

Thematic session II: Challenges for resource maintenance and utilisation¹

The issue of transboundary mountain preservation raised by Yi Shaoliang posed question of regional cooperation in environmental conservation across the Pamirs, as well as induced debates about the perspectives and usefulness of ICIMOD's policy of establishing protected areas across national borders. These may take the form of National Parks, a Western concept that has invited widespread critique. As an idea of outsiders that not necessarily take into account the aspirations of local populations the creation of such areas is highly contested. Especially the tendency to ignore local knowledge and local resource utilisation in those areas presents problems for people who depend on these resources for their livelihoods. As such, nature protection often takes precedence over the protection human lives and livelihoods and gives rise to local resistance. This general problem of integrating local stakeholders and local knowledge is compounded by the mandate of ICIMOD that does not represent the entire Pamirs. Critically, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have no representation in ICIMOD so that transboundary nature protection will indeed be confronted with added problems.

In his paper that was written in collaboration with Wang Jinniu (Chengdu Institute of Biology) and Wu Ning (ICIMOD), however, Yi Shaoliang attempted to summarise much of the existing Chinese-language literature about conservation and development in the area of the Eastern Pamirs. This provides an invaluable view on an otherwise difficult to access body of scholarship and shows the high attraction the region has had for Chinese scientific work in both the natural and social sciences.

The talk by Nusrat Nasab introduced the work of Focus Humanitarian Assistance, which is part of the Aga Khan Network. She elaborated on the contexts in which Focus works, and the means they employ to address issues of Disaster Risk Reduction in remote mountain villages of Northern Pakistan. Her account concentrated on the challenges and perspectives and the lessons learned for further engagement in terms of supporting community based disaster management systems. This was expanded upon in the discussion around the virtues of community risk mappings and the necessity to ground humanitarian work in an apprehension of local knowledge systems. These in turn must form the basis of local early warning systems that enable local communities and households to anticipate local disasters from natural hazards and mitigate their effects. However, the challenge for building and supporting such systems is presented as one of enabling infrastructural resilience that cannot be established by local communities alone but requires high investments from outside

¹ Based on minutes recorded by Marina Heyink and Tim Polster

agencies. This is true especially in light of growing population pressures in Gilgit-Baltistan that led to the increased construction of buildings in areas with a higher exposure to natural hazards.



*Bulunkul: Desert, steppe and arid conditions leave marginal spaces for Kirghiz pastoralism that are used in a challenging environment above 3,600 metres altitude
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