Newsletter

Mashhad CSO networking Symposium, January 8-9, 2020

"Promoting Responsible Tourism for Heritage Protection and Sustainable Development" Symposium was held in Mashhad on 8-9 January 2020. In collaboration with Action partner, the Mashhad CSO Networking Symposium was organised by Marefat Pardis Toos (MPT) in Mashhad on 8-9, January 2020. Eighty-one persons including Italian partners, CSOs, academic institutions, local authorities participated in the Symposium, from the five provinces of Iran: Khorasan Razavi, Golestan, Fars, Hormozgan and Bushehr. It had different sessions of speeches, lectures, group work, etc. On Tuesday, January 7 participants arrived at the Pardisan Hotel. In the evening we visited Pahlavan Rostam Ecological and Tourism Complex.

The role of accommodation in ecotourism

Dr. Mozhgan Sabet Teimouri

Accommodation is one of the most essential components of travel in all types of tourism. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines a tourist as a person who has stayed in a tourist destination for at least one night. By following certain rules, nature-based tourism will become ecotourism, so the role of the accommodation will be more vital in ecotourism trips. Ecotourism is a responsible trip to nature to protect the environment and produce a sustainable income for the local residences. Ecotourism rose to prominence in recent years but the growing inclined toward visiting intact nature, wildlife, and local houses has imposed many challenges and pressures on natural and local ecosystems. The most important goals of creating eco-tourism resorts are to support and promote local culture; provide tourism products, services and activities with local nature; protection of local environment, ownership structure, family management and local community participation; and finally improve tourism infrastructure. Thus, for teaching local and traditional culture, ecotourism resorts generate wealth for the host community and emphasize their role to bring local and traditional culture the least impact. The aim of staying in this type of accommodation is to improve the quality of tourism experience and increase tourist satisfaction. This will lead to improving the life quality of the local community and human-natural environment and developing small businesses.

Day one, January 8: Five Presentations

On the first day (Wednesday, January 8) after registration, the opening ceremony began. Dr. Hossein Kashiri -Symposium General Secretary- greeted the participants.

As a part of the symposium, cultural events were organised wherein a group of boys sang patriotic songs, two girls recited Shahname, by Ferdowsi, a famous Iranian poet (940 – 1020 AD) and visited the mobile museum.

Dr. Stefano De Santis (NECOS) spoke about "What is Responsible Tourism"

The presentation introduced the tourism industry through statistical data, negative and positive impacts of tourism on the local communities, elaborated the concepts and key characteristics of sustainable and responsible tourism, importance of community engagement in tourism and the value added of including sustainable tourism in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On behalf of ITACA and Atlantide, Dr. Enrico Libera spoke about "EU and Italian Objectives, Challenges, Achievements in Tourism Sustainability".

The presentation introduced Iranians the International, European and Italian challenges, achievements and objects in tourism sustainability. It focused on the importance of sustainability in the tourism industry through examples of relevant tools used by international and European institutions to promote it (UN Agenda 2030, the European Tourism Indicator System- ETIS, the EU eco-label, EMAS).

Dr. Vrinda Dar (NECOS) talked about "Opportunities and Challenges of Responsible Tourism in Pilgrimage Cities".

The presentation was considered in the context of Mashhad as a religious city. It suggested to give tourists an experience of the local community and cultural assets of the city they value through focusing on the characteristics of religious cities and the potential of building on this tourism by including cultural tourism. NECOS shared the challenges, opportunities and strategies for developing responsible tourism in cities where tourism is predominantly religious

She talked about: Cultural Heritage and Responsible Development, Characteristics of Pilgrimage Cities, Responsible Tourism Development in Religious Cities: Challenges, Responsible Tourism Development in Religious Cities: Opportunities, Strategies for Responsible Tourism Development

Dr. Hossein Kashiri, MPT CEO presented the Capacity Needs Assessment of its target provinces: Khorasan Razavi, Gorgan and Fars.

He introduced the MPT team and stakeholders and the analysis of the results of the needs assessment exercise conducted amongst them. He talked about sustainable tourism and the attractions that persuade tourists to travel to Iran, results emerging from the assessment, conceptual and theoretical principles of sustainable development that required training, opportunities and challenges in promoting sustainable tourism and heritage protection.

Mr. Hamed Moshiri, P4L CEO presented the Capacity Needs Assessment of Bushehr and Hormozgan.

He introduced the P4L team and NGO partners that were participating in the Symposium and the results of their needs assessment. Based on the results of the questionnaires responses and conversations with each of their stakeholders, they were categorized as following: eco museum; nature groups tourism, traditional house, medical and health tourism, accessible tourism; sport Tourism, intangible cultural heritage. He spoke about P4L's activities on sustainable development such as ecotourism training for Dena local tour guides.

DAY 2, January 9:
Round Table and Group Discussions

On the second day of the symposium group works were held. Participants were divided into three groups and broke into group discussions on the evening of Day 1: (i) Cultural Heritage Protection and Tourism; (ii) The Tourism Businesses; (ii) Tourism Policies and Legislations. Each group was asked to:

■ Conduct a situation analysis on needs and gaps

■ Identify who needed the knowledge (ex. professional groups, local authorities, businesses, NGOs, etc.)

■ What were the local knowledge and skill needs

■ How could the knowledge be transferred to those who needed it (capacity building methodology)