local inhabitants, coupled with the need of visitors to the area.

Unsustainable resource use and tourism practices are viewed as the key threats faced by the local ecosystem.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations have been working at the local scale for over a decade in order to improve the economic, social and environmental situation of CKNP area. All the interventions have a common objective, but no framework that coordinates the different activities and strategies applied by these organizations have a legislative framework of reference, as the only law on parks is the Northern Areas Wildlife Preservation Act of 1975.

To tackle these deficits and to achieve a better coordination of the different interventions towards the realization of CKNP, the project "Participatory Management and Development of Central Karakorum National Park (CKNP)" had been approved in June 2007 by the Northern Areas Administration; this 5 year initiative is supported by the HKKH Partnership Project, WWF Pakistan and the Karakorum Trust Project. The CKNP partners have been cooperate in the implementation of activities according to the repartition of responsibilities agreed in the CKNP project document. However, two of the key projects: Karakorum Trust and HKKH Partnership Project, are being concluded and due to a lack of funding the PC-1 activities would have had to be reduced substantially. Particularly the capacity to implement CKNP regulations and manage the (future) park must be ensured if the CKNP planning process is to be successful, which is considered a key factor for economic and livelihood development of communities in CKNP bufferzone. SEED project revised the PC-1 project jointly with CKNP Directorate in 2010 to ensure that this important project will be concluded.

This is where the SEED project takes off...

## SEED project intervention

Realizing the close interrelation between poverty alleviation, social and economic development for local people, environmental research and conservation of the unique natural beauty of the area, the SEED project aims to catalyze an integrated social, economic and environmental development, including the realization of Central Karakorum National Park.

With this aim, the project operates in compliance with the priorities defined in implementation plan for the Agenda 21, developed at the World Summit of Sustainable Development in 2002 to achieve the reduction of poverty and support the sustainable development of mountain ecosystems:

“An integrated approach is needed for conserving, upgrading and using the natural resource base of land, water, plant, animal and human resources. In addition, promoting alternative livelihood opportunities, particularly through development of employment schemes that increase the productive base, will have a significant role in improving the standard of living among the large rural population living in mountain ecosystems. (...) Specific information on ecology, natural resource potential and socio-economic activities is essential. A given mountain slope may include several climatic systems - such as tropical, subtropical, temperate and alpine - each of which represents a microcosm of a larger habitat diversity. There is, however, a lack of knowledge of mountain ecosystems.”

For the past 20 years, Ev-K2-CNR has been supporting Gilgit-Baltistan with scientific expertise, through community development, improvement of the tourism sector, conservation of cultural heritage and facilitation of small businesses in collaboration with many partner organizations and departments from Italy, Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. Finally, Ev-K2-CNR has the opportunity to catalyze these experiences in different sectors and extensive networks in a holistic large-scale project that will make a real difference on the ground, for local people, visitors to the area, the economy, but also for the areas' wildlife and the conservation of its unique beauty of global relevance.

For SEED project Ev-K2-CNR was fortunate to find the right partner for this venture. Ev-K2-CNR and Karakorum International University (KIU) share a common vision and approach and the university is truly native to Gilgit-Baltistan. KIU's mandate is to support the development of the Gilgit-Baltistan region by imparting knowledge and scientific education to the local youth, in order to harness their skills and expertise for the socio-economic and environmental development of their own homeland. In this respect, the collaboration with Karakorum International University renders the SEED project intrinsically sustainable.

With Ev-K2-CNR's expertise in high-altitude environmental research,

## Key Focus

a key focus of the SEED project is to promote “management-oriented research”: to integrate research and capacity building for intrinsic knowledge generation with ecosystem and national park management.

The project will strengthen Central Karakorum National Park management, the government agency which is responsible for the implementation of park regulations, by providing appropriate facilities, equipment, staffing and relevant trainings.

Scientifically informed, adaptive, national park management builds on a profound knowledge of the target ecosystem, the acquisition of which involves extensive research and monitoring activities due to the complexity and dynamic nature inherent in ecosystems. Relevant research and monitoring will be carried out in the SEED project and at the same time, capacity to do so in the future will be built. Protagonist for this will be the most important scientific centre of the area and main partner of Ev-K2-CNR in the SEED project, Karakorum International University.

Capacity building for Karakorum International University faculty will be achieved through different collaborative research and exchange programs between Ev-K2-CNR affiliated Italian universities and Karakorum International University, as well as an improvement of the university's own facilities, according to the recommendation of Agenda 21: “Generating and strengthening knowledge about the ecology and

*Building a strong,  
intrinsically  
scientific CKNP  
management*



sustainable development of mountain ecosystems”.

The university will link up with the park management and other SEED project partner organizations to create a culture of intrinsic, management-oriented research and monitoring schemes and protocols that can directly be applied in decision making processes of the park management.

In this way, the SEED project will contribute to the finalization and implementation of a management plan for Central Karakorum National park in a threefold way:

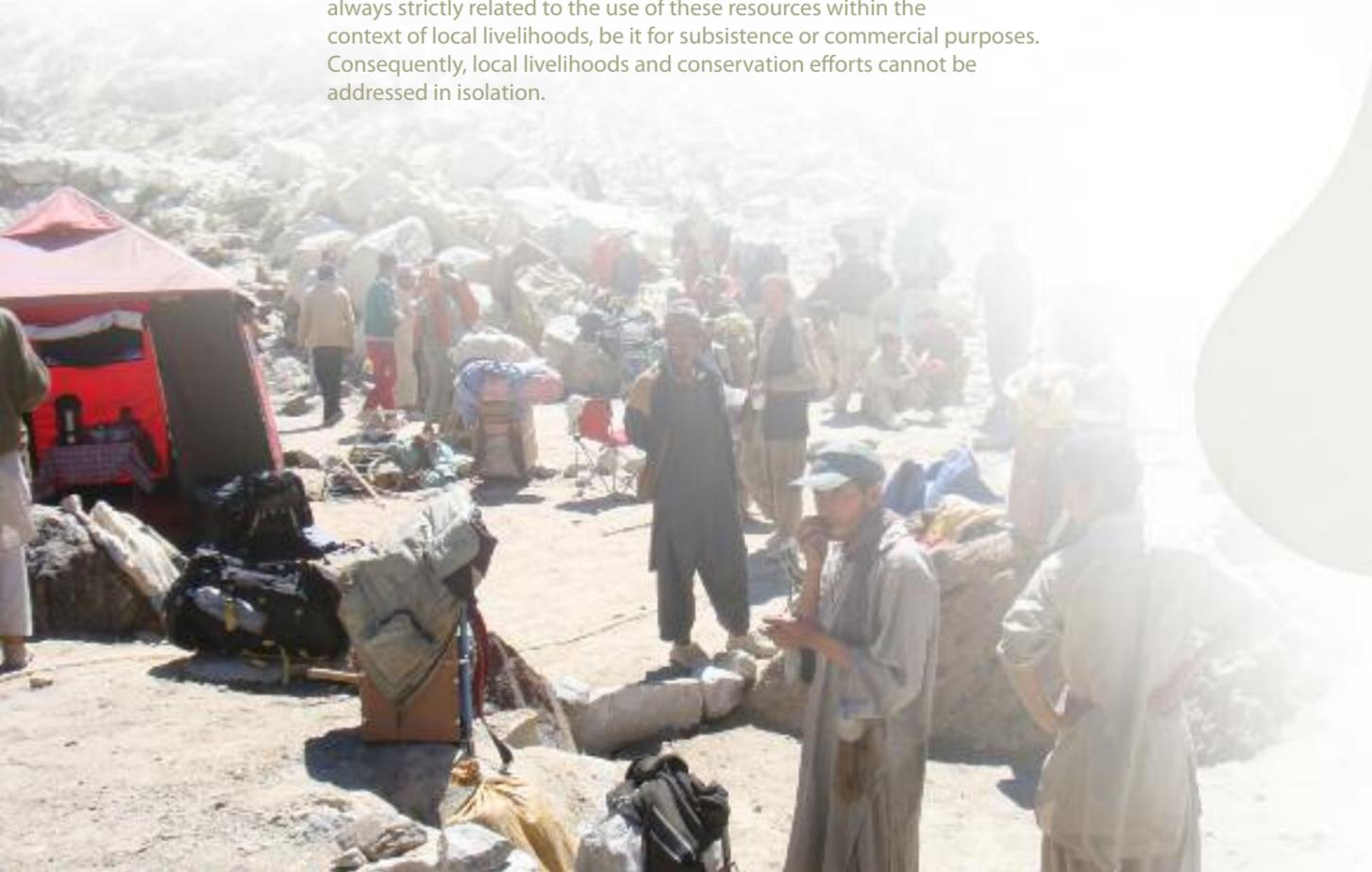
- Establishing and extending key baseline data for the development of regulations and zoning to be developed in the framework of the management planning process and establishing a mechanism to feed this information into the management planning process
- Building a structure and creating the capacity for the development and implementation of the management plan according to contemporary protected area management approaches and practices
- Building the foundation for the implementation of the management plan at the community level by creating, empowering and committing local institutions, and testing, documenting and mapping best local natural resource management practices.

Other Ev-K2-CNR projects will join into this effort by establishing the legislative framework and the formal institutions and processes required for CKNP Directorate and partners to successfully manage the park.

Experiences across the planet have shown that successful protected area management involves the participation of the local communities living in and around the park, which is impossible without providing tangible benefits for the well being of these communities.

Local natural resource management practices and regulations are almost always strictly related to the use of these resources within the context of local livelihoods, be it for subsistence or commercial purposes. Consequently, local livelihoods and conservation efforts cannot be addressed in isolation.

*Economic development and support for the eco-sustainable tourism sector*



*Improvement of local livelihoods and well-being*

The SEED project will focus its support on livelihood assets and improvements of local people's well being, ensuring that they are not in conflict with, but support the park's conservation efforts.

The project will address local communities' basic needs, regarding health, hygiene and sanitation and contribute to increased livelihood security, foremost through supporting diversification of cash income sources of households, by generating income opportunities in the tourism, craft and small trade industry. But it will also help the communities to increase the yield of their crops in an ecologically sustainable way and to diversify their agricultural portfolio

With regard to the implementation of Central Karakorum National Park regulations, only an educated local population, which is able to understand the idea of a national park and can read the regulations is able and willing to support and participate in the management of the park. The SEED project will launch campaigns to raise awareness, informing and communicating with local communities about the park but also improve basic education services for local people. The target areas focus on settlements close to the park and along major trekking routes.

For protected areas, eco-sustainable tourism is the economic sector which is most consistent and compliant with a national park's vision, objectives and regulations. The eco-sustainable tourism sector has a large potential to generate funds which could sustainably support many local families, the park management office and open up new perspectives for local communities. Such benefits have been proven to be key for achieving consensus and foster a common agreement among the stakeholders for park management vision and regulations, a prerequisite for a successful and effective implementation of the protection on the ground.

However, tourism development is a double-edged sword. An increase of visitor flows commonly also results in an increased pressure on natural resources as well as on the social and cultural identities of local communities. Such negative impacts can be mitigated by good management of the visitor flows. This requires knowledge about visitors, a skilled park management, informed tourism industry protagonists and appropriately situated and managed visitor facilities. SEED project supports improvements in the quality of visitor services and installation and sustainable management of appropriate and ecologically sustainable visitor facilities. It also provides the park management with the knowledge and systems that allow it to generate information to manage visitor flows..

## SEED Activities

### BUILDING A STRONG, INTRINSICALLY SCIENTIFIC CKNP MANAGEMENT

#### Management-oriented research and training

- Develop an integrated management-oriented research program
- Conduct management-oriented environmental research and monitoring to support the CKNP
- Install and manage operations of Automatic Weather Stations in CKNP
- Assess local techniques in sustainable natural resource use and identify best practices
- Provide community-level training in natural resource management best practices
- Mobilize communities for participation in conservation and sustainable use of Park resources
- Establish an international panel of natural resource experts at KIU to support CKNP management
- Establish a faculty for integrated mountain area development studies and applied research at KIU
- Carryout afforestation and social forestry interventions in vulnerable watershed areas

#### Sustainable Park Management

- Establish environmentally sustainable CKNP headquarters
- Establish/improve Park Entrance Points including camping and CKNP field office
- Establish CKNP visitor information and registration facilities Improve Park signage
- Recruit new staff and provide support for existing CKNP staff
- Provide working equipment for CKNP staff
- Build capacity of key stakeholders involved in CKNP management
- Establish sanitation and sustainable waste management schemes for major trekking routes, including installation of two ecological platforms at Concordia (Baltoro Glacier) for human waste
- Carry out trail upkeep and maintenance services
- Establish tree plantations at the Hispar campsite

### IMPROVEMENT OF LOCAL LIVELIHOODS AND WELL-BEING

#### Local livelihoods

- Assess local livelihood opportunities, risks and changes
- Carry out training courses for trekking leaders and guides
- Support traditional woodworking craftsmanship Health, education, basic facilities
- Improve/install water supply schemes for communities
- Implement measures to improve water quality
- Build capacity of local administrations in water quality and sanitation control
- Conduct teacher training courses
- Provide modern teaching aids for local schools

- Improve facilities/infrastructure of local school buildings
- Establish a health-service network for Braldo-Shigar
- Improve capacity of Lady Health Workers (LWHs) and Trained Birth Attendants (TBAs)
- Improve higher education facilities at the KIU campus by installing a water supply scheme and a renewable energy supply and improving access ways
- Raise community-level awareness on key issues, including: hygiene and health, the importance of education ; gender inclusion; improvements in community organization; and the community's role in CKNP management

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR THE ECO-SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SECTOR

#### Agricultural productivity

- Promote off-season vegetable farming and seedling production
- Enable market access for local agricultural products
- Assess potential for increased production and marketing of local agricultural products
- Establish fruit nurseries and training for improved productivity and marketing for local farmers
- Improve livestock and pasture management
- Develop systems for environmentally sound, safe and hygienic production and processing of agricultural products and provide related training

#### Economic development

- Economic development
- Develop trophy hunting programs
- Promote safe gemstone mining techniques in the CKNP area
- Build local capacity for gemstone cutting and polishing

#### Promotion of cultural heritage and eco-sustainable tourism

- Assess and map historic settlements and places of architectural value
- Assess and promote cultural heritage of CKNP and buffer zone
- Renovate traditional architecture and village-layouts in Askole
- Establish a cultural/historical museum in Askole
- Develop Askole in relation to infrastructural improvements of existing campsites
- Identify and promote cultural heritage-trekking routes
- Improve hospitality services in terms of quality and social / environmental awareness
- Carry out sustainable solid waste cleanup campaigns on major trekking routes
- Engage local media to promote public awareness of CKNP
- Develop an interactive web portal for CKNP and Northern Areas



## IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

### Ev-K2-CNR Committee

The Ev-K2-CNR project was initiated in 1987, when the now ninety year- old geologist Ardito Desio began a new research campaign in the Himalayas and Karakorum, supported by Agostino Da Polenza. Just two years later, the Ev-K2-CNR Committee was registered as an independent nonprofit association, committed to scientific and technological research in the Hindu Kush – Karakorum – Himalaya (HKKH) region, with particular reference to Nepal, Pakistan and Tibet. In 2006, the association obtained juridical recognition and in 2007, in order to formalize the close collaboration with the National Research Council, a Research Unit was established within Ev-K2-CNR, under the auspices of the CNR Earth and Environment Department. Ev-K2-CNR is best known for the Pyramid International Laboratory Observatory, located in Nepal, in Sagarmatha National Park, at 5,050 m a.s.l. Installed in 1990, in collaboration with the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), its aim was to become a high altitude research base, and today it has become one of the most complex and interesting remote area research sites. To date, around 600 research missions have been carried out there. Ev-K2-CNR has accumulated a vast quantity of knowledge relating to high altitudes in the research fields of Medicine and Physiology, Environmental Sciences, Anthropology and New Technologies. With its rich network of international and institutional collaborating partners, Ev-K2-CNR plays a strategic role in the exchange and transfer of scientific and cultural knowledge and expertise. Its approach to an increasingly interdisciplinary kind of research enabled the implementation of integrated programs (such as the Karakorum Trust and HKKH Partnership) for the promotion of socio-economic and environmental development in mountain areas.



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### Karakorum International University

Karakorum International University was established in 2002 as a federal university, through a charter with the President of Pakistan as its Chancellor. The university aims to provide higher education facilities to the people of the Northern Areas and to contribute to bring the region at par with the rest of the country.

Since its inception, the number of students at KIU has reached just over 2000, with about 1/3 female students. KIU hosts a faculty for applied sciences and a faculty for social sciences and the following 12 departments:

- Mathematics
- Computer Sciences
- Food, Agriculture and Chemical Technology
- Biological Sciences
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Business Management
- Economics
- Educational Development
- Modern Languages
- International Relations and Political Sciences
- Earth Sciences

Soon, an Institute of Hotel Management and Tourism, Philosophy; Law and Politics; Arts, Culture & Heritage will follow. KIU aims at promoting sustainable socio-economic development in the mountainous areas of Pakistan through the improvement of knowledge, skills, and expertise to sustainably manage natural resources. Consequently, courses and themes of academic curricula offered at the University are made relevant to the mountain environment and touch virtually every aspect of life in the Northern Areas.

With around 400 employees and over 120 faculty members, KIU is the only institution in the Northern Areas that feature a large number of highly trained and versatile manpower in a variety of educational fields and well equipped laboratories and facilities. Furthermore, KIU collaborates with a number of NGOs, INGOs and government departments, such as Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NORAGRIC/UMB) NUFU Project, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP). The guiding principles of the University's work include: relevance, multi-disciplinary integration, and quality and excellence. KIU is committed to achieving excellence in the graduate and post graduate level education and research providing comprehensive educational opportunities. It also contributes to the advancement of the society through research and creative activities dedicated to increase human capital based on the knowledge-driven development.



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## Project Partners

The SEED project design has followed a participatory approach. Collaborating agencies had been selected early in the process and planning activities and expected results were formulated considering the partner's expertise and long-term experience working in NA. Most agencies have been active in various other past projects, some of which were discussed earlier.

Building on long-term experiences and sound expertise of collaborating agencies and their first-hand knowledge of the social, political, ecological and economic context in the project area will support a high efficiency of the project activities and ensure an impact on the ground. On the other hand, this approach has shown to be challenging regarding the achievement of a high effectiveness of the intervention with regard to the results, specific objectives, overall goal and vision.



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