Regional Seminar of Lok Awas Yatra- Northern Region

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Lok Awaas Yatra, a journey to select initiatives in rural habitat development that have improved the quality of life for the rural poor without environmental losses was carried out by basin- South Asia secretariat at Development Alternatives in partnership with its regional partners i.e. Centre for Sustainable Development- Himachal Pradesh, TARN and HESCO-Uttrakhand. The fourth regional Yatra in the series of five was carried out from December 6 – 10, 2010 in the Northern regions of India covering Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. It concluded in a Regional Seminar at Jagori Capus, Dharamshala on 10th December 2010 where state level stakeholders i.e. village community members, masons, Panchayati Raj Institutions, NGOs, students, architects, media, social scientists came together to discuss regionally applicable good practices and identify key enablers for large – scale replication of good practices in Northern India. The key highlights of the Northern Region Yatra were the visits to projects related to traditional and disaster resilient construction, renewable solutions for domestic energy, eco-friendly habitat development and alternate, low energy construction technologies. The Seminar started with a recapitulation of the process of the Lok Awaas Yatra so far by Ms Mona Chhabra Anand, partner, basin-South Asia where she described the genesis of the yatra in an earlier initiative to develop a base document for the proposed National Rural Housing and Habitat Policy for India that was submitted to the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. The Panchayati Raj Institutions are drivers of habitat development at the village development and they need the necessary information and knowhow on sustainable and safe technologies for habitat development. Lok Awaas yatra has been started to consolidate and share knowledge on successful experiences around rural habitat development with Panchayat leaders, junior government officials, artisans, NGOs and academia directly and indirectly through written documentation and films. Addressing the gathering, Mr Mandal, ADC, Kangra acknowledged the potential of the initiative and provided ideas on integrated planning of village habitats. He stressed the need for detailed analysis of technologies based on local conditions and encouraged the participants to take the dialogue further. Reflecting on the fourth yatra in the series, Ms Zeenat Niazi, on behalf of the Yatra
Organising team, shared that basin-SA platform plans to share the lessons from the yatra with the Ministry of Rural Development for design of the process of implementation of the proposed policy. basin-SA extended the vote of thanks to the yatris, funders and partners and especially the government of Himachal Pradesh for their encouragement and support.

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