



Eco-Tourism & Camping Villages Project

The once-booming tourism industry of Pakistan has gone through a sharp decline because of the security situation, especially in areas that were once considered the tourist hubs of the country, such as the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This has resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate across the province, particularly for youth, which constitutes over 30% of the population. The current government both at Federal and Provincial levels took a keen interest in revitalizing the tourism industry in the country to provide local employment opportunities for the youth.

In the year 2017, The KP Government allocated 257 million PKR for the promotion of the tourism industry in the province with emphasis on eco-tourism and opening of new avenues not explored before. For this purpose, the Tourism



QUICK FACTS

Duration: 2017-2023

Implementing partner: Department of Culture, Sports, Tourism, Archaeology and Youth Affairs Department – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hashoo Foundation

Funding Partner(s): Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, UNDP

Budget: \$ 2.168 million GoKP Share for Phase-I
\$ 484,335 UNDP share since 2017 till Dec 2020.
PKR 300 million GoKP share Phase II
\$ 200,000 UNDP Share for Phase II till Dec 2022

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Corporation of KP inked a cost-sharing agreement with UNDP in August 2017 for the implementation of the camping pod's village project in scenic valleys of the province. Since then, UNDP is supporting the Department of Tourism, Sports, Culture, Architecture & Youth Affairs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in setting up 'camping villages' in scenic locations across the province. By fostering tourism, both KP's government and UNDP hope to revitalize the economy of the region by providing lucrative and sustainable employment and business opportunities to the local population, especially the youth.



The establishment of camping villages was a unique and novel idea to foster tourism in the province of KP. In addition to providing livelihoods to the local youth, this initiative provided tourists with an opportunity to partake in adventure tourism, understand eco-friendly tourism, and witness the beauty of the country. Till now, five camping pod villages have been established in different areas of the four districts. Each camping village is equipped with ten imported camping pods and washrooms of an international standard. Each camping pod is fully furnished with high-quality furniture as well.

The project also introduced eco-friendly products made of 'green wood' – a blend of recycled materials such as plastic bags and scraps used to construct structures such as gazebos, staff accommodation quarters, kitchens, dining areas, benches, and picnic tables. The use of green wood to make these 'green structures' for the

camping villages will ensure low carbon footing and contribute to the project's aim of promoting eco-friendliness. The Eco Tourism and Camping Villages project has opened new avenues for the promotion of eco-tourism and attracted the private sector to establish similar camping villages in other parts of the province.

Results Achieved:

After the initiation of the project, the following results have been achieved so far:

- Establishment of 05 Camping sites (01 Chitral, 01 Swat, 02 Buner and 01 Battagram) providing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with some great new tourist hubs.
- Enhanced income generation, and business development opportunities for youth
- 100 youth trained in business development and entrepreneurial skills and Eco-Tourism to encourage them to set up their own tourism-related business.
- Existing small-scale businesses are provided with training and orientation to make the best use of the economic opportunity provided by the camping villages and provide tourist-friendly services.
- Awareness sessions for local youth from each location on the indigenous cultural, historical, and environmental importance of the tourist sites.

Achievements:

After signing the cost-sharing agreement with the Tourism Department of KP, UNDP has strengthened its relationship with the tourism department by providing services not only in establishing the camping sites but also helping the tourism departments at both federal and provincial levels for change management strategies and revamping the whole approach for the promotion of the tourism industry in the country. The following are the main achievements:

- Phase I of the project has been completed and handed over to the Government of the KP Tourism Department.
- 100 youth have been trained in Entrepreneurship & Business Development, Hospitality Management, and Adventure Tourism in Swat, Buner, Battagram, and Chitral.
- Technical support was provided to the KP government for i) preparation of a strategic plan for the promotion and development of the eco-tourism industry in the KPK province and ii) administrative support to TCKP and facilitating strategic plan preparation.

Lesson learned:

During the implementation of the project, the concept of Camping Pods was very well received by the public at large. A lot of interest was generated in social media as well as mainstream media and the tourists thronged the camping villages established by TCKP. The ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan along with cabinet members and the Chief Minister of the KP province paid a visit to the site and appreciated the pods and all available facilities.

The said pods were procured through the international procurement process of UNDP.

A single major hurdle in the establishment of camping villages/areas was the uncertainty in the availability of land. Several visits were undertaken for the selection of an appropriate place for establishing camping villages as per the guidelines of TCKP. These visits were undertaken by a team of subject matter professionals of TCKP, UNDP with support from local district administration.

Once the site was selected with preliminary consent for the availability of land by local administration; master planning and other design works were undertaken. However, multiple times, the sites had to relocate as the land could not be

handed over for execution. For example, the site of Shahi in Lower Dir was conflicted and the Government of KP was requested to either resolve the conflict or provide a new site. This led to a loss in a crucial time and unnecessary delays in the completion of the project.

Phase II of the Project:

After receiving an overwhelming response from the public on the Gabben Jabba, the provincial government under the Culture and Tourism Authority of the province has decided to invest more in establishing 5 additional sites in the scenic valleys of the KP province. Satisfied with the phenomenal performance of UNDP, the provincial government signed a financing agreement of 1.9 million USD with UNDP last year for the implementation of the second phase of the camping pods project.



Main Achievements of the Phase II of the Project:

- Extensive surveys were carried out on 17 sites, after which 5 sites were selected for Phase II of the Project: Sulanthanr, Swat; Gabeen Jabba, Swat; Surlaspur; Upper Chitral, Yarkhunlasht, Upper Chitral; Shahi; Lower Dir. Only the Shahi site in Lower Dir is owned by the Government of KP. All the other sites are privately owned,

for which CTA Office signed lease agreements with the owners of the land.

- A topographic survey was conducted on all selected sites and a layout plan was prepared accordingly.
- The design of the pods was revised for the Phase II of the project, as per the directive of the CTA Office. After the approval of the designs by CTA KP, the tender was advertised for the manufacturing, transportation, and installation of pods.
- BOQs were prepared and advertised for carrying out civil work on the sites. Similarly, a separate RFQ was floated for the installation of prefab structures such as the kitchen, guard room, admin office, and general washrooms for each site.



- Training on eco-tourism were provided to 210 youth (142 male, 68 female) to in coordination with the YEP program.

Planned Activities for Year 2023:

- Completion of Civil Work for all sites of Phase II of the Camping Pods Project.
- Installation of prefab structures on all sites.
- Installation of camping pods on all sites along with all associated accessories.
- Provision of furniture for all camping sites.
- Finalization of the fifth camping site.
- Contract amendment for increasing the number of sites from 5 to 10 sites.
- Additional surveys for new sites with CTA.

Partnerships

- Department of Tourism, Sports, Culture, Architecture & Youth Affairs, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – Provided financial support in the execution of the Phase-I and Phase-II of the Eco-Tourism project.
- Hashoo Foundation – Engaged for community training around eco-tourism and hospitality management.
- Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) – supported in the change management strategy of the PTDC

Project Areas Phase I

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Districts Chitral, Swat, Buner, and Battagram

Project Areas Phase II

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Districts Upper and Lower Chitral, Swat, and Orakzai