



# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

## CONSERVING PLACES WE LOVE TO TRAVEL TO

Half Yearly Technical Progress Report  
(July-December 2019)

Submitted by WWF India to MakeMyTrip

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## Introduction



The Himalayas in India are spread over 3.95 lakh sq. km and extend across six states which include Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, West Bengal (Darjeeling) and Arunachal Pradesh. The Himalayan region occupies the strategic position of entire northern boundary (North-West to North-East) of the nation and contains snow-clad peaks, glaciers of higher Himalaya and dense forest cover of mid-Himalaya. The Indian Himalayas are divided into two biogeographic zones - the Trans-Himalaya and the Himalaya, based on physiographic, climatic and eco-biological attributes. The Indian Himalayas constitute of only about 12% of the country's landmass, however they are home to 30% of the entire faunal assemblage of the country and accounts for 27% of the total vertebrate diversity of the country. The floral and faunal diversity of the Himalayas include the highly endangered Snow Leopards and IUCN red listed vulnerable the Black-necked Cranes.

In addition to the biodiversity, the Himalayas also have the highest concentration of glaciers outside of the Polar Regions. The Himalayan glaciers account for about 70% of the world's non-polar glaciers and affect the lives of millions of people in several countries: China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Their runoff feeds two of the oldest rivers in the world, the Indus and the Ganges, whose tributaries carry precious water for 500 million people on the northern Indian plains. It has also been estimated that about 8,634 million m<sup>3</sup> of water flows down Himalayan rivers every year.

Himalayas has a rich history of nomadic pastoralism which is been practiced by a large number of tribes. These communities are extremely dependent on the alpine rangelands for numerous benefits such as freshwater for drinking and various daily chores, foraging grounds for cattle which provides them livelihood benefits such as sale of meat, milk, wool and leather. These high Himalayan steppes form backbone of the transhumance economy of the region. Apart from the natural heritage, the Himalayas are also known for their distinct cultural heritage and a meeting point of different religions and ethnicities. Referred to, by many, as the epitome of spirituality, countless people head to the Himalayas to gain spiritual knowledge and many come to live along its rivers in search of meaning and to attain moksha.

## Rationale of the Project

Owing to the natural beauty and pleasant climates, the high Himalayas are a great destination for travelers and adventure seekers. For those who love photography, the wildlife, vast alpine meadows and lakes & streams, make great subjects. This has led a considerable rise in the number of people visiting Himalayas in the summer season. Moreover, to boost the tourism-based revenues, the local governments are also making efforts to popularize Himalayas as a prized tourism destination. Tourism in the Himalayas is growing at a very fast rate and is consolidating itself as a cornerstone of the economy. An estimated number of tourist arrivals from 2011-15 to the Himalayan states were 494 million (8.42% of the total national arrival). This is further expected to increase multi-fold, estimated 240 million by 2025\*

Even though tourism is seen as an important source to generate income in the mountain regions, with the government also encouraging it as a policy, it also brings in its own kind of pressures to this fragile eco-system. Excessive tourism is bringing with it the threat of -

- Opening up of pristine and earlier unexplored areas exposing these to pollution and disturbance of local bio-diversity.
- Increased incidents of negative Human-wildlife interaction
- Intrusive and ad hoc infrastructure development to support the sudden influx of tourists
- Increase in pollution, particularly plastic brought in by tourists into the landscapes.
- Increased waste generation and issues related to waste management or the lack of it

## Objective and Activities

Primary Objective: **Promote Sustainable Tourism**

In an effort to balance the strain on the natural bounty of the region in a sustained manner, one of WWF-India's initiatives is Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Working with villagers belonging to indigenous communities, the CBT programme aims to equip locals with knowledge, infrastructure, and business acumen, in order for them to realize and harness livelihood opportunities in the sphere of tourism. CBT, therefore, aims to establish a network of community-centric homestays offering diverse services such as accommodation, catering, camping, nature trails, cultural programmes, among a long list of other immersive activities. The larger goal of the initiative is to not only provide villagers with a source of alternate livelihood, but is also to give them a platform to display their indigenous knowledge, exhibit their traditions and culture which are so deeply entwined with the eco-system within which they live, while ensuring that the same communities visualize a scope for benefit and sustenance from conserving the biodiversity in the region.

In Jammu & Kashmir, this is being achieved through the setting up of 5 homestays and 6 Eco-Café's in Jammu & Kashmir while also setting up channels for waste collection to reduce the tourism footprint.

**Activity 1** - Setup 5 home-stays under the Community-based Sustainable Tourism Program with basic amenities to create alternate source of livelihood

**Activity 2** - Setup 6 eco-café's which could be led/owned by women cooperatives or otherwise. This would create an alternate source of livelihood for women/community, apart from the homestays.

**Activity 3** - Support for capacity building of tourism service providers in these sites for ensuring standardization and service levels as far as food & hygiene and waste disposal is concerned.

**Activity 4** - Engaging with local tour operators such as taxi drivers and travel agents to support responsible and sustainable tourism.

## Progress updates

Significant progress has been made on the outlined project activities between July & December 2019. This half yearly report outlines all the undertaken activities and progress made so far:

### I. Homestays

#### **Rationale behind establishing homestays:**

Homestays are uncommon in Kargil district, and thus it was identified as an opportunity to set standards & practices for these in the region, with an aim to provide tourists with a traditional experience and a chance to live the mountain life for a few days.

During the stay, tourists would be introduced to the cultural, environmental & historical highlights of the region through visual media like posters, information brochures, games and interactions with the host. Information on common threats to the natural environment and good tourism practices one must follow to minimize the threats would also be shared. The ultimate objective would be delivering an excellent traditional experience wrapped in awareness about the fragility of environment and humans' responsibilities towards it

To achieve this, it has been planned to renovate the homes of beneficiaries to:

- Develop basic luxury but keeping the traditional ambience intact.
- Local cuisine would be encouraged along with procurement of raw food material locally which would help keeping the footprint low.
- Waste would be segregated in-house for ensuring responsible disposal/reuse.

Print materials would also be developed covering all the information to be communicated to the guests.

## First quarter

Three homestays are being setup in Kargil district – hence **Sankoo**, a small village in Suru Valley, Zaskar, was selected for the following aspects:

1. **Human Wildlife Conflict** – the incident rate is high here making it a focus area for WWF
2. **Potential for Wildlife Tourism** – due to the presence of wildlife in this area, it will allow the visitor ample opportunity to spot various species – wolves, black bear, leopards, etc
3. **Potential for Village Tourism**- The opening of new route from Manali-Zaskar-Kargil should have huge inflow of tourists on this route, making it imperative to create a responsible tourism model before the footfall increases



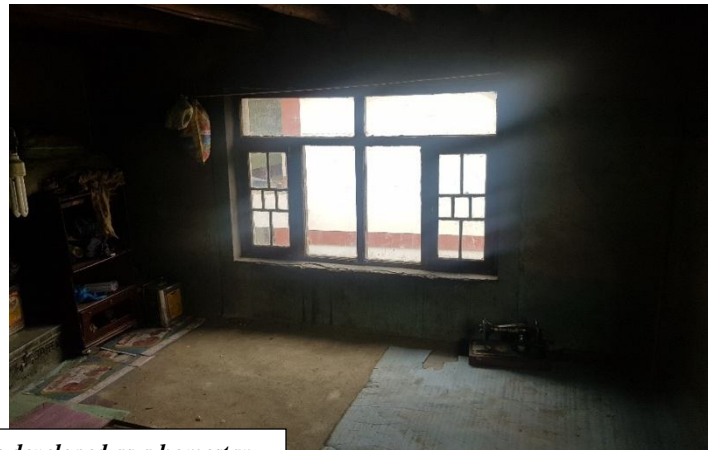
## Selection of Beneficiaries



*Meeting with Shortlisted Candidates at Sankoo*

Selection of beneficiaries followed three phases:

- (i) a consultation meeting was called for all the local residents of the village for an introduction to the concept of eco-tourism and homestays.
- (ii) The villagers were asked to self-nominate themselves if interested, followed by interactions with the potential candidates and the community.
- (iii) Final candidates were then interviewed with selections made based on criteria such as sources & stability of income, losses incurred due to human-wildlife conflict, understanding of the concept of ecotourism, proactive personality and leaning towards pro-conservation awareness. The final names were then shared with the community taking all the other members in confidence.



*Home at Dras – to be developed as a homestay*

### Second Quarter

Balance 2 homestays are located in Drass, this being a lesser developed village with limited facilities, a beautiful landscape with higher potential for homestays, rich biodiversity that makes it a potential destination for wildlife tourism and a small number of tourists visit Drass every year specifically for Himalayan Brown Bear excursions. Similarly, here too, there was a need to setup a sustainable tourism model and scale up gradually before the footfall increases significantly.



*Home at Drass, to be developed as a homestay*

### Selection of Beneficiaries

Similar procedure was followed for the final selection of beneficiaries, in which a Community consultation meeting was organized followed by shortlisting of potential candidates and final selection of the beneficiaries.

## II. Eco-Cafes

### The Concept

With the increase of tourist footfall in Ladakh there have been several interventions to improve the infrastructure for catering to such a high influx. Numerous restaurants and cafes have come up both in the major townships and along the highways. Driven by the demand of tourists, most of the cafes and restaurants deliver a conventional urban experience, somewhere diluting the cultural essence of Ladakh and with such high volume of tourists



*Traditional large wooden windows*

following unsustainable consumption patterns, the operations of the cafes leave a higher footprint.

With an objective to provide the traditional Ladakhi ambience, it has been decided to setup eco-cafes which will have a traditional style of building and interiors but with modern facilities (eco-toilets) and focus on local cuisine. The operations of the cafe would be eco-friendly, some of the vegetables and herbs would be grown within the cafe premises and a

proper in-house waste management system would also be followed.

More than just being an eco-cafe, these setups will act as interpretation centers. Apart from providing a cultural experience, the cafes would also enlighten the tourists with cultural, environmental and historical information through posters, information brochures and interactions with the host.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

2 Eco Cafes in Drass and 2 Eco Cafes in Mulbekh

#### Eco-Café 1: Matayen, Drass



*Eco-Cafe Matayen, Drass*

#### Status

Steps	Status	Remarks
Selection of Beneficiary		<b>Done</b>
Preparation of Plan		<b>Done</b>
Construction		<b>Done</b>
Furnishing		<b>To be done in April</b>
Setup Complete		



## Why Matayen?

Matayen location is at the gateway of Ladakh, the first hamlet after Zojila Pass towards Leh. The region is a vital habitat for species like brown bear, snow leopards & others. With several cases of depredation in the past, many herders have reduced the number of livestock they rear. This hamlet was suggested as an option by the head of Animal Husbandry Department himself and the place was found to have great potential.

The eco-café setup in Matayen would function as a Tourist Orientation point right at the entrance of Ladakh. The landscape is magnificent with a giant grassland and panoramic view of the mountains around it, which is the first of its kind in Ladakh on the way from Srinagar to Leh. As it is a small hamlet, the natural beauty has not been compromised by man-made structures becoming the reason many tourists and especially bikers halt at this place for photography. At times Zojila pass is closed because of avalanche/landslide/ traffic jams at the top or Army's movement, and it is Matayen that the tourists come back to.

## Selection Process of the Beneficiary

Initially a community gathering was conducted where the concept of Ecotourism, especially eco-cafes was discussed. People were informed about the upcoming training for nature guides & chefs, waste management and its importance. The Sarpanch was asked to collect the names of the interested villagers - only 4 people came forward and one of them backed out later. The remaining three were interviewed and one was eliminated as he did not meet the selection criteria. The remaining two were equal in potential. Both were informed about project's objectives in detail in presence of the Sarpanch and its linkage with conservation. During the discussion, it was clear that Bashir Ahmad Lone was more enthusiastic and proactive with employment opportunities for the local youth, to bring a positive change in the collective attitude towards wildlife and to promote the local culture among tourists. The final decision was taken in a community meeting where everyone accepted and appreciated the selection of final beneficiary.



*Interaction with the beneficiary, Mr. Bashir Ahmed*



*Interaction with Locals at Matayen*

## Eco-Cafe 2, Mulbekh



*Mulbekh Landscape*

### **Selection Process of the Beneficiary**

The location was selected based on the deprecation status, people giving up livestock due to fear of wild carnivores and strategic location for wildlife tourism. Similar process was followed for selection of likely candidates. Few people did come forward but most found it tough to grasp the concept of an Eco-Café.

Interviews of all the candidate were conducted with the selection of our second beneficiary – Mr. Lobzang who grasped the concept well and its potential. After multiple interactions, the opportunities and gaps were identified, and an orientation plan was prepared accordingly. Lobzang has been very enthusiastic and was even ready take a loan for investing a fair amount to setup a good café.



*Partial construction of the Eco-café at Mulbekh*

## Status

Steps	Status	Remarks
Selection of Beneficiary	Green	Done
Preparation of Plan	Green	Done
Construction	Orange	Halted due to extreme weather
Furnishing	Red	To be done in April
Setup Complete	Red	

## Eco Café 3, Mulbekh



## Status

Steps	Status	Remarks
Selection of Beneficiary	Green	Done
Preparation of Plan	Green	Done
Construction	Red	Postponed due to extreme weather
Furnishing	Red	To be done in April
Setup Complete	Red	

## Selection Process of the Beneficiary

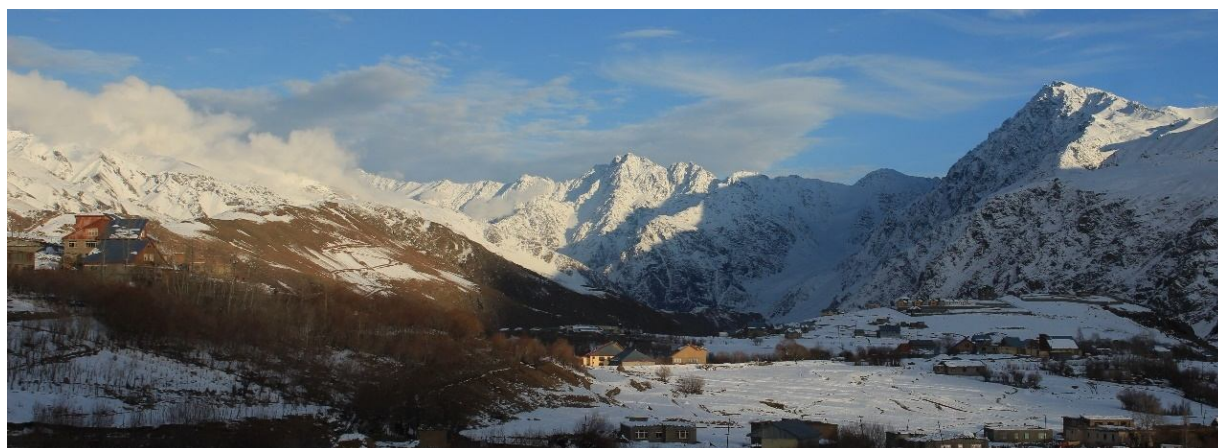
*Interview with Beneficiary at Mulbekh*



After the community consultation meeting, frequent visits were made to Mulbekh and neighboring villages Wakh & Budh Kharboo. Multiple interactions were conducted with groups and individuals where Mr. Eshay was identified to be another potential person in Mulbekh.

During the discussions it was found that an SHG (self-help group) cultivates on a piece of land which he owns, and he wanted to use same piece of land for the café also involving the SHG in running it. One of Eshay's hands is disabled but he is enthusiastic and able enough to join the cause and spread the word of conservation.

### Eco-Café 4 Drass:



**Drass Landscape**

### Status

Steps	Status	Remarks
Selection of Beneficiary		<b>One Beneficiary backed out , process underway for another candidate</b>
Preparation of Plan		
Construction		
Furnishing		
Setup Complete		

Initially Abid Hussain, age 27 was identified as the beneficiary for the eco-café in Drass. The plan for the café was also complete but Abid backed out later due to personal reasons.



*Meeting with Abid Hussain, the beneficiary who backed out later*



*Meeting with SHG at Drass regarding Eco-Cafes*

The process for the selection of beneficiary had been started again and is in its final phase.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

**Eco-Café Alchi:** A community consultation meeting has been conducted, and as requested by the Sarpanch, they had been given some time to discuss the project among the community, and later the potential candidates were shortlisted and the personal interviews are to be conducted for the final selection.

**Eco-Café Durbuk:** The Locals want to setup the café on community basis which will be run by a village eco-committee, and the profits will go for the community welfare. The work and discussions over preparation of a committee model is underway.



*Meeting at Durbuk regarding Eco-Cafes*

## III. Trainings/Capacity Building

Trainings are being planned with the objective to raise skilled personalities who would not only be capable of serving the purpose of ecotourism on their own but go an extra mile to put in efforts to spread the message of sustainable tourism. Collaborations with several organizations are being formed so as to bring rich knowledge and expertise aboard, and tap all the possibilities of a stronger market linkage for the trainees.

## Nature Guide Workshops



*Classroom session for the Nature Guide Workshop held on 8-9 Jan 2020*

Roots Ladakh & Ladakh Youth Initiative have been selected as our implementing partners for the Nature Guide Workshops both for youth and our beneficiaries. The workshops will consist of classroom sessions followed by outdoor sessions to create a better learning platform for the trainees.

The module is completely designed with major focus on:

- Concept of Ecotourism
- Knowledge about Local Biodiversity and dynamics
- Nature Interpretation
- Hospitality
- Using instruments like Binoculars, Spotting scope etc.
- Observational Survey Skills
- Prevention & Management of human wildlife conflict
- Basic communication skills

The nature guides would have a direct link with the Eco-Cafes and Homestays being setup and tie ups with certain tour operators would also be established so that they are able to get customers and grow further.

The first two Nature Guide Workshops for Local Youth of Kargil were organized on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2019 which were attended by about 50 people, who were introduced to the concept of ecotourism and the responsibility of local people in maintaining it under sustainable limits, and the trainees were then taken for a Nature Trail for an actual demonstration of facts versus the dynamics of the environment. Skill improvement sessions were organized where trainees were taught using Wildlife spotting instruments.



*Outdoor session for the Nature Guide Workshop held on 8-9 Jan 2020*



*Session for the Nature Guide Workshop held on 8-9 Jan 2020*



*Session for the Nature Guide Workshop held on 8-9 Jan 2020*

### Workshop for Homestay Owners

Collaboration with a few already-successful homestay operators is underway – these are people already adapted to running homestays since a few years and have grown in an exemplary manner keeping the cultural ambience intact.

Names: Tashi and Gyalson Gyal from Rumbak, Leh.

The trainings shall be provided right after the setup of homestays i.e. in March-April with major focus on hospitality and market linkage.

### Cooking & Hygiene Workshops

The collaboration with Roots-Ladakh would also cover this activity. The focus would be more on local cuisines so as to encourage the traditional setup and also on some common dishes that are high on demand.

A basic training on hygiene will be provided and a small checklist shall be provided to all the homestays and eco-cafes for maintaining hygiene. Regular follow ups would be taken to check and encourage that the checklists are followed strictly.

Tentative schedule: March-April 2020

## IV. Stakeholder Engagement Programme

To have a sustainable model of tourism it is important for each of the major stakeholders to have a key role to play, with collaborative efforts that would help to achieve this balance - thus it is key to have all the influencing stakeholders to be aligned and pledge to keep the operations under sustainable limits.

An Ideal model of sustainable tourism has been formulated looking at the current issues and possible solutions, with several tasks to be assigned to various stakeholders for practical solutions aiming to reduce the tourism footprint.

Meetings with various stakeholders are being conducted with objectives to assess their perspective, interests, problems, views towards other stakeholders, their idea of solutions and their objectives related to tourism.

### Identified Stakeholders

- Tourism Department
- Wildlife Department
- Taxi & Bike Unions
- Tour Operators Union
- Travel Agents
- Hotels & Restaurants
- Airports Authority of India & Airlines
- Merchant Association
- Rural Development Department
- Local NGOS

Workshop to be organized with following themes:

- Current Model of tourism in Ladakh and the possible future
- Common threats due to tourism across Ladakh



- Need of Sustainable Tourism
- Methods to attain the model of sustainable tourism
- Role of each stakeholder
- Need for Policies and enforcement

Overarching themes towards our project objectives:

- Tourist Orientation
- Sustainable/Responsible Consumption
- Waste management and recovery

**Tourist Orientation** refers to conditioning of a tourist's perspective and interests during a visit. There is a need for tourists to have proper information about the highlights of a region, the threats it faces and the expected behaviour from a tourist – these would help sensitise and encourage responsible behaviour of tourists.

Secondly, there is an imperative need for focus to shift from responsible disposal of waste to **Responsible Consumption** of resources. A small unstructured **survey** was conducted in which indicated that tourists believe they are being responsible when they dump garbage into the bins, but hardly anyone knew about the final disposal. Plastic bottles thrown in dust bins still pollute with the same degree than when thrown in the open! In Ladakh, all the waste collected from dustbins is sent to an open dump yard, some of which is burnt and rest flows away with wind, ultimately reaching a major river or the landscape in general. There is a need to sensitise people & travellers to encourage sustainable/responsible consumption & behavioural change. With this background, workshops for waste management, particularly focused on the aspect of waste recovery will be organised for all stakeholders including the beneficiaries.

All the stakeholders would be brought to work together to raise these two topics and attempt to reduce tourism footprint.

## V. Orientation and Training for Tour Operators

The module for trainings of tour operators and taxi drivers would focus on:

- Enhancing their knowledge about local biodiversity
- Enhancing interpretation skills
- Enhancing communication skills
- Enhancing their knowledge about laws and policies related to tourism and wildlife

Information brochures to be developed and placed in all the rented taxis and bikes with information about environmentally & culturally sensitive areas and a list of Do's & Don'ts. Discussions to develop an audio clip covering necessary information for orientation are also underway, that would be proposed to be run mandatorily in each taxi as soon as the trip starts.

## Upcoming

### **Nature Guide Workshops for Local Youth**

- 2 workshops to be done in March

### **Stakeholder Engagement Program**

- One Workshop to be done in Jan/Feb
- One to be done in April

### **Tour Operators Training**

- One Workshop to be done in Feb
- One to be in April

### **Homestays Owners' Training**

- Would be efficient if done once the homestays are ready
- To be done in March end or April

### **Homestays Owners' Cooking & Hygiene Training**

- Would be efficient if done once the homestays are ready

### **Homestays Owners' Nature Guide Training**

- To be conducted in Feb

### **Cafe Owners' Nature Guide Training**

- To be conducted in Feb

### **Cafe Owners' Cooking & Hygiene Training**

- Would be efficient if done once the Eco-Cafes are ready

## Annexure 1

### Eco-Café 1, Location:Mattayen, Drass

#### About

Location	Mattayen, Drass
District	Kargil
Name of the Beneficiary	Bashir Ahmad Lone
Age	49
Date of Birth	10/05/1970
Number of Members in family	4 (Wife and 2 Sons)
Current Livelihood Dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works as an independent labour,</li> <li>• cultivates at a small land for self-consumption</li> <li>• owns 2 cows and 4 horses</li> </ul>
Adhaar Number	2699-9103-5994

#### Dimension of the Café

Inner Dimension	12 X 14 feet
Outer Dimension	15 X 17 feet
Inner Height	8 feet
Exterior Height	8.6 feet



Map of the Café



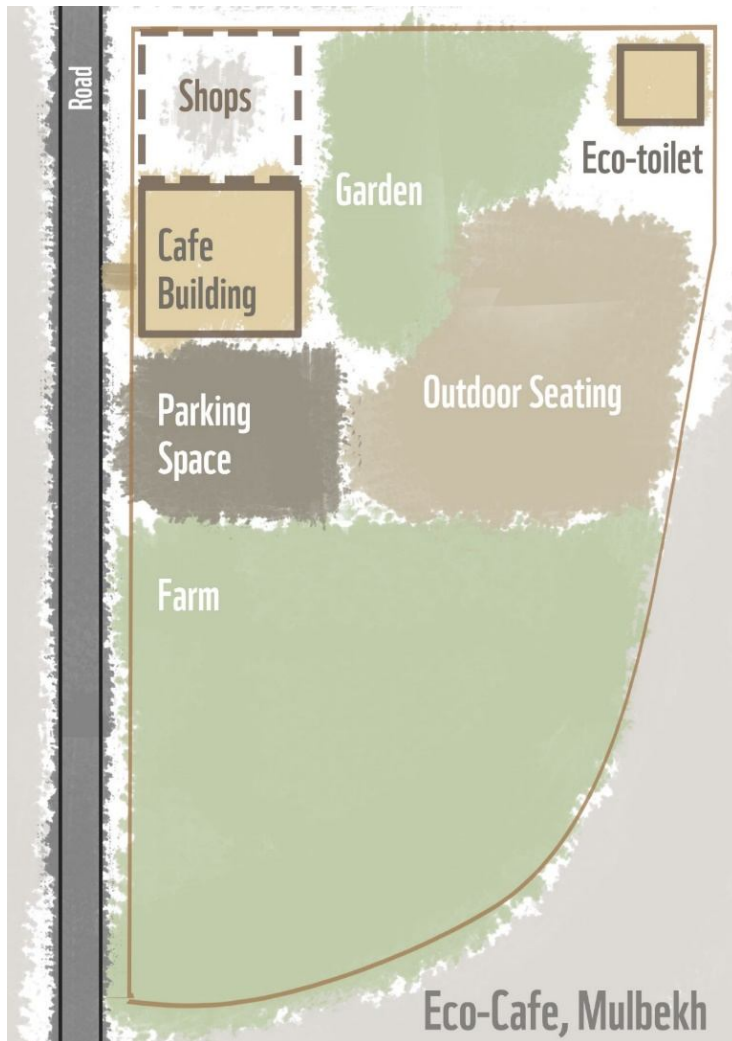
## Eco-Café 2: Location, Mulbekh

### About

Location	Mulbekh
District	Kargil
Name of the Beneficiary	LobzangTsering
Age	40
Date of Birth	30/01/1979
Number of Members in family	6
Current Livelihood Dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cultivates at a small land for self-consumption</li> <li>• owns 3 Cows</li> <li>• Has setup a homestay</li> </ul>
Adhaar Number	2207-4789-9982

### Dimension of the Café

Inner Dimension	<b>18 X 20 feet</b>
Outer Dimension	<b>20 X 22 feet</b>
Inner Height	<b>10 feet</b>
Exterior Height	<b>11 feet</b>



### Eco-Café 3, Location: Mulbekh.

#### About

Location	Mulbekh
District	Kargil
Name of the Beneficiary	EshayDorjay
Age	50
Date of Birth	10/05/1970
Number of Members in family	5 (Wife and 3 Children)
Current Livelihood Dependency	Works as an independent labour, cultivates at a small land for self-consumption & owns 2 cows
Adhaar Number	6793-9279-6345



#### Dimension of the Café:

It'll be a hexagon in Shape

Inner Dimension	6 X 6 X 6 X 6 X 6 X 6 feet
Outer Dimension	7 X 7 X 7 X 7 X 7 X 7 feet
Inner Height	10 feet
Exterior Height	11 feet

#### Eco-Café 4, Location: Drass

- Potential beneficiary (still under discussion):

Location	Drass
District	Kargil
Name of the Beneficiary	Mehboob Hassan
Age	27
	Unemployed Youth

### Homestay 1, Sankoo

Name of the Beneficiary	Mohd. Yunus
Age	26
Number of Members in family	6
Current Livelihood Dependency	Works as a Bus Driver
	Has 2 cows and 8 sheep Lost 30 sheep to human-animal conflict

### Homestay 2, Sankoo

Name of the Beneficiary	Mohd. Ali
Age	49
Number of Members in family	5
Current Livelihood Dependency	Cultivates on a small land, and majorly depends on livestock
	Lost 12 sheep to human-animal conflict

### Homestay 3, Sankoo

Name of the Beneficiary	Ahmad Hussain
Age	48
Number of Members in family	4
Current Livelihood Dependency	Works as a Tailor
	Lost 4 sheep to human-animal conflict

### Homestay 4, Drass

Name of the Beneficiary	Ahmad Ali
Age	38
Number of Members in family	4
Current Livelihood Dependency	works as a daily wage labourer

### Homestay 5, Drass

Name of the Beneficiary	Shafaque Ali
Age	41
Number of Members in family	5
Current Livelihood Dependency	works as a helper at a restaurant