

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Space Culture – Public Engagement in Space through Culture (9)

Author: Mr. Arun Radhakrishnan
India, amongdastarz@gmail.com

Mrs. Sonal Asgotraa
India, sonal@ghe.co.in

ASTROSTAYS: CREATING LIVELIHOOD BASED OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ASTRONOMY
BASED TOURISM.

Abstract

Tourism centered on astronomy is a developing, innovative, and specialized business. The Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) collaborated with the International Astronomical Union's Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD) in 2018 to launch Astrostays, a community-led astro-tourism initiative that provides rural communities with long-term socioeconomic opportunities. Astrostays educates community members to be astronomy guides and hosts, teaching visitors on local arts, crafts, and cuisine, as well as indigenous star mythology. The Astrostays Concept is unique in that it fuses the spirit of contemporary astronomy with indigenous folklore from the region. At a time when cultural identities are fast disappearing, the programme preserves traditional cultural, and ethnic flair while also assisting impoverished areas. In terms of technicalities, the community leaders that start on this endeavor are often less informed when compared to people from the cities. This meant that much of the work in training them had to be novel, improvised, and out of the box in order to simplify complex topics. Unlike traditional forms of Science communication, where prior STEM education is required, the Astrostays training content is fully tailored to assume that the communicator has no prior knowledge of any mathematical or scientific concepts. These insights gathered about visitor behavior and training preparation may pave the way for the adoption of innovative outreach strategies targeted at stimulating public interest in science. The Astrostays concept is gradually being replicated at the state level in several regions of India. The model's effectiveness is clear, as Astrostays made over \$23,000 in revenue last year alone, supporting over 46 families and empowering over 25 women, according to an independent audit. Much of the income is reinvested in local infrastructure since it is a community-owned and operated business, and this promotes the socio-economic development of the region.