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Proposals invited for APMN's Small Grants' Programme

APMN invites proposals for its Small Grants' Programme, 2000-2001. As part of its commitment to capacity building and institutional strengthening in the Asia-Pacific region, APMN will award grants ranging from US \$ 500 to 3,000 to proposals that best meet the criteria outlined in the Small Grants' Guidelines <<http://www.apmn.mtnforum.org/smallgrant.doc>>.

All applicants must also meet the APMN Network Partners' Criteria outlined in the guidelines. All proposals must be submitted on the prescribed form.

The proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by APMN/ICIMOD specialists based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Based on their recommendations, about six projects will be funded by APMN from a grant made available by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

In the First Round (1999-2000) of the Programme, 38 proposals were received from all over the Asia-Pacific region. Of these, seven were selected and supported with the funds made available by SDC. Information on those seven proposals can be found at <<http://www.apmn.mtnforum.org/sgProposals.htm>>.

The deadline for receipt of proposals is November 15, 2000. All successful applicants will be notified in writing and announced on the APMN website on or before December 31, 2000. If you are unable to download the Guidelines and Application Form from the web, you may request the same by writing, e-mailing, or sending a fax to:

Mr. Ujol Sherchan
APMN Network Administrator
c/o ICIMOD, G.P.O. Box 3226
Kathmandu, Nepal
Fax: 00-977-1-522509/536747
Email: <apmn@icimod.org.np>

You may submit proposals through fax, e-mail (as attachments), or regular post.

Elections Underway for the Asia Pacific Mountain Forum Board Member

The Mountain Forum is currently holding a series of elections for its Board of Directors. There is one seat allocated for the Asia-Pacific region. For details on nomination and voting criteria, procedures, and schedules, please visit the following APMN web page: <<http://www.apmn.mtnforum.org/board/boardelections.htm>>

Voting will take place from 18-27 October 2000. The result will be announced in early November 2000. To make this election a success your active participation is requested. **To vote, please go on-line any time between 18-27 October 2000 and place your vote from this web page:** <http://www.apmn.mtnforum.org/board/vote.htm>

If you have any questions, please contact

Mr. Ujol Sherchan
(address as in previous article)

Conserving Himalayan Honeybees

The Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region is one of the world's richest in terms of diversity in honeybee species. At least five different species of honeybee are found in the HKH region: among them *Apis dorsata*, *Apis florea*, *Apis laboriosa*, *Apis cerana*, and *Apis mellifera*. *Apis florea*, *Apis dorsata*, and *Apis laboriosa* are wild in nature and cannot be kept in hives. These species build single comb nests on tall trees, bushes, and cliffs. They are potential crop pollinators and are the basis for most commercial forest honey and beeswax sold in different countries in the HKH. There are traditional honey-hunting communities who harvest honey and beeswax from these wild bees.

Apis cerana and *Apis mellifera* can be kept in hives and managed for honey production and crop pollination. *Apis cerana*, the native honeybee, is not popular among commercial beekeepers because of its low honey yield and undesirable behavioural traits: for example, frequent swarming and absconding.

Apis mellifera was introduced to the region to promote beekeeping as a commercial enterprise. As a result, *Apis cerana* is declining at an alarming rate. If this process of replacement of *Apis cerana* with *Apis mellifera* were to continue for another decade, it could lead to complete extinction of this native Himalayan honeybee. Studies carried out by ICIMOD have shown that, at present, there are only a few areas where *Apis cerana* can be found, e.g., some mountain areas in Nepal, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir in India, and the provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan in China. In Pakistan, where *Apis mellifera* has been promoted much more vigorously, there are very few colonies of *Apis cerana* left; mostly with farmers in remote villages.

Why Conserve *Apis cerana*?

One could argue that when there is a more productive bee like *Apis mellifera*, why should we conserve a less productive bee?

- *Apis mellifera* is an import and not well adapted to the agro-climatic conditions of mountain areas. It is highly susceptible to cold and needs to be migrated to warmer, low hill areas during winter and brought back during summer, otherwise it requires a lot of winter management. *Apis cerana* is cold resistant, suitable for stationary beekeeping, and available for the pollination of early blooming mountain crops.
- *Apis cerana* is resistant to common mites such as *Varroa* and *Tropilaelaps*; *Apis mellifera* is highly susceptible to them and requires expensive chemicals to control them. Mites are causing great losses for *mellifera* beekeepers every year. Conserving *cerana* is of utmost importance for global pollinator biodiversity conservation and food security maintenance.
- Though *Apis mellifera* is more suitable for commercial beekeeping, beekeeping in many areas of the HKH region is a small household activity for which *Apis cerana* is more suitable. It requires simple, less expensive technology, and mountain

farmers can easily afford it.

Potential for Promoting Apis cerana

Apis cerana in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region has three sub-species - namely, *A. cerana cerana*, *A. cerana himalaya*, and *A. cerana indica*. Similar studies have reported five sub-species: *A. cerana cerana*, *A. cerana skorikovi*, *A. cerana abaensis*, *A. cerana hainanensis*, and *A. cerana indica* in the Chinese Himalayas. Among these, *A. cerana cerana* found in the high mountain areas of Nepal, India, and China is larger in size than other *cerana* species and matches *Apis mellifera* in behaviour and honey production; it also has the potential for improvement for commercial use.

Conserving Apis cerana: An ICIMOD Initiative

For the past ten years, ICIMOD has been implementing a programme to conserve *Apis cerana* in the HKH region and has been trying to convince government and non-government organisations to support beekeeping with *Apis cerana*.

Traditionally bees were kept for honey. Using bees for crop pollination is a relatively recent concept. The recent trend of diversifying mountain agriculture from traditional cereal crops to high-value cash crops, fruit, and vegetables requires insects for cross pollination, since most commercial varieties of these high-value crops are self-incompatible and essentially cross-pollinated. Within the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region there are already reports of declining fruit crop yields and crop failures because of inadequate pollinators in intensive cash crop farming areas.

In countries of the HKH region like China, Pakistan, Bhutan, and Nepal where farmers need bees for pollination of orchard crops, there is no practice of using them. The mind-sets of planners, policy makers, beekeepers, and farmers need to be changed in view of the value of honeybees as crop pollinators and policies need to be formulated that place more emphasis on the use of honeybees in pollination of mountain crops.

Stock improvement through selection and multiplication

Among three sub-species of *Apis cerana* found in the Himalayan region, *A. cerana cerana* is larger in size and comparable to *A. mellifera* in terms of honey production and other behavioural characteristics. It is found in the high altitude areas of Jumla (Nepal), Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir (India), and the northern areas of China. Research is being focused on selection and multiplication of the colonies of such highly productive sub-species, i.e., *A. cerana cerana* through selection, breeding, and mass queen rearing. The first step in this direction is to identify potential gene pool areas of the highly productive strains of *Apis cerana* in the HKH region. The colonies maintaining highly prolific queens, containing good amounts of brood and adult bees, resistant to different diseases and parasites such as the particularly dreaded Thai Sac Brood Virus disease, having less swarming and absconding tendencies, and good honey gathering qualities are being selected and multiplied through selective breeding and mass queen rearing.

ICIMOD is carrying out a farmers' participatory action research programme on selection and multiplication of highly productive strains in selected sites like the Jumla, and Dadeldhura districts of Nepal, Kullu hills of Himachal Pradesh, India, and mountain areas of Pakistan. Experimental apiaries have been set up at these sites with farmers' participation.

Apiary management research

The frequent absconding and swarming displayed by *A. cerana* are characteristics essential for survival of colonies but undesirable for beekeeping. Research by ICIMOD shows that insufficient bee flora, excessive handling, exposure of colonies to summer sunshine, and diseases and pests are the main causes of absconding. Practices such as sugar feeding, providing shade from summer sunshine, and a queen gate at the hive entrance significantly reduce absconding. Frequent swarming can be effectively reduced through a selection programme against this trait. The removal of newly constructed queen cells during the active swarming season also helps to check swarming considerably.

Zonation of beekeeping areas

Promoting the use of *Apis mellifera* in low hill/plains' areas and *Apis cerana* in mountain areas is a sensible approach. Such zonation is important because, when two species are kept in the same area, there is always competition (for food) and the chance of transfer of diseases/parasites from one species to another. In low hill/ plains' areas where *Apis mellifera* has been promoted on a large scale, *Apis cerana* has disappeared. Banning the promotion of *Apis mellifera* in these areas is one strategy that can help conserve *Apis cerana* in mountain areas.

The beekeeping project at ICIMOD is making serious efforts with the involvement of local farmers/beekeepers and national institutions to conserve *Apis cerana* and promote it for beekeeping and crop pollination in mountain areas of the HKH region.

Acknowledgement

This study is a part of the project on 'Indigenous Honeybees of the Himalayas' funded by Austroprojekt.

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Accelerating Biodiversity Loss in Afghanistan

**From SAVENEWS, No. 11, March-May 2000 posted on the MF-Asia Discussion list ; Friday, 23 June 2000
SAVENEWS is the Quarterly Newsletter of Society for Afghanistan Volunteer Environmentalists (SAVE)**

In the last few decades the loss of biodiversity has been unprecedented in Afghanistan. Afghan fauna are characterised by their remarkable adaptation to arid steppe or mountain conditions. The large herds of wild asses and gazelles, which until recent times populated the steppes, have almost been exterminated by hunting. Similarly, their predators, the cheetah, and, to a lesser degree, the hyena have declined. Their associated arthropod fauna, such as dung beetles, which are often host specific, have also presumably disappeared.

The forests and mountains also harboured large numbers of wild goat, ibex, markhor, Bactrian deer, yak, otter, marten, and long-tailed marmot. These have also been much reduced in number by hunting and habitat degradation. Predators much sought after for their furs, such as the Turanian tiger, the snow leopard, wolf, red fox, brown bear, ermine, and lynx, are now rarely seen. Only relatively protected or isolated areas such as the Pamir range, with its famous Marco Polo sheep, have retained their fauna.

In the migration season, huge numbers of birds migrate from Siberia through Afghanistan to the warmer Indian peninsula and Africa. During these seasons, the wetlands throughout the country serve as essential habitat for thousands of waders, ducks, and other waterfowl. The rare Siberian crane and the greater flamingo are among these species. For their continued survival, the Afghan wetlands are an essential stop for resting and feeding. Many birds also winter in these wetlands.

Pressure on species from hunting has been increasing for the past several decades with the increase in the number of firearms, as a result of war, coupled with increased necessity for food and money. The open door policy for poachers and smugglers has diminished populations of falcons in Afghanistan. The lucrative business attracts thousands of people who make easy money from the sale and trade of falcons in Afghanistan. Across Afghanistan, in almost more than 26 provinces, the business of catching falcons, their subsequent smuggling to Pakistan, and then selling them to affluent Arabs continue unabated because of the involvement and circulation of a lot of money.

The Houbara bustard populations in Afghanistan now face the same elimination. Hunting parties from the Arab world come to Afghanistan and spend several weeks hunting Houbara. They have wiped out whole populations and move forward toward the Central Asian states.

The lack of restriction and regulation causes a serious threat to birds. Ignorance about future repercussions could pose a serious threat to the environmental health and prosperity of our nation. A substantial number of wolf and fox pelts appear in fur shops in Kabul, along with a number of pelts of snow leopard, leopard, and baby leopard. Strings of ducks and other waterfowl are frequently seen in the market in Kabul, indicating that indiscriminate shooting continues.

On the other hand, some wildlife habitats temporarily cut off from hunting pressure by warfare may have provided a temporary sanctuary for some species, allowing some populations to increase. During rehabilitation, care will have to be taken to restrict hunting during the breeding season and to restrict the collection of bird eggs. Regulations on trade in falcon and other raptors for falconry will have to be put in place to ensure survival of the species and the sustainability of a profitable trade.

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Mountains and Media

A Panos South Asia/ICIMOD Workshop

A workshop will be held for journalists from the Asia Pacific region from 13 to 16 November 2000 at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu, Nepal. Participants will be 16 journalists selected from the region. The workshop aims to

- increase and improve awareness about issues affecting mountain and upland areas in the Asia Pacific region,
- foster informed debate by ensuring increased and informed coverage of mountain issues by the regional media, and
- generate publicity for the 'International Year of Mountains' in 2002.

The workshop will facilitate interaction among journalists and the media, Internet specialists, and technical experts. Issues such as the scarcity of information and data and difficulty of access, which journalists based in mountain regions constantly face, will also be addressed. Practical sessions will be organised to help participants hone their skills in story development and information searches on different subjects relevant to mountain areas. Participants will take a one-day field trip to observe some of the problems/successes of development programmes in the mountains.

A 'Journalists' Reference Pack' is being put together with information on issues related to sustainable development in mountain environments as well as relevant reference sources such as documents, journals, websites, institutions, libraries, and so on. This tool will be 'field tested' with/on the workshop participants. The final reference pack will incorporate their feedback and be distributed to media in different countries.

Conservation Vs Livelihood

[Shashwat Saraf; e-mail: <saswats@actionaidindia.org> posted on the MF-Asia Discussion list, Monday, 21 August 2000]

This is an excerpt from a workshop held in the Sainj and Tirthan valleys of the state of Himachal Pradesh in the North of India. The workshop involved community, researchers, NGOs, and others from different parts of the country struggling on this issue.

In 1984, the Government of Himachal Pradesh issued notification of its intention to constitute certain areas of Sainj and Tirthan valleys of the Kullu district in Himachal Pradesh as the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP), and also appointed a director and other staff to manage the intended Park. A management plan for the protected area was made that allowed the local people to fully exercise, unhindered and unrestricted, their traditional and legal resource use rights inside the intended National Park. Then, suddenly, in 1999, the state government initiated a settlement of rights' process in the area and also made final notification of GHNP in the record time of a few months. This resulted in extinguishing all types of resource use rights of approximately 50,000 people living on the boundaries of the area. This was done without prior notice to the population living in and dependent on the area and without making proper rehabilitation or alternative arrangements. The inhabitants, highly dependent on the area's forests for agriculture and animal husbandry and the life-giving medicines and whose socio-religious life, culture, and polity were totally integrated with the forests, were caught unawares. This act of the government not only resulted in despair in the local communities but also gave rise to spontaneous agitation and created an atmosphere of confusion, suspicion, and severe conflicts between the local people and forest department.

A three-year ecological study of livestock grazing and biodiversity conservation has estimated that there are 25,000 to 30,000 local and migratory livestock that graze in more than 140 prime alpine pastures of the GHNP. Nearly 88% of the area is situated inside National Parks and Sanctuaries, compared to only 12% in the eco-development area (outside GHNP). There are no alternative pastures available for livestock grazing inside GHNP; and all other available pastures are already being used by other villages. The fodder available outside the GHNP and in the vicinity of the villages is collected for use in winter when there is heavy snow.

Similarly, another study on the socioeconomic conditions of people living inside and adjacent to the GHNP and the social impact of the conservation of biodiversity project - including the process of documentation of right settlement - pointed out that near about 70% of the people are dependent on the collection of medicinal plants and mushrooms for earning the cash needed to buy essential market goods. In addition, almost all the households are dependent on GHNP forests for their bona fide agricultural and domestic needs, e.g., wood, branches of trees, and certain grass species for agricultural implements, household utensils, and manure. For the landless and scheduled castes, who are totally dependent on GHNP resources for their survival by making handicrafts, agricultural implements, and so on, using bamboo and certain species of grasses taken from the area and selling them to nearby higher caste villagers is the only source of subsistence.

The social impact assessment of eco-development projects indicates that most of the investments were made in civil works such as building construction, inspection paths, and stone soling of village streets with only token investments in improving on-farm and off-farm employment. Eco-development investments could not provide sustainable alternative employment to the dependent population. The participation of vulnerable sections of the affected population in decision-making has been negligible. The settlement of rights' process has been very defective and has violated provisions contained in the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and Land Acquisition Act of 1894.

Until the government provides alternative pastures and other forest resources to the affected people, their legal and traditional rights over GHNP will be violated. Providing alternative pastures and other forest resources may take 5 to 50 years, depending upon the regeneration period required for various species. It follows that final notification has been made without providing these right holders with either cash compensation or alternative forest resources, but rather on the basis of a promise that they shall be provided with the same in the near future.

There is evidence that the state government's main intention is to exclude certain biodiversity rich areas to hand them over to the multi-million dollar Parbati hydel power project. Research studies conducted by various national and international scientists show that the area recommended by the chief wildlife warden for exclusion from the Park is very rich in wildlife biodiversity.

Central Asian States and Aga Khan Sign Treaty to Launch Regional University

Excerpt from the World Reporter (TM)

DUSHANBE, 08/29/2000.

Posted by Kishor Pradhan

e-mail:<kpradhan@ait.ac.th>

on the MF-Asia Discussion List, Friday, 1 September 2000

The University of Central Asia is being established following an international treaty signed in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic in August 2000. Twenty-five million people, dependant on the mountain areas of Central Asia for their livelihoods, will benefit from this educational institution dedicated exclusively to education and research on mountain regions and societies.

An initial endowment of \$5 million by the Aga Khan will be allocated for the university's programmes in Tajikistan. Tajikistan President, Emomali Rahmonov, and President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Askar Akaev, representing the first founding states, signed the treaty in their respective capitals with his highness the Aga Khan. The establishment of the university was recommended by an international commission of mountain experts, academicians, and regional specialists appointed in 1995, shortly after President Rahmonov and the Aga Khan signed an agreement to facilitate the work of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) in the region.

"Mountain populations experience extremes of poverty and isolation as well as constraints on opportunities and choice," said the Aga Khan, "but, at the same time, they sustain great linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and religious pluralism and show remarkable resilience in the face of extraordinarily harsh circumstances. By creating intellectual space and resources, this university will help turn the mountains that divide the nations and territories of central Asia into the links that unite its peoples and economies in a shared endeavour to improve their future well-being."

The university is intended to serve people in the mountainous parts of Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, China, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

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