

Himalayan University Consortium: Mission and Vision

Background

The Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) was founded by the participants of the first consultation workshop on 'Mountain-focused university consortium development with universities in the greater Himalayan region' held from 24–25 March 2007 at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu. The participants included high-level representatives of universities from five of the eight ICIMOD regional member countries, as well as a number of other regional and European organisations interested and engaged in university-level education and development in the region. The meeting recognised, amongst other things, that a multitude of academic organisations were generating and disseminating a large body of knowledge on sustainable mountain development in the region, and that there is an urgent need to share, improve, and adapt this knowledge to meet the specific capacity and knowledge development needs of the Consortium members. It was also the general conclusion of the Consortium that academic knowledge developed through higher education in the region has to suit local mountain development contexts, thereby adding value to the development work of all partners, especially government agencies and mountain-specific, development oriented non-governmental organisations.

Discussions at the workshop focused on forging a strong alliance amongst participating educational organisations for joint curriculum development, teaching, research, training, and policy advocacy. All universities in the region are interested in developing more focused and enriched content on mountain specific issues and topics in their curricula. New curricula, and academic and non-academic degree and diploma courses, tailored to meet the specific needs of each institution, will help universities to increase their effectiveness, reach, and relevance to mountain societies at large. By working together on a curriculum, such as the one developed by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) on sustainable mountain development, and by setting up a robust system of exchange for students, faculty members, university administrators, and other organisational functionaries, the use of each university's resources will be maximised and universities will benefit from the combined experience and knowledge resources of Consortium members. By building a mountain-specific knowledge base and approach in developing the learning culture, customised faculty, and staff training and improvement in the overall university curricula, Consortium members hope to produce a cadre of trained professionals able to promote the mountain agenda and support the sustainable development of the greater Himalayan region, covering the large, vulnerable, and fragile ecosystems in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar – a geographical span of 3500 km, containing close to 150 million people.

Role and Objectives

The Himalayan University Consortium comprises of universities in the greater Himalayan region, as well as those located elsewhere, but engaged in sustainable mountain development activities in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region. The institutions represented at the meeting held in March 2007 have been deemed founding members of the new Consortium. The Consortium intends to undertake activities such as: the development of a postgraduate fellowship programme among member universities and institutions, the development of mountain-focused curriculum in suitable subjects, the development of a programme for the

exchange of faculty members, joint teaching of a generic course on sustainable mountain development that covers topics such as knowledge networking and policy advocacy, and promotes sustainable mountain development in the region.

In short, the HUC for mountain development studies is an organisation of interested academic and research institutions working together to:

1. Promote and support the conducting, acquiring, preserving, and sharing of mountain research and development data, information, and knowledge through academic and non-academic means and platforms;
2. Provide open and equitable access to these knowledge resources to members and possibly other actors in the region; and
3. Promote the effective use of the available knowledge through training courses, academic curricula, student/faculty exchanges, and web-based information portals.

Some of HUC's guiding principles in relation to research and professional education are:

- To co-ordinate and occasionally steer research efforts (so that institutions develop their preferred specialisations and strengths, but also to ensure that the product is more than the sum of parts).
- To strive for applied knowledge that actually meets the demands of policy makers, communities, and civil society and contributes to policy debate.

Vision

The goal of the Consortium is to ensure that governments and civil society actors have access to, and make optimal use of, reliable, relevant, and up-to-date knowledge, expertise, and skilled manpower, and that, towards this end, knowledge institutes produce and share such knowledge and expertise, making the best use of cutting edge methods and educational tools to advance theory and methodologies in mountain development sciences and practise. HUC will promote the optimal use of knowledge from beyond the region by academic and professional education institutes, and encourage such institutions to pass on and develop tailored solutions, thus optimising their contribution to multidisciplinary sciences, including technical and social sciences, and to public policy discourse.

Mission

HUC will encourage and facilitate relevant, responsive, and mountain specific research, exchange, education, and outreach in mountain development sciences and related areas. To this end HUC will support the acquisition, development, archiving, and disseminating of knowledge and documents relevant to a wide spectrum of disciplines, and promote the conducting of research and related academic training programmes by HUC members jointly and individually for the benefit of researchers, civil society, and the development community in the HKH region. HUC will serve as an effective and holistic voice for the mountain development science and research community and will foster multidisciplinary action research, education, and extension to promote the informed and judicious use of natural resources for the benefit of society.

HUC aims to build an integrated view of the education needs of mountain development enthusiasts at the university level, and to advance a broad representation of universities and professional associations to promote mountain development science and practice.

Goals

1. Generating a Repository of Data, Information and Knowledge

A medium- and long-term goal of HUC is to facilitate the acquisition of, and wide access to, mountain science data, information, and knowledge, recognising and taking into consideration the advances in information and communication technology in relation to archiving, processing, documenting, and sharing these knowledge resources.

2. Promoting Effective Application of Mountain Knowledge

HUC is committed to supporting the effective use of knowledge resources, educational tools, academic planning, and management experiences by promoting, supporting, and facilitating the acquisition, maintenance, and development of comprehensive documentation, and by providing consultation and training on the nature of knowledge gathering, as well as on analytic techniques and teaching methods.

3. Promoting (model) Curricula

A strategic medium-term goal of HUC is to develop model curricula to improve human resource development for the mountains focusing on the needs of the HKH region. This will fulfil the long-cherished vision of Himalayan universities to prepare students for success in the variety of mountain development professions, which rely upon the latest technologies (e.g., geographic information systems and geo-spatial science), multidisciplinary sciences, including traditional science and experiential knowledge. Central to this vision is a comprehensive body of knowledge that specifies what aspiring mountain ecologists, resource managers, economists, geographers, and anthropologists, as well as other development professionals, need to know to advance their professions.

Membership

The founding universities in the HKH region and ICIMOD are all full members of the HUC. In addition, the HKH countries not represented in the HUC founding meeting have also been approached to appoint one full membership each. Full membership of other universities in the region will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but will be treated with caution, as the Consortium may become less effective if membership grows too much. However, other universities and institutions of tertiary education and research may be invited to participate in HUC programmes, activities, and services. Likewise, specific programmes, activities, services, and collaboration may also expand to include the western Himalayan mountain ranges.

There are a further five institutions and universities, not based in the HKH, which are associate members. These associate members are of strategic importance because of their knowledge, networks, and resources. The inclusion of new associate members will be considered with openness, but caution on a case-by-case basis.

Governance and Organisational Structure

The annual workshop of the HUC will be hosted on a rotation basis by the different HKH member states. All members and associate members will be invited to submit agenda proposals to ICIMOD or the central organising institution, or respond to the proposed draft agenda (in terms of content), prior to the annual workshop. The structure and facilitation of the workshop will be agreed upon and finalised by the hosting institute(s) and ICIMOD.

ICIMOD will host the secretariat of the HUC, develop and maintain a website with membership pages, and act as spokesperson for the HUC with the media and relevant institutions (such as governments, well-wishers, and sponsors). While substantial funding will be sought for major programmes that the HUC initiates and adopts, the HUC itself intends to

be a lean and pragmatic body, and seek sober external financing for the overheads of the secretariat, the annual workshop, and travel and subsistence allowances for HUC events for HUC members in need of such support.

Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) Members and Associate Members

SN	Institute	Country	Status
4. 1	Kabul University (KU), Kabul	Afghanistan	Member
5.	Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Dhaka	Bangladesh	Member
6.	GUCAS Campus, Kunming Institute of Botany, Kunming	China	Member
7.	Lanzhou University, Lanzhou	China	Member
8.	Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Urumqi	China	Member
9.	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai	India	Member
10.	HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar	India	Member
11.	Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun	India	Member
12.	CSK Agricultural University Himachal Pradesh, Palampur	India	Member
13.	Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel	Nepal	Member
14.	Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu	Nepal	Member
15.	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu	Nepal/ HKH Region	Member and secretariat
16.	NWFP Agriculture University (NWFAU), Peshawar	Pakistan	Member
17.	Karakoram International University, Gilgit	Pakistan	Member
18.	Centre for Geoinformatics (Z_GIS), Salzburg University, Salzburg	Austria	Associate member
19.	United Nations University (UNU), Tokyo	Japan	Associate member
20.	International Institute of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), Enschede	Netherlands	Associate member
21.	University of Life Sciences (UMB), Oslo	Norway	Associate member
22.	Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok	Thailand	Associate member
23.	University of Central Asia (UCA), Bishkek	Kyrgyzstan	Associate member
24.	University of Highlands and Islands (UHI), Millennium Institute, Perth	United Kingdom	Associate member
25.	University of New Mexico (UNM), Albuquerque	United States of America	Associate member