

## **Improving Environmental Knowledge of Clergies in Central Gilan MEG-IR13-04**

**Grant Budget:** USD3,000

**Objective of the Project:**

To promote the environmental knowledge of the clergies in Gilan Province

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**Background and Problem Statement**

Low level of environmental awareness has been diagnosed to be the main cause for emergence of majority of environmental problems in southern Caspian Sea area in the past 3-4 decades. As the population increased exponentially after the 1979 revolution, and pace of development speeded up after the 8 years of imposed war, the environmental problems and issues also grew bigger in size and more complex in nature. Unfortunately the environmental awareness in the coastal communities did not rise in proportion to the size and number of ever-growing environmental problems, and the importance of environmental education and the urgent need for it faded more and more in the shadow of economic development. The sudden environmental awakening of a thin slice of the coastal communities is now calling for immediate attention to the situation and quick action. The South Caspian area is vast and homes 7.5 million residents and more than 20 million seasonal visitors, thus reaching all the people in a short period of time seems a rather, if not impossible, but challenging task.

**Goals and Objectives**

To overcome the area-wide low level of environmental awareness, the Education office of the provincial Directorate of Department of Environment began to develop effective and applicable projects for "Training the Trainers" to extend its reach in communities as far as possible. The following project has been developed **to promote environmental knowledge of the clergies in central Gilan province**, hoping to utilize their capacity of addressing hundreds of thousand of people annually for transferring environmental messages to that portion of public which is hard to reach. The project serves several priorities of both NCAP and SAP, of which examples are pollution, biodiversity, natural resources and public participation.

**Proposed Project activities**

- A team of experts led by the Department of Environment in Gilan and supported by SCIENSE NGO.
- A training file - Each clergy attending the training day will receive a file. This will be a ring binder style of file and will contain summary information about the different issues facing the Caspian Sea, and how they might be solved. The file will also contain ideas for talks that the clergies can give and how to include environmental issues into teaching given at the Mosque. The file will be very flexible. The Department of the Environment can issue other pages of information on an occasional basis to go in the file. The training file will contain at least ten sections dealing with different environmental issues.

- A training program – this will be a one day program which will include presentations by the training experts about the Caspian issues, discussion groups about the relationship of Islam to the environment, and question and answer sessions. A review questionnaire of the workshop will be disseminated and collected after completion.
- Review Report – A questionnaire will be sent to each clergy who attended the training to find out how they have use the training and the information give – and in particular whether they have made talks about the environment in the Mosques.

The outcomes of the project will be an increased understanding by clergies of environmental issues and motivation to spread the environmental message through the Mosques. As a result of their talks at the Mosques, there will also be an increased understanding of the people attending Mosques. The outcomes cover the priorities listed in the MEG guideline. The training file materials and workshop for Mosque leaders will cover the content of all four priorities that are listed – unsustainable use of resources, threats to biodiversity, pollution and unsustainable coastal area development.

The criteria for success will be the successful completion of the development of our training file and program; the attendance of 150 clergies at project's three events; and the inclusion by at least one third of those attending the training program of information in one of their talks at the Mosques. The Department of the Environment has very close links with the clergies community in Gilan and the project will receive their full support.

**Implemented project activities:**

The project has been canceled due to unexpected issues happened to the project manager. The deposited grant money to the project account was reimbursed to the CEP-SAP account by the end of March 2006.