

**Environmental Monitoring  
and  
Post Cleanup Campaign of  
Babusar Cup Polo Tournament  
August 11 to 13, 2009**



**Gilgit Baltistan Environmental Protection Agency**

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## 1. Introduction

The Northern Areas of Pakistan covers an area of 72,496 Km<sup>2</sup> dominated by one of the most mountainous landscape on the earth. Northern Areas is, perhaps, the most spectacular rejoin of Pakistan in terms of its geography and scenic beauty. Here world's three mightiest mountain ranges the Karakoram, the Himalayas and the Handukuch meet. Five out of fourteen mountains peaks with height of over 8000 meters including the world's second heights peak K-2 and some of largest glaciers out side the polar region are located in Northern Areas. Beautiful landscape, unique cultural heritage and rich Biological diversity given the Northern Areas a competitive advantage in attracting tourists from all over the world.

The Babusar Valley is located in Diamer District of Northern Areas some 35 Kms from KKH near Chilas, which takes two hours drive onward journey to Babusar. The Babusar pass can also be accessed through Mensehra, via Kaghan valley covering a distance of 200 Kms . The Babusar Pass is 4173 meters high with lush green mountains covered with thin forest, have beautiful lakes in the surrounding of the top. Babusar Pass remained the gateway between Northern Areas and other parts of the Pakistan till the construction of Karakoram Highway. It was the only route for communication between North Pakistan and other parts of the country. Traders used this for trade by mules. During the British rule and up to 1986, Babusar was the summer camp office of the Assistant political Agent and other officers of Chilas sub division who resided in Babusar during summer.

## 2. Polo at Babusar

Polo the Game of Kings and the king of all games is traditionally played in the Northern Areas. Polo is an equestrian sport with its origin embedded in Central Asia dating back to 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The game was introduced in South Asia by the Muslim conquerors in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The word polo is in fact a Balti word meaning ball. Polo is played in all Districts of the Northern Areas. Gilgit, Chitral and Baltistan have always played the game of polo closest to its original form. In the past the local Rajas, Mirs



and Mehtars were the patrons of the game. At times more than 50% of the annual budget of their principalities would be spent on supporting the game of polo.

The most exciting polo tournament of the entire Northern Pakistan, is played on top of Babusar Pass, around 4,174 meters above sea level since 2007. It is a place unique and exotic in itself, surrounded by some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in the world. In 2007 the Northern Areas Administration has organized “1<sup>st</sup> Babusar Cup Polo Tournament” in Babusar Pass. Similarly, the thired “Babusar Cup Polo Tournament” was organized from August 11 to 13, 2009 and organized by the Tourism, Environment, Sports and Culture Department Northern Areas, at the highest polo ground in the world. The event marks the annual competition between the polo teams of six district of Northern Areas.

This Polo Tournament is based on its geographical location, lucid atmosphere and newly constructed NHA road which, will provide easy access to Northern Areas from Naran and Kaghan valleys of NWFP, the tournament was designed to signify the touristic potential of Babusar and it’s surrounding.

The Northern Areas Environmental Protection Agency and District NGO’s Netwok Diamer have arranged an environmental awereness campaign and post cleanup campaign of the Babusar Polo Festival 2009.

### **3. Objective**

Solid waste generation is the main threat to environment during the Babusar Polo Cup Tournament. A post cleanup activity was mandatory to maintain the natural and builtup environment of the area. The main objective of the campaign was to aware pepole/visitors about importance of fragile ecosystem of the area.

### **4. Environmental Problems During Babusar Polo Festival**

As the event becomes more popular, scientists say it is damaging the fragile environment that surround the polo ground. The Babusar Pass area contains lakes, streams and peat marshes, and rare species of plants and animals.



Solid waste generation is the main hazard during the Babusar Polo Festival. Waste is an unwanted or undesired material or substance. It is also referred to as rubbish, trash, garbage, or junk depending upon the type of material and the regional terminology.

#### **4.1 Kinds of waste**

Generally wastes are of two types; Biodegradable and no biodegradable.

##### **4.1.1 Biodegradable**

Biodegradable such as food waste or sewage is broken down naturally by microorganisms either aerobically or an-aerobically. If the disposal of biodegradable waste is not controlled it can cause a number of wider problems including contributing to the release of greenhouse gases and can impact upon human health via encouragement of pathogens.

##### **4.1.2 Non biodegradable**

Such as polythene bags, tin, glass, wrappers, blades, syringes and others do not degrade for a long time period and pose threats to humans and livestock of the area.

#### **4.2. Types of Solid Waste Generated during the Polo Festival**

Polythene bags, Glass, Plastic bottles, Milk pack boxes, Fruit juice packs, Cold drink bottle caps, Glass bottles, Medicines, Syringes, Paper, Blades, Wood pieces, Poultry waste, Old shoes, Clothes, Vegetables and Fruit.



### **5. Environmental Monitoring of Babusar Polo Festival**

The Northern Areas Environmental Protection Agency and District NGO's Network Diamer have arranged an environmental awareness campaign and post cleanup campaign of the Babusar Polo Festival 2009. Over 30 volunteers of Northern Areas Environmental Protection Agency (NA-EPA) and District NGO's Network Diamer have

swept the area. They also encourage visitors to use garbage cans. NA-EPA has provided collection bags, waste collection bins, gloves, mask and awareness material.

**5.1 Waste Collection methodology**

The solid waste was collected from the ground on dally basis by volunteers of NA-EPA and DNN Diamer. About 1800 kg of solid waste were collected during the three day festival.



**5.2 Waste Transportation**

A mini-truck (Shehzor) was used for transportation of solid waste from collection points to landfill site.

**5.3 Equipments used for waste collection and disposal**

Details of equipments/machinery used during collection and transportation of solid waste are;

S #	Equipment/machinery used	Quantity
1	Waste collection bins	30
2	Cloth bags	100
3	Masks	48
4	Gloves	48
5	Vehicle	01

**5.4 Landfill**

NA-EPA has selected a landfill site for disposing off the waste having size of 10 \* 10 \* 5 feet deep, about one kilo meters away from Polo ground. Over a period of three days, a total of 100 bags (1800 kg) were disposed off in landfill.



### 5.5 Environmental Awareness Campaign Stall

Northern Areas environmental Protection Agency and its partners have arranged an environmental awareness stall to aware people/participants about environment during the Babusar Polo Tournament. NA-EPA and its partners have also distributed awareness material during the festival.



### 5.6 Environmental Awareness Walk

NA-EPA and its partners has arranged an awareness walk in bazaar area on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the festival and in polo ground before beginning of the final polo match. The basic objective of the walk was to aware people/visitor about fragile environment of the area. Volunteers of NA-EPA/DNN Diamer, officials from government and private organizations and media persons participated in the walk. The NA-EPA/DNN Diamer volunteers were raised banners focusing on environment.



## **6 Recommendations**

During the Babusar Polo Festival, Post Cleanup Campaign is an important tool to reduce risk of environmental degradation and to ensure sustainability of the event; therefore following recommendations and considerations are made on the basis of past experiences;

- Distribute awareness material to sensitize the visitors about fragile ecosystem of the area,
- Before the festival volunteers should be motivated for collection and disposal of solid waste,
- Special funds should be allocated for post cleanup campaign, and
- To reduce risk of water pollution camping sites should be away from water bodies.