



Exposure visit for Uttarkashi community members to a community-based responsible tourism model in Rudraprayag.

Development Alternatives in collaboration with the National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS) is promoting ecotourism-based livelihoods in Uttarakhand. 5 members from the Uttarkashi community went on their first exposure visit to a responsible tourism model. The objective was to introduce community members to the community-based responsible tourism initiative of PSI in Madhuganga valley. It focuses on making the rural population capable of accessing the livelihood benefits created by the ecotourism/responsible tourism industry; promoting local culture, food and nature to the outside world; increasing use of natural and human resources of these areas for rural development; making rural women financially independent and creating an environment for women to come into mainstream livelihoods.

Local population of the Madhmaheshwar Paryatan Samooh independently organised the visits on the occasion of Shivratri and offered experiential stay packages costing INR 3,500 for 3 nights of stay. The package included costs for a trek to Tungnath temple, interaction with local weavers, farming experience, folk music and local Garhwali food for all three meals a day. PSI has developed 9 homestays in Raunlek, Uniyana and Ransi villages in Rudraprayag district. These beautiful homestays lie behind the flowing river. The interiors created with pine, pebbles and tourism charts of the region are also displayed. The Madhuganga valley, known for its temples, trek, culture and scenic views is 15 kms away from Chopta, which is a crowd puller region.

Girish, a local leader, was in-charge of coordination and management. He played various roles such as making the packages, living arrangements and trek guiding for guests.

The people of Kamad-Thandi learned a lot from this cross-cultural exchange (guest-host interactions). The focus was the promotion of their heritage, waste management and hygiene practices, technology, awareness on environmental conservation and building a community-led responsible tourism model to enhance the local economy.