



Press Release n. 08/2011 - June 23, 2011

## **WASTE ON THE MOUNTAINS: EVK2CNR'S EXPEDITION "KEEP KARAKORUM CLEAN" HAS STARTED**

BERGAMO - Waste abandoned along the roads: it's not just an urban problem. Even in the most remote environments, waste has been a problem for decades. Moreover, cleaning or recycling are often an almost unknown idea for local populations. The EvK2Cnr Committee has been working on this problem among the Karakorum mountains since 2009, and again this year is promoting the "Keep Karakorum Clean" expedition that will clean up glaciers, trekking routes, base camps, and Gasherbrum II (8.035 m), climbing up to almost 8000 meters. The initiative is promoted within Seed (Social Economic Environmental Development), the extensive cooperation project implemented by Italy and Pakistan for the conversion of the debt. Among the primary objectives, there is also a widespread awareness campaign on the importance of environmental protection and waste disposal among expeditions, trekkers and local people.

"Keep Karakorum Clean " expedition, led by Maurizio Gallo (mountain guide and technical manager of EvK2Cnr in Pakistan), has started on June 1, 2011 with the cleaning campaign of the campsites located along the trekking route from Askole to Concordia and the base camps over the Baltoro Glacier: K2, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum and so on towards the Gondogoro La. The staff is composed by Pakistani porters and climbers trained by EvK2Cnr: every year, new climbers are involved in the cleaning expedition, in order to spread the awareness of environmental protection in their valleys of origin.

From mid-July to mid August, a selected group of high altitude porters will clean up the normal ascent route to Gasherbrum II, up to camp 4 placed at 7,800 meters above sea level. Up there, the situation of abandoned waste is reported very serious, also because on the mountain has never been carried out any cleaning action.

"Our 2011 goal is to collect 7-8 tons of waste - says Gallo -. In the last 2 years we collected about 20 tons of rubbish and we can assume that most of the old waste, left by past expeditions on these glaciers, is now cleaned. Now we have to work above all for making the cleaning process sustainable year after year, by training the staff, raising awareness among the expeditions and involving the CKNP staff in this project, given that in the future it will be in charge of them".



In order to raise awareness among climbers, Gallo has also prepared a sort of “handbook of environmental rules” for expeditions (see attachment).

“Keeping remote environments clean is almost up to visitors’ commitment - says Gallo -. They must keep in mind that the environment must be preserved. A climber is caring about acclimatization since he leaves from home and he constantly acts with this goal. Cleaning should be the same. It ’s a long process but I hope things can change”.

In 2009, the EvK2Cnr Committee launched the first cleaning expedition over the Baltoro glacier, collecting more than 8 tons of waste including paper, plastic, cans, glass and toxic materials. The waste that could be burned was disposed by Earth, the ecological disposer installed in the village of Askole by EvK2Cnr. In 2010, there were 2 missions: Keep Baltoro Clean and Keep K2 Clean that cleaned up higher camps on mount K2: the total waste collected was about 13 tons. During the expeditions it was also created a platform for human waste at Circo Concordia, 4,700 m, located among the Baltoro, Abruzzi and Godwin-Austen glaciers.

Keep Karakorum Clean is part of a wider program aimed to environmental education, training and sustainable tourism promoted by the Seed project in order to preserve Karakorum mountains –that has been a renewed destination for climbers and explorers for centuries -, and to improve the quality of life of local people, who live in this beautiful but fragile ecosystem.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HANDBOOK FOR EXPEDITIONS

- Check food supplies before starting the trek, eliminating unnecessary packaging.
- Organize separate waste collection even during the trek. You can burn paper, collect plastic and cans and provide bins for transporting waste from the beginning to the end of the trek, even if this means paying for dedicated porters.
- Regularly check kitchen staff to make sure they are separating waste for recycle.
- Plan the climb accurately, bringing to high camps only the essential equipment.
- Carry down, every time, any waste and unused equipment, even the broken tents. If you can’t do it yourself, provide for high altitude porters dedicated to the recovery of equipment along the ascent route at the end of the expedition, even if this involves an additional cost.
- Leave the base camp for last, after having checked that all the waste was carried away.
- Pick up any rubbish left by others along the way and take them down.



- Acknowledge that preserving the environment is important as much as acclimatizing and reaching the summit.

## BALTORO GLACIER -DATA

Approximately 60 Km long, it extends for approximately 700 km<sup>2</sup> and leads to the Braldo Valley, not far from the village of Askole, the last inhabited place on the way to the glacier. It is among the biggest valley glaciers of the world and is surrounded by some of the main peaks of the Earth, like K2, Broad Peak, Masherbrum and the Gasherbrum mountains. Karakoram has the higher concentration of glaciers over the Asian continent, an area of approximately 18,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The glaciers form big deposits of fresh water in an otherwise dry environment. These deposits are fundamental for the flows of the Indo and Yarkand rivers. The greater part of the Baltoro Glacier covers the main ridges of the Greater Karakoram.

EXPEDITIONS AVERAGE NUMBER/Trekkers per year present in the Baltoro glacier: 60

NUMBER OF MOUNTAINEERS/TREKKERS PER YEAR at Baltoro: 700

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PORTERS/STAFF accompanying expeditions. 6000 moving presences

AVERAGE DAYS OF PERMANENCE ON MOUNTAINEERING EXPEDITIONS ON THE GLACIER: 50-60

AVERAGE DAYS OF PERMANENCE of GROUPS OF TREKKERS on the glacier: 20

## IMAGES

The waste of K2

<http://www.montagna.tv/cms/?p=30188>

Toilets and Keep Baltoro Clean expedition

<http://www.montagna.tv/cms/?p=29969>



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