Position Paper
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HUC TRANSITION ROADMAP

*Members of ICIMOD-HUC Joint Task Force on HUC's Management Structure and Secretariat's Hosting Arrangement, Kathmandu, 10 September 2024. From left: Wenling Wang, Shekhar Ghimire, Rosalind Cornforth, Izabella Koziell, Ataullah Shah, Jakob F. Steiner
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANSO	Alliance of International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions
APAARI	Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
APN	Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research
AP-PLAT	Asia Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Information Platform
BoG	Board of Governors
CASCADE	The Conservation and Sustainability Consortium of Academic Institutions
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GA	General Assembly
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HKH	Hindu Kush Himalaya
HUC	Himalayan University Consortium
HUC CPO	HUC Communications Partnership Officer
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
ICIMOD SCOs	ICIMOD Senior Communications Officers
IUCA	International Universities Climate Alliance
JTF	Joint Task Force
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation Learning
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTAPV	Medium Term Action Plan V
NORHED-II	Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development
NSFC	National Science Foundation of China
PAC	Program Advisory Committee
RECAP4NDC	Restore Conserve and Protest Forest and Tree Cover for NDC
RMCs	Regional Member Countries
SA	Strategic Action Areas
SI	Strategic Initiatives
SC	Steering Committee
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
ToR	Terms of Reference
TP	Transition Period
UNFCCC COP	United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change Conference of Parties
USPs	Unique Selling Points
WCRP	World Climate Research Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **_Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) Transition Roadmap_** Position Paper provides contextual background and establishes the rationale for the HUC's transition to autonomy. It details the course of action in the Transition Period Workplan which consists of four Strategic Areas and 30 concrete activities with specific milestones. The Paper describes the hosting arrangements of the Secretariat by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) during the phased transition as advised by ICIMOD's Programme Advisory Committee in its 6 December 2024 Recommendations. The Paper lists the risks for the implementation of the Transition Workplan against the regional context of political instability and socio-economic uncertainty. The risk mitigation strategy is built on the assumption of uneven quality of membership across the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) and outside of the region, especially in the post COVID-19 situation.

The Paper defines autonomy as a separate legal status with an autonomous management structure as it is operationalised through formalised processes - administration, resource mobilization, partnerships, finance, human resources, enterprise resource planning (ERP), facilities, IT, legal services, contracts, monitoring/evaluation/learning (MEL), travel, events, communication, and housekeeping – based on financial independence. The Paper recognizes the process and duration it would take to achieve autonomy and defines the transition period as 36 months, starting in January 2025 and ending in December 2027.

An autonomous HUC is a knowledge and network partner of ICIMOD. Likewise, ICIMOD is the key stakeholder of the HUC. The existing synergy between HUC and ICIMOD needs to be consolidated and boosted through detailed elaboration of governance and management structures, a more effective collaboration mechanism with formal contact points across both governance structures, and a revised communication strategy that strengthens mutually beneficial cross-interactions.

As a network of 100+ institutional members and 600++ fellows featured by a participatory approach in partnership building and distributive leadership, the autonomous HUC needs to overhaul its knowledge management and communication to document and showcase the progress the Consortium has made over the past decade, the cash and in-kind contributions its members have made, and the ownership, commitment, and leadership amongst its members and fellows. This is crucial for the generation of diverse and sustainable income streams in order to mobilise resources, progressively working toward financial independence.

By the end of the transition period, HUC aims to become a sustainable and internationally recognised network of universities and higher education institutions in the HKH focusing on sustainable mountain development, with its own legal entity.

1. THE CONTEXT

The Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) was established in 2007 as an initiative of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) with the objective of promoting regional collaboration in research and education on mountain issues in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). Over the course of 17 years, HUC has become a network of 100++ institutional members and 600++ fellows, making important contributions to the development of individual capacity and institutional capability for impactful climate action and sustainable development of the mountain and downstream communities. The network features a participatory approach in partnership building and distributive leadership whereby Co-Leads of active Thematic/Cross-cutting Workgroups take the lead in co-creating knowledge and co-designing place-based innovative solutions in collaboration with local stakeholders.

ICIMOD, as the founding member, has been hosting the HUC Secretariat and providing generous core funding for the operation and activities of the Consortium. ICIMOD's inter-governmental status provides the HUC community a platform to promote regional collaboration in knowledge co-production and sharing. HUC has benefited from the enabling environment ICIMOD has offered, such as administrative, communications, and partnership support. The continuity of close alignment of the mandates of ICIMOD and HUC notwithstanding, the expansion of the HUC network requires a thorough consideration of its governance, growth strategy with practical pathways for the HUC to achieve financial and institutional sustainability. Furthermore, the diversified interests of HUC members, shaped by the local and national contexts, as well as growing opportunities for innovative research and education, require a more responsive operational mechanism.

To this end, a separate legal status and autonomous management structure with formalised processes for how HUC can draw down on ICIMOD services (Administration, Resource Mobilization, Partnerships, Finance, Human Resources, ERP, Facilities, IT, Legal Services, Contracts, Monitoring/Evaluation/Learning (MEL), Travel, Events, Communication, Housekeeping) need to be established for the HUC to mobilize resources and actively work toward operational and financial independence. Likewise, the momentum of member engagement in HKH countries and regional collaboration needs to be sustained and strengthened to continue to deliver strategic results for the network. The synergy between ICIMOD and HUC also needs to be consolidated and boosted through a more effective collaborative mechanism with formal contact points across both governance structures, and a revised communication strategy that strengthens mutually beneficial cross-interactions.

These changes will be implemented over a three-year Transition Period through a set of four well-defined lines of development (Strategic Areas) and embedded actions (Initiatives), with oversight provided by external observers forming a Senior Advisory Group and the HUC Steering Committee (SC). Each Strategic Area within the Roadmap will be overseen by self/nominated HUC/SC members to form Strategic Area Working Groups (SAWGs).

Background

The ***ICIMOD HUC Joint Task Force on HUC's Management Structure and Secretariat's Hosting Arrangements*** (JTF) was established following one of the key decisions made by the HUC Steering Committee at its meeting on 18 April 2024 in Kathmandu. The purpose of the JTF is to define what autonomy means for the Himalayan University Consortium in the context of its Secretariat being hosted by ICIMOD and to operationalize its autonomy by the following measures below:

(i)   A detailed guideline that will include measures for establishing an autonomous human resource and financial management system, a separate bank account, and a separate working space for the HUC, based on the ICIMOD's existing management framework;

(ii)   A roadmap for HUC's transitions toward being an autonomous entity;

(iii)   A draft of an institutional agreement between ICIMOD and the HUC regarding hosting arrangements of the HUC Secretariat; and

(iv)   An outline for HUC resource mobilization with a specific timeline.

Following two online meetings, the JTFs met in person (see Annex 1) in Kathmandu on 8-11 September 2024 to produce a Working Draft of the ***HUC Transition Roadmap*** covering points (i) to (iv) above. The Roadmap was reviewed by the HUC Steering Committee in its virtual Meeting on 19th September 2025. The agenda included time to interact with ICIMOD's senior management and professionals to evaluate the feasibility of collaboration and to exchange with HUC's key stakeholders (also on the JTF) from Pakistan (Professor Dr. Attaullah Shah, Vice Chancellor, Karakoram International University) and China (Dr. Wang Wenling, Assistant Professor, Institute of International Rivers and Eco-Security, Yunnan University, China, Co-Lead of Water Thematic Working Group) to

understand members' needs and expectations and gauge resource mobilizing potential. The face-to-face meeting was hosted by ICIMOD in Kathmandu and facilitated by the HUC Secretariat.

Members of SC and representatives of ICIMOD Directorate provided verbal comments on the First Working Draft of the Roadmap at the SC e-meeting on 18 September 2024. Written comments from SC members were compiled by the Secretariat 2 weeks after the SC meeting. The JTF e-met twice, 7 November and 12 November, to discuss revisions to the Roadmap. The 28 November 2028 version incorporated responses to the comments by ICIMOD Directorate and HUC Steering Committee and was submitted to ICIMOD's Programme Advisory Committee and Chairperson of ICIMOD Support Group by the HUC SC Acting Chairperson, via HUC Secretariat, on the same day. On 3 December 2024, the Executive Secretariat of ICIMOD circulated an updated version, with the same date, to which further points have been added to the main text, and additional Annexes and links to supporting documents were provided. On 5 December 2025, Professor Attaullah Shah, in his capacity of Acting Chairperson of the HUC SC, presented the Roadmap to PAC at an HUC-focused session of PAC meeting in ICIMOD. PAC provided detailed recommendations, dated 6 December 2025, to ICIMOD's Directorate. The detailed recommendations of PAC have been incorporated in Section 5 and other relevant texts of this document.

2. HUC CAPABILITIES

The HUC community is built on a wide range of expertise, methodologies, and skills from various disciplines to tackle issues and challenges faced by mountain and downstream communities in the HKH. Over the past decade, the HUC Secretariat coordinated a series of high-quality high-impact capacity development programmes and facilitated more than twenty collaborative research projects across 40 institutions in the region. On the one hand, through the continued engagement of HUC fellows and members in their home country facilitated by country-based hubs, the community maintains a strong foothold at the national and sub-national levels. On the other hand, thanks to the quality of scholarly engagement and an innovative modality of partnership building, the HUC has gained recognition on the global stage and made important contributions to the empowerment of the Global South in the local-to-global partnership.

Three core capabilities with intrinsic values of the HUC are identified as:

(i)   Interdisciplinary Capacity Building;
(ii)   Climate and Sustainable Mountain Development Governance; and
(iii) Local-to-Global Partnerships.

These capabilities will define the three areas through which ICIMOD can seek expertise and services to enhance the quality of its outcome-based activities.

2.1 Interdisciplinary Capacity Building

The most prominent strength of the HUC is featured in its interdisciplinary approach. The complex, wicked problems faced by mountain and downstream communities can only be understood through a multi-scientific system thinking that involves multiple forms of knowledge and knowledge holders, including scientists and Indigenous heritage bearers. Solutions to these challenges, in turn, can only be co-designed and jointly implemented by transdisciplinary teams involving stakeholders across all levels and sectors. This inter- and transdisciplinary approach is a flagship character of HUC capacity building programmes.

The HUC, through its Thematic and Cross-cutting Workgroups (Annex 2A, Table 2a.3.; and Annex 8), offers system thinking, inter- and transdisciplinary approach in designing and conducting capacity building programmes in collaboration with its key stakeholders. During these customized programmes, the HUC team will impart knowledge, methodology and skills to reflect, conceptualize, plan, and act interdisciplinary to ensure holistic, integrated, and thoroughly inclusive solutions benefiting stakeholders equitably.

The HUC has pioneered e-learning, digitalization, and hybrid training modality, combining virtual global classrooms with field-based practicum in data collection and analysis. It has a functioning portal with a one-stop sign-in, linking up with a globally recognized e-learning platform in sustainable mountain development. This existing know-how and network serve as a foundation for HUC's subsequent provision of income-generating e-courses.

2.2 Climate and Sustainable Mountain Development Governance

Local communities in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region face multiple, often cascading, challenges brought about by climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, air pollution, as well as persistent inequities resulting from the socio-economic development and globalization processes. However, decisions on climate action and socio-economic development are often made elsewhere. Likewise, climate information and scientific data on natural resources are often inaccessible to local people and small and medium business owners, the sustainability of livelihoods and the success of investments of whom depend on natural and climate resources. To bridge this gap, scientists and scholars in the HUC community have been designing, testing, and refining tools and methodologies to invert climate information for impactful and meaningful decision-making at local and sub-national levels. HUC scientists and scholars provide facilitation for bottom-up, participatory interactions of multiple stakeholders in policy consultation and formulation, bringing voices from societal actors and groups in the process. The HUC can collaborate with stakeholders, including ICIMOD, in evidence-based policy translation and policy brief production. Furthermore, the HUC pays equally strong attention to building institutional capability by providing methodology and tools to review and identify touchpoints for improvements in the institutional processes. The dynamic nature of a network gives the HUC a vantage point to visualize and act upon the flow of innovative ideas and hybrid modalities between the informal and formal spheres of climate action.

2.3 Local-to-Global Partnerships

On the one hand, the majority of HUC members, especially full members, are located in the mountainous region of their respective country and therefore, maintain a close relationship with their constituency in the local community (Annex 2A, Table 2a.1). This gives the HUC an advantage in staying relevant and responsive to local issues and continuing to scale out and scale up the impact of capacity-building activities by ICIMOD and other key stakeholders. On the other hand, associate members located in major cities or outside of the HKH (Annex 3a, Table 3a.2) offer state-of-the-art knowledge, methodologies, technologies, and skills, as well as global connectedness. This local-to-global academic partnership helps HUC to bring mountain issues and Indigenous voices to the global agenda, and likewise, share locally relevant solutions across the HKH and other regions in the world. HUC's active connection with like-minded consortia in the Global South, such as APAARI, allows it to make important contributions to the agenda-setting and paradigm-shifting movement, from "development for" to "development with and by" local communities. HUC's contributions have been recognized by the WCRP through hosting the Himalayan Hub of 'My Climate Risk' Lighthouse Activity. Other networks working on climate change issues such as The Conservation and Sustainability Consortium of Academic Institutions (CASCADE, hosted by Newcastle University) and International Universities Climate Alliance (IUCA, hosted by the University of New South Wales) are keen on collaborating with the HUC as part of scaling up the impacts through global processes (Annex 3).

HUC's unique local-to-global partnerships and people-to-people diplomacy are complementary to Type I partnerships that focus on governments, formal mechanisms, and high-level science diplomacy. It helps bring multiple voices from across sectors of society to ensure impactful whole-society climate action.

3. HUC GOAL AND TRANSITION PERIOD OBJECTIVES

The HUC aims to become a sustainable and internationally recognised network of universities and higher education institutions in the HKH focusing on sustainable mountain development, with its own legal entity.

To achieve this goal, four **Strategic Action Areas** (SA) and embedded **Strategic Initiatives (SI)** have been identified (Section 3) together with three Thematic Areas that represent the unique capabilities of the HUC academic network (i.e., the HUC USPs) that add value to the HUC members and offer distinct complementarities to ICIMOD.

The HUC Transition Period (TP) will commence on the 1st of January 2025 for three years until 31st December 2027. From the outset of the TP, HUC will adopt an evolutionary approach to guide its actions. The objectives will be to create the main building blocks for a fully functioning, autonomous HUC, involving all key stakeholders. These are summarised below:

SA1. Formalizing legal registration for the HUC as a separate legal entity, with the correspondent governance and infrastructure.

SA2. Developing a new HUC strategy for the post-transition period (1 January 2028 onwards).

SA3. Identifying and securing diverse and sustainable income streams.

SA4. Strengthening collaboration with HUC strategic partners, including ICIMOD, across the USP areas identified.

4. TRANSITION PERIOD WORK PLAN

The four Strategic Areas synthesise eight months of internal HUC deliberations on resource mobilization and governance, impact tracking and communication, together with consultations with ICIMOD staff and the HUC Joint Task Force. The ICIMOD consultations (Annex 5a) have covered the value addition from HUC, governance structures, the opportunities for increased collaboration where there are gaps in ICIMOD's capability, as well as areas for improvement, particularly with regard to communication.

Each **Strategic Area (SA)** has embedded **Strategic Initiatives (SA/X)** with time-bound milestones to ensure effective oversight by each Strategic Area Working Group (SAWG), drawn from the HUC SC/members. In view of the need for the overarching progress to be tracked during this Transition Period, a third-party observing group, henceforward referred to as the HUC's Senior Advisory Group, has been proposed to be established for mentoring and monitoring purposes. The HUC Senior Advisory Group will consist at least three and no more than five members nominated and jointly approved by the HUC Steering Committee, and with no conflict of interest.

The next sections summarise each SA and work plans, with the immediate next steps laid out in Section 4.

Senior Advisory Group

Context

Current

Hosting arrangement with ICIMOD affecting HUC (-ve, +ve)

Financial dependency / unsustainable

Future

Establishing HUC as a legal entity autonomy

Gaining financial autonomy

Benefits for HUC members and community

Closer cooperation with ICIMOD to boost outcomes for HKH

JANUARY 2025

STRATEGIC AREAS 4
Collaboration with ICIMOD

STRATEGIC AREAS 3
Sustainable Income Streams

STRATEGIC AREAS 2
Post-transition Strategy Development

STRATEGIC AREAS 1
Legal Registration & Governance

DECEMBER 2026

USPs

Interdisciplinary Capacity Building

Climate & SMD Governance

Local-to-Global partnership

ICIMOD

Strategic Group Leads

Action Area Coordinators

Intervention Managers

Component Leads

Communications Unit

RMCs Country Focals

Areas for Improvement

Governance

Communication

Cross-exchange with ICIMOD

Robust MEL

HUC

TWGs/CWGs Co-Leads

Country-based Hubs

Fellows

ICIMOD Mountain Chairs

Global Network Partners

HUC Secretariat

HUC Steering Committee

4.1 Strategic Area 1 (SA1) - Put in place legal registration, governance and infrastructure to support this

Activities in SA1 cover critically important operational areas. These include:

- **Strengthening a functioning and engaged members' community**: Redefining 'membership' for HUC, re-engaging and recruiting new members, and amending the HUC by-laws and charter to reflect the change to an autonomous organization.
- **Putting in place a new structure and governance**: If the General Assembly in mid-April 2025 confirms HUC's transition to autonomy, a new governance structure will be required. this will involve registering HUC as a legal entity, clarifying existing roles and recruitment into new roles, and establishing a hosting arrangement with ICIMOD during the Transition Period and the new operational infrastructure.

These activities are implemented via three Strategic Area 1 (SA1) initiatives and embedded SMART tasks.

SA1/1a: Hold a General Assembly (GA) meeting to move with the amendment of by-laws and refresh the HUC charter

- At the earliest opportunity, HUC Secretariat will proactively engage with all member country hubs to raise awareness of the General Assembly and issues to be discussed.
- HUC Secretariat will coordinate a General Assembly Meeting (GA) around mid-April 2025 for all stakeholders of the Consortium – heads of institutions of institutional members, TWG/CWG Co-Leads, equitably selected fellows and affiliates, and senior representatives of grant-making bodies and government officials of relevant agencies. To keep costs to a minimum, this may take place in a hybrid modality.
- The GA meeting held in the mid-April 2025 will serve as an open platform for members and stakeholders deliberate on the need and feasibility to become an independent legal entity, amend the by-laws to formulate clear criteria of membership fees including consideration of in-kind contributions (e.g., services to HUC, support to training programmes) and implications on membership if the members fail to pay for a certain number of years.
- Representatives of the Board of Governors and Programme Advisory Committee of ICIMOD will be invited to participate in the GA meeting to experience at first-hand the partnership building and scientific collaboration possible through the HUC for the Hindu Kush Himalaya.

SA1/1b: Preparation to establish HUC as a Legal Entity

- The HUC Secretariat in coordination with the Governance Task Team, Co-Chaired by two SC Members, Dasho Nidup (Royal University of Bhutan) and Prof Liu Peng (Yunnan University), will explore different possible options for registering HUC as a separate legal entity by June 2025.

- For this, the SC will explore options of registration in Nepal and any other country in the HKH of their choice. Moving the HUC outside of the HKH will involve consultation with ICIMOD's Board of Governors for accountability and transparency purposes.

- The Secretariat will explore and establish the minimum funds that are required for registration and the SC will explore the possibility of raising this initial amount through contributions by the members.

- The Secretariat Lead/ Executive and the Governance Task Team will coordinate with the lawyers of the selected country for registration of HUC in that country. The HUC and ICIMOD will discuss and agree on how to resource legal fees related to registration of HUC.

- According to PAC detailed recommendations dated 6 December 2024, the extent to which the HUC is able to make documented progress toward legal registration will be used as one of the key criteria of evaluation, based on which ICIMOD will make decision regarding the subsequent phase(s) of transition.

SA1/1c: Development of relevant legal documents

- Development of relevant legal documents will be a prerequisite for registration of HUC and will be more directed by the relevant laws of the country of registration.

- The HUC Secretariat will work with the lawyers of the country of registration to formulate relevant legal documents. These documents will be prepared by the end of the second quarter of 2025.

SA1/2: Establish new Governance structures (during TP and beyond)

- During the first phase of the transition, Jan-Jun 2025, the PAC recommends the ICIMOD management to arrange an acting HUC Secretariat Lead and an acting Program Associate till June 2025, to ensure that the HUC programmatic work moves on uninterrupted. This is an interim arrangement where there will be no change in the positioning and internal reporting lines of HUC.

- The contract of the existing consultant can be extended till the end of June 2025. ICIMOD will approve the ToR and the consultant will support the two acting staff in HUC Secretariat as well as support the HUC Governance as required.

- To ensure that all decision-making processes are free of any conflict of interest, the PAC recommends that ICIMOD management should refrain being part of HUC's governing bodies during this period of transition.

- The SC will move to quarterly meetings during the Transition Period to maintain oversight during this critical period (also see SA3/1) and provide a reporting structure for the external Senior Advisory Group. .

SA1/3: Put in place infrastructure for the autonomous operations of HUC (transition through to implementation)

- It is anticipated that 2 full-time staff will be required as a minimum, 1) HUC Executive Officer; and 2) HUC Communication & Partnerships Officer. The SC endorsed the change of the title of the HUC Secretariat Lead to the **HUC Executive Officer** at its e-meeting on 19th September 2024. The SC reconfirmed its endorsement of the two ToRs at its e-meeting on 16th December 2024, to be subsequently reviewed and endorsed by ICIMOD. The central support functions in ICIMOD, i.e. Administration, Finance, HR, ERP, Facilities, IT, Legal Services, Contracts, M&E, Travel Hospitality, Housekeeping, will provide all necessary support to HUC. This support will be monetized and tracked within the overall core contribution by ICIMOD to HUC during the transition period. Whilst HUC is held within ICIMOD staff will maintain connection to their contact points and follow ICIMOD standard procedures and processes.

- The central support from ICIMOD - Administration, Resource Mobilization, Partnerships, Finance, Human Resources, ERP, Facilities, IT, Legal Services, Contracts, Monitoring/Evaluation/Learning (MEL), Travel, Events, Communication, Housekeeping - will be gradually tapered off as and when HUC is able to generate sufficient income so that by the end of the transition period HUC will have its own support system in place.

- ICIMOD will open a new bank account dedicated to receiving funds/ grants for HUC before the end of 2024. Rules and regulations for resource mobilization, including the collection of membership fees and decision matrix for fund raising, are to be developed and put in place at the General Assembly in mid-April 2025.

- For the interim period before full autonomy, all policies and procedures of ICIMOD, except HR and resource mobilization, will be applicable for running the operations of HUC. However, the HUC SC will develop its own policy and procedures by the time HUC gets registered as an autonomous entity.

- HUC will develop its own MEL framework that includes key transition deliverables. However, ongoing and collaborative activities with ICIMOD must continue to fall under the 2023-26 ICIMOD Medium Term Action Plan V Results Framework, to ensure outputs and deliverables feed ICIMOD's 2026 results targets. This will facilitate reporting and impact tracking by both organizations during the Transition Period, including ensuring the use of the ICIMOD core funds is justifiable. HUC will need to report back to ICIMOD as per the agreed results framework of ICIMOD for the use of ICIMOD core funds for governance, resource mobilization, and programmatic purposes. This will be similar to the system ICIMOD has for any of its interventions. There will be, however, areas of activity of the HUC – of mutually exclusive competencies – that do not feed into ICIMOD's MTAPV result framework. These activities will be financed by the funds generated from various streams of income of the HUC.

4.2 Strategic Area 2 (SA2) - Co-develop with the HUC members a new strategy for the post-transition period

SA2 looks to the future and aims to communicate a renewed vision and remit for the post-transition period through developing the new HUC Strategy 2028-2034, and ensuring continued understanding and engagement of the HUC members.

SA2/ Initiative 1: Strategy Development

SA3/1a: Setting the Scene

- HUC General Assembly in mid-April 2025 will decide whether a new strategy is needed, how that can be achieved and who will implement it.
- HUC General Assembly will decide on the form of review of the 2018-2025 Strategy, to be completed no later than August 2025.
- The HUC Secretariat coordinate the preparation and publication of the 2018-2025 review report, to be finalized by end of September 2025.

SA3/1b: Develop the new Strategy 2028–2034

- An internal Strategy Development Workshop between the Development Team and potential external Observers will be convened by December 2026, enabling a discussion based on the position paper and recommendations by Transition Support Group.
- The new Strategy will be completed by April 2027.
- The new Strategy needs to be approved by SC and HUC Members, by August 2027.

4.3 Strategic Area 3 (SA3) - Identify and secure sustainable (diverse) income streams

SA3 focuses on the development of a sustainable income generation strategy and operating plan. Given the diverse nature of the likely activities within the HUC, from locally focused field-based research operating across the region to academic exchanges and interdisciplinary capacity building, effective and sustained financial structures will be put in place that can facilitate these complex activities and ensure equitable cost and benefit sharing.

Priority funders will be identified in consultation with key stakeholders through the HUC members and collaboration with key stakeholders. The primary aim will be to generate quick-win revenue streams to secure long-term baseline funding. The USP activities will be cross-fertilised with these target groups as well as with existing programmes at ICIMOD, to accelerate HUC's profile and impact. In this TP, HUC will capitalise particularly on the knowledge and approach of the membership and support from ICIMOD to bring early successes.

SA3/1a: Develop financial forecast and work up scenarios based on the most cost-effective model for HUC

- The HUC Executive Officer will coordinate the Resource Mobilization Task Team, Co-Chaired by two SCMs, Professor Tri Ratna Bajracharya and Prof Nichole Georgeou, and present to ICIMOD finance a financial forecast under various scenarios, building on the financial projections provided by ICIMOD (September 2024; see Annex 6). This requires input from SA1 on levels of member activity. This will be completed by April 2025 and will cover the period from June 2025 to the end of 2026 (in alignment with ICIMOD's MTAP-V).
- Co-develop proposals for research projects, including collaborative projects with ICIMOD, obtain fundings (including strategic funding agencies such as NFSC, ANSO, APN, etc.), and allocate appropriate proportions of these grants to HUC.
- By the third quarter of 2026, the next forecast projections will be developed for post MTAP-V.

SA3/1b: Review and optimise expenditure

- Efforts will be made to ensure the HUC operates as a lean organization. Priority areas and programme activities (including the HUC Thematic Working Groups) will therefore be reviewed as a SC standing agenda item at the quarterly SC meetings in line with the financial forecasts. Inputs will come from the GA meetings, bilateral meetings with HUC members and the ICIMOD Strategic Groups based on the three unique selling points (USP) areas of HUC i.e., Interdisciplinary Capacity Building, Climate & Sustainable Mountain Development Governance and Local-to-Global Partnerships.

SA3/2: Establish annual membership fees

- Following the amendment to the by-laws the membership fees will be rolled out by June 2025 following an approved tiered annual membership fees basis at the GA in mid-April 2025 (see SA1/1).
- It is expected that the Associate Members (approximately 20 members) will be able to provide secure long-term funding to the HUC of around US$25,000 per annum.

SA3/3a: Development of the HUC pipeline

- HUC Communications and Partnerships Officer (HUC CPO; recruited by early January 2025) will assess and identify funding opportunities (consultancy services such as research grants and customized training).
- A sustained Training programme offering customized capacity building is expected to provide a secure income stream to HUC. Based on the proposed projections, this would require an annual delivery of 3-4, 1-week training courses (costed at around US$30,000) provided to ICIMOD and other key stakeholders with an overhead to HUC). The SC Resource Mobilization Task Team will support the HUC Secretariat in establishing the resource mobilization strategy by end of June 2025.
- The CPO will need to develop pitches and coordinate meetings with prioritised funders.
- A monthly assessment of pipeline opportunities using the decision tree below (SA3/3b) will be maintained and regular communication provided to the relevant HUC members. The CPO will liaise with relevant ICIMOD Partnerships & RM Officer.
- These action points are included in the ToR for the HUC Communications & Partnerships Officer.

SA3/3b: Design and establish a decision tree for funding opportunities

- The HUC CP Officer will develop a decision tree aligned with the funding strategy with criteria that reflect the HUC values and can maximize income. This will include being able to identify opportunities that can complement capabilities between HUC and ICIMOD. This will be completed by the end of June 2025.

SA3/3c: Identifying the right entry points for specific funding opportunities (see SA1, SA4)

- As opportunities arise, the right entry point will be decided through mutual consultation of HUC and ICIMOD with the spirit of complementing and maximizing to secure the funding.
- The HUC CPO will coordinate these consultations with the focal point of ICIMOD for responding to such funding opportunities.

Potential Income Streams

SA3 will explore and assess relevant and sustainable income streams. These will include:

Income-generating opportunities and related IP: Recognising the USPs (see Section 2), HUC will create a range of Knowledge Products and Training Services from across the HUC membership. Commercial opportunities will be proactively sort-out and exploited including opportunities for providing customised training programmes to key stakeholders, consultancies, impact assessments, private sector events on sustainable mountain development, providing speakers etc. To facilitate these opportunities, the new HUC Communications and Partnerships Officer (CPO) will actively strengthen partnerships in the private sector, and the HUC Steering Committee (SC) will consider including private sector representation on the new HUC non-Executive Advisory Board.

Membership Fees: To secure a small baseline for operations, membership fees will be introduced pending approval by the General Assembly (see HUC Position Paper on Governance and Resource Mobilization, April 2024). These will be charged annually to Associate Members (approximately 20 members, from US$1,000 to US$5,000 each member depending on the size of student body or budget, for a total of US$25,000 per annum), and to HUC members. The fee basis will follow a tiered system (1-3) which will take account of the annual in-kind contributions (e.g., service to HUC, training support, etc). The fees-based model will be developed as part of the SA3.

Postgraduate and executive-level education: The HUC will support the development of postgraduate (e.g., PGT Disaster Management Programme), executive-level education, and curriculum development as well as research and enterprise opportunities.

Research grants: Through a new horizon scanning process (SA3) and identification of research grant calls, both for individuals and the HUC country hubs, an increase in large-scale consortium grant applications is anticipated. This would bring in substantial research resources for the HUC members and overheads. Pending agreement at the next

General Assembly, participating universities may also be asked to provide a percentage of the monies they receive from grant overheads to support HUC's operations, where partnership/collaboration has been facilitated by HUC for such funding opportunities.

Independent Fellowship Applications: The HUC will continue to encourage individuals who show great potential from their network to apply for independent Research Fellowships with host institutions from across the network (e.g., through ANSO, NSFC, APN, etc.). This will generate new research income, including contributions to HUC overheads.

Non-traditional sources for applied research and training: The HUC membership is well-placed to benefit from funding from multi-lateral organizations, such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, and several Foundations (e.g., SDC, APN) with such aims as meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and eradicating poverty. This will likely provide additional research grants, income for capacity development as well as funding for Visiting Fellows and PG student exchanges.

4.4 Strategic Area 4 (SA4) - Strengthen collaboration with ICIMOD across three USP areas identified

For policymakers to be able to make well-founded and dynamic decisions that bridge the gap between the wide scales and uncertainties of climate change, and the context-specific and nuanced actions that are needed at local levels, long-term trusted partnerships across the different governance levels and interdisciplinary capacity building are needed. Much of this capacity already exists within the HUC network and knowledge base. SA4 will therefore focus on **communicating its renewed vision and remit, growing its collaborative framework and building activities around its three USP areas** so key stakeholders, including ICIMOD, can leverage this unique and rich capability.

SA4/ Initiative 1: Interdisciplinary Capacity Building

S4/1a: Foster interaction HUC-ICIMOD

- **Prepare HUC USPs:** The unique selling points (USP) that HUC can offer to the ICIMOD Strategic Groups (SGs) will be refined and expanded with regard to interdisciplinary capacity building. The list will serve as a guideline for joint discussions and will be disseminated to meeting participants in advance. The USPs include (a) an offer to provide follow-up to ICIMOD workshops in RMCs on topics where HUC has available expertise. Additionally, HUC will continue to organize standalone workshops to which relevant ICIMOD experts are invited (see SA4/1b); (b) an offer to turn knowledge created by ICIMOD into e-learning material and integrate it into curriculum development (see SA4/1c); (c) an offer to support ICIMOD staff involved in research or assessments with research design and potential pathways for proofing of concepts (see SA4/1d); (c) a list of experts from the HUC network ICIMOD can draw upon for secondments and exchanges (see SA4/1e). This will be done by the end of January 2025.
- **Meetings with the ICIMOD Strategic Groups:** HUC Secretariat and TWGs/CWGs Co-Leads met with selected AA Coordinators and Intervention managers who were available from end of September through mid-November 2024 and discussed practical pathways for collaboration during the transition period. Concrete joint workplan has been co-developed with and specific budget has been booked for SG2 AA-C Foresight, Settlements, and Tourism and SG2 AA-D Rangelands, Spring, and RECAP4NDC. No joint workplan is developed with SG1 AA-A or AA-B. Discussion is not yet finalized with SG3 AA-E SERVIR.
- **Meeting with Communications:** HUC Secretariat met with the ICIMOD Communications Unit Head and SG3 Lead and discussed effective communication of HUC outputs during the transition. Follow-up meeting is required to identify potential regional capacities HUC can provide to ICIMOD for effective communication to stakeholders. Completed by April 2025.
- **Compile HUC-ICIMOD cooperation potential:** HUC Secretariat and SG Leads will jointly identify additional cooperation areas for the second half of 2025 and 2026, as guidance for workstreams SA4/1b to SA4/1e by April 2025.
- **Recap Meetings:** Meetings between HUC and all SGLs, AACs and IMs who have voiced concrete interest need to be reinitiated by May 2025 to narrow down on potential priorities for the transition period.
- **ICIMOD Country Focals to HUC Country Hubs:** HUC will arrange 8 dedicated meetings between HUC Country Focals and Country Chapter Leads or selected HUC members from the respective RMC to inform about the respective others' aims and activities, by June 2026.

S4/1b: Co-design and jointly execute collaborative trainings and conduct stand-alone trainings

- **Develop 'follow-up' strategy:** HUC Secretariat and 3 TWG Co-Leads will develop a framework and success matrix on how follow-up trainings in RMCs need to be established by June 2025.
- **Execute follow-up trainings:** A *minimum* of 1 follow-up trainings *per year* will be executed for ICIMOD based on the need and demand expressed by target groups, by December 2027.
- **Execute training on research design catering to ICIMOD staff members:** HUC will conduct 2 workshops at ICIMOD for ICIMOD staff on a consultancy basis on research design in the specific target areas by December 2026.
- **Stand-alone trainings:** A minimum of 2 stand-alone trainings *per year* will be conducted with the HUC Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), with invitations to ICIMOD colleagues, by December 2027.
- **Reporting:** Documentation of all trainings needs to be completed line with ICIMOD SPMEL where relevant by December 2027.

SA4/1c: E-learning and curriculum development

- **Capacity documentation:** E-learning and curriculum development capacities within HUC will be documented, including communication via the independent web presence by December 2025.
- **E-course development service:** The HUC provides ICIMOD an exclusive service of digitalization of ICIMOD's existing training materials and knowledge products and development of one e-course on Springshed management (funded by SDC, by mid-2025) and 15 courses funded by GIZ as part of RECAP4NDC by the end of 2026.
- **Curriculum development:** HUC will identify universities and higher education institutions across the HKH interested in curriculum development with the expertise HUC/ICIMOD can provide and identify 2 HUC members with whom curriculum development is initiated, into the period after transition by December 2026.

SA4/1d: Secondments and Exchanges

- **Establish HUC expert database:** HUC will set up a database drawn from HUC fellows/members categorized by experience and background accessible to ICIMOD and other key stakeholders by August 2025, which will also serve as a baseline for other Initiatives (see SA4 2b and 2c).

SA4/ Initiative 2: Climate and Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) Governance

SA4/2a: Foster HUC-ICIMOD interaction

- **Prepare HUC USPs:** HUC will refine and develop the list of unique selling points (USP) it can offer to SGs with regards to governance. The list serves as a guideline for discussion and will be disseminated to meeting participants in advance. The USPs include (a) HUC members' active role on the global stage in deliberations revolving around governance (see SA4/2b-WS2), (b) HUC's ability to bring academics to the table for regional or international discussions on science to policy (see SA4/2d-WS4) and (c) HUC's insight into available tools developed in the region by academic institutions (SA4/2d-WS4). The list will be completed by January 2025.

SA4/2b: Strengthen HUC's role on the global stage

- In tandem with SA4/1d HUC will prepare an overview of members involved in global networks deliberating on governance by December 2025. These can help to facilitate future dedicated exchanges between HUC members involved and ICIMOD e.g. at the International Mountain Conference (IMC, Innsbruck, 14-18 September 2025) in the runup to CBD and UNFCCC COPs.
- 3 dedicated interactions between HUC members involved in global deliberations and ICIMOD will be scheduled before relevant events such as UNFCCC COP by December 2027.
- HUC and ICIMOD will coordinate to develop a comprehensive strategy to amplify mountain voices on the global stage by December 2027.

SA4/2c: Establish a roster of HUC experts to bring the latest scientific evidence, cutting-edge technologies, and innovative approaches to HKH high-level science-policy dialogues and global forums (also SA4/1d)

- HUC will prepare an expert database (see also M5.1 under Initiative 1): ICIMOD can draw from this network when requiring academic experts for HKH high-level science-policy dialogues and global forums, by August 2025.

SA4/2d: Access to current frameworks and practice, approaches and tools for climate governance

- HUC will establish an overview of current frameworks and practice, approaches and tools for climate and SMD governance available at HUC institutions by December 2025.

SA4/ Initiative 3: Local-To-Global Partnerships

SA4/3a: Optimise country-based hubs and networks

- HUC Secretariat will prepare an overview of country-based hubs (e.g. existing country chapters, existing networks and alliances) in HKH countries, in which members are actively involved by June 2026. The momentum of China-based and Pakistan-based members needs to be maintained through frequent exchanges and active participation in open calls for CPEC funding, NSFC, ANSO, etc., for which ICIMOD's endorsement is required.
- HUC Secretariat with support from regional members will develop country-specific roadmaps to boost member engagement at national and sub-national levels by December 2026.
- HUC Secretariat will establish a pan-region calendar of events to be organized by HUC members, available on HUC website by December 2025.

SA4/3b: Consolidate HUC's inter-regional and global connections

- HUC Secretariat in cooperation with its members and close coordination with ICIMOD will prepare an overview of inter-regional and global partners and identify touchpoints for collaboration by June 2026.
- HUC will facilitate at least 1 knowledge exchange and experience sharing on climate governance between like-minded consortia and networks, either online or in person including ICIMOD staff by December 2027.
- HUC commits to strengthening voices from Indigenous communities and early/mid career, female scientists at global forums, by ensuring representativity of at least 20% in the experts provided for deliberations until December 2027.

SA4/ Initiative 4: Renew HUC's Communications Strategy

SA4/4a: HUC Website and Portal

- HUC Secretariat will finalize the HUC Website with the SC (removing ICIMOD branding, adapting font etc. to clarify separate entities) including independent hosting, ensuring acknowledgment of core donors, by June 2025.
- HUC Secretariat will develop guidelines for future independent contributions of members to the website by June 2025.
- HUC will continue developing modules to harvest and visualise data to demonstrate metrics of success live on website, by December 2025.

SA4/4b: HUC Communications Strategy

- In close consultation with members and TWGs HUC will develop a new Communications Strategy to ensure effective communication of HUC outputs by December 2025. Whilst hosted by ICIMOD the HUC Communications Strategy needs to communicate with the ICIMOD Communications Strategy in terms of best practices, processes and procedures.
- HUC will develop guidelines on effective communication of any HUC member output via HUC channels and appropriate measures according to countries by December 2025, appropriate acknowledgments - also whilst hosted by ICIMOD, HUC will need to work in line with the various ICIMOD Comms Policies and Procedures.

SA4/4c: HUC Publications

- The HUC Secretariat will develop a strategy for publication support by ICIMOD to HUC during the transition in coordination with ICIMOD Comms by December 2025.

- HUC will develop guidelines on attribution for publications that were facilitated or co-funded by ICIMOD and HUC by December 2025.

SA4/4d: Identify and implement incentives

- In consultation with HUC members, the Secretariat will identify incentives for active participation (incl. paying membership fees), e.g. through certifications (see SA1) by April 2025.

Strategic Areas	2024 Q4	2025 Q1	2025 Q2	2025 Q3	2025 Q4	2026 Q1	2026 Q2	2026 Q3	2026 Q4	2027 Q1	2027 Q2	2027 Q3	2027 Q4
SA1. Put in place legal registration, governance and infrastructure to support HUC's transition to autonomy													
SA1.1.a. Hold the first General Assembly meeting in April 2025 to endorse the amendment of By-laws and refresh the HUC Charter, followed by the second GA in September 2025													
SA1.1.b. Establish HUC as a legal entity													
SA1.1.c. Development of relevant legal documents													
SA1.2. Establish new governance structures, incl governance structure at ICIMOD; JTF's quarterly meetings to oversight implementation during the transition period		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SA1.3. Put in place the infrastructure for the autonomous operation of the HUC, incl staffing and office arrangements													
SA2. Co-develop with the HUC members a new strategy for the post-transition period													
SA2.1. Strategy development													
SA2.1.a. Setting the scene (review & learning), by August 2025													
SA2.1.b. Develop the new Strategy for 2028-2030, by August 2027													
SA3. Identify and secure sustainable (diverse) income streams													
SA3.1.a. Develop financial forecast and work up scenarios based on the most cost-effective model for the HUC													
SA3.1.b. Review and optimise expenditure by the JTF		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SA3.2. Establish annual membership fees, to be rolled out by May 2025													
SA3.3.a. Development of the HUC pipeline incl funding strategy by June 2025													
SA3.3.b. Design and establish a decision tree for funding opportunities by June 2025													
SA3.3.c. Identify the right entry points for specific funding opportunities													
SA4. Strengthen collaboration with ICIMOD across three USP areas identified													
SA4.1. Interdisciplinary Capacity Building													
SA4.1.a. Foster HUC-ICIMOD interaction								X	X	X	X	X	X
SA4.1.b. Co-design and jointly execute collaborative trainings and provide stand-alone trainings, including trainings on research design catering to ICIMOD staff		X	X										
SA4.1.c. E-learning and curriculum development													
SA4.1.d. Secondments and exchanges													
SA4.2. Climate and Sustainable Mountain Development Governance													
SA4.2.a. Foster HUC-ICIMOD interaction			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SA4.2.b. Strengthen HUC's role on the global stage													
SA4.2.c. Establish a roster of HUC experts to bring the latest scientific evidence, cutting-edge technologies, and innovative approaches to HKH high-level science-policy dialogues and global forums													
SA4.2.d. Access to current frameworks and practice, approaches and tools for climate governance													
SA4.3. Local-to-Global Partnerships													
SA4.3.a. Optimise country-based hubs and networks													
SA4.3.b. Consolidate HUC's inter-regional and global connections													
SA4.4. Renew HUC's Communication Strategy													
SA4.4.a. HUC website and portal													
SA4.4.b. HUC Communication Strategy													
SA4.4.c. HUC publications													
SA4.4.d. Identify and implement incentives			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

5. ICIMOD-HUC HOSTING ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Past Financial Trends 2018 – 2023

Between 2018 and 2023, the average annual expense of the HUC provided by the ICIMOD core budget was US$227,801. The total income during the same period from donor-earmarked projects is US$2,105,188 or US$300,741/per annum. In addition, from 2018 onward, HUC Associate members made cash contributions to the HUC activities at an average US$30,000/per annum. Full members from India, China, Pakistan, and Nepal made in-kind contributions by hosting HUC General Assembly meetings and other events. For each US$1 ICIMOD spent from its core budget for the HUC, the cash return-on-investment was from US$1.3 to US$ 1.5; the ratio would have been 1::2 if member in-kind contributions were accounted for in the financial reporting system.

5.2 Hosting Arrangements

In the PAC Communication on 6th December 2024, the following recommendations were made regarding the hosting arrangements:

- that HUC becomes a fully independent organization which can co-operate with ICIMOD in partnership in an equal and mutually beneficial relationship.
- that in order to achieve full legal independence, PAC proposes a phased transition, from the current institutional arrangement with full hosting by ICIMOD, to full independence, with the following steps: ICIMOD invites the HUC General Assembly - as the highest HUC governance body - at their next meeting in February[1] to make a decision on becoming legally independent.
- as the General Assembly takes the decision to become legally independent, PAC recommends that HUC will be provided support by ICIMOD during the transition process.

The transition process would consist of two phases:

A first short term phase until June 30, 2025, to carry out concrete steps towards independence. During this period, ICIMOD would continue its current hosting facilities. This would enable HUC to initiate the process of identifying and agreeing with an organization (university or other) to host HUC or initiate the legal registration process.

In late June 2025, the ICIMOD management will commission an independent reviewing team, which will be jointly selected and agreed by ICIMOD and HUC to ensure no conflict of interest, to assess the progress made towards independence of HUC. The PAC will provide guidance to this independent review. If the review concludes that there have been concrete steps taken in HUC's path to independence, ICIMOD will support this process further including the handing over of accountabilities and responsibilities. This will be the second phase of the transition. The terms of arrangement of the second phase will be decided by ICIMOD management which will also include the funding contribution.

Concrete steps by June 2025 implies, that another organization has agreed formally (through a letter of agreement) to host HUC during the transition and to take over the responsibilities and risks (with ICIMOD continuing to make funding contributions); or HUC has managed to make strong progress on legal registration and there is a documented progress that indicates certainty that legal registration will be completed within six months of the June date.

If the review concludes that there is no concrete progress made till the end of phase 1 i.e. June 30, 2025, HUC is not ready to exist as an independent organization. In order to not lose the strategic value of HUC, PAC recommends in that case, the integration of HUC as a network initiative in SG3, AAE. This will imply that HUC will no longer have external governance structures and reporting lines.

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[1] PAC recommendations are dated 6 December 2024. On 16 December 2024, the HUC Steering Committee decided to schedule the General Assembly Meeting in mid-April, having taken in thorough consideration of the demanding workload and work intensity of the Secretariat and cultural sensitivity of annual calendars of Hindu Kush Himalayan countries and outside of the region.

5.3 Office Space

Contingent on the success of the first phase of the transition (Jan-Jun 2025), the coordination office of the autonomous HUC – HUC Secretariat – will require a space separate from ICIMOD's programmatic and functional structure. To convey the message of intellectual openness and the member-based nature of the network, the space needs easy accessibility to the public (external visitors) and prominent visibility. A prominent signpost at the entrance along the pathway would be useful to signify to ICIMOD staff members and visitors a new, separate, and autonomous entity of the HUC.

6. RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGY

The following risks and risk mitigation strategies are specified based on the practical knowledge and know-how of the HUC Secretariat and its community while operating in the context of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region featured by political instability and socio-economic uncertainty. The risk mitigation strategy is also built on the assumption of uneven quality of membership across the HKH and outside of the region, especially in the post-COVID-19 situation.

Risks	Mitigation	Strategic Areas
Duration of the transition process, and its constituent actions, may take longer than the estimated timeframe with available resources.	• Introduce quarterly review e-meeting by HUC Steering Committee for oversight and progress review and make necessary adjustments; • Align the actions with key cycles in both organizations, HUC and ICIMOD, for synchronized deadlines for actions.	Cross-cutting
Lack of clarity and consistency and delayed recruitment timelines jeopardise transition.	• Full cooperation of PAC detailed recommendations dated 6 December 2024 and HUC SC's decisions regarding staffing of the Secretariat, dated 16 December 2024.	Cross-cutting
Transition to secure funding requires sustainable pipeline, which requires a full-time HUC Communication & Partnership Officer	• In its 16th December 2024, the HUC SC recommended internal transfer of staff member capable for the job to expedite staffing of the Secretariat.	SA 3
A separate legal entity registered in Nepal is not possible	• Explore alternative options for legal registration in other countries while keeping the co-location in ICIMOD for continuous presence in the HKH • If/when the motion toward registration in a country outside of the HKH has to take place, discussion with the ICIMOD's Board of Governors is required for accountability.	SA1
The proposal for amendments of the By-laws 2018 and the subsequent new strategy are not endorsed by HUC membership	• Refreshing the membership with effective communication and active engagement to enhance understanding among members • Engage members and stakeholders in country-wise and stakeholder-wise consultation throughout the strategy drafting process.	SA1, SA2
Lack of understanding of the transition by HUC members and stakeholders, resulting in	• Continuous dialogue with members and stakeholders to enhance shared understanding and secure ownership of the transition and the subsequent autonomy.	Cross-cutting

a decline in membership quality and activeness		
The unstable geopolitical situation in the region impacts countries' ability to engage and make financial contributions (membership fees) and to conduct activities of HUC country hubs	• Develop country-based risk statements and review them regularly. • Do not consider financial contributions (membership fees) from HKH countries as base income for HUC's sustainability. • Instead, focus on alternative sources of regular or one-time contributions from Associate Members, other member categories (such as Corporate Members, philanthropy donations, etc.) • Maintain a close exchange with HUC members on developing funding opportunities at all times in a rapidly evolving funding landscape inside and outside academia • ICIMOD facilitates access of the HUC Secretariat and leadership to the ICIMOD Support Group (ISG) with clarity on ICIMOD-HUC complementarities.	SA3
Lack of proper reporting and documentation and failure to showcase the success of the HUC Strategy 2018-2025, leading to a decline in ownership and incentives to stay engaged	• MEL implementation • Improve communication vehicles (website, social media channels) to boost members' ownership and engagement • Recognition of all forms of contributions (monetary, in-kind) as equivalent of membership fees.	SA2
Failure to prioritize HUC USPs (three areas identified) as the core identity of HUC, with or without ICIMOD	• Renew brand identity with expanded community of stakeholders • Actively articulate core values using all communication vehicles through actions such as promotional products)	SA2, SA4
Turn-over of staff members, leadership including SC, and stakeholders (TWG/CWG Co-Leads), leading to a loss of institutional memory and institutional capacity	• Putting a CRM (customer relationship management) system in place • Proper handover and induction process • Mentoring leadership succession • Institute a focal point at each HUC university member on a rotational basis	SA2
Lack of clarity of understanding of (trans) boundaries on the ICIMOD's collaborators' side	• Defined focal points across key services and research units • Clear and regular lines of communication understood and used by the involved staff/personnel from both organizations	SA4
Lack of understanding of ICIMOD ways of working, operations, and structures on the HUC's part	• ICIMOD Directorate and functional departments proactively communicate with the HUC Secretariat and leadership about its ways of working, operations, and structures. • ICIMOD leadership takes into due consideration of what works and what doesn't as detailed in the Independent Evaluation Report (Feb 2024) and internal survey	Cross-cutting

| | amongst ICIMOD's mid-to-senior staff on collaboration with HUC and concerns and proposed solutions by senior managers (such as SG3 Lead David Potter). | |
| | • Organize team-building exercises between HUC TWGs/CWGs Co-Leads and ICIMOD focal points, including Comms and functional departments as a pre/side event of the GAM in mid-April 2025. | |

7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Upon thorough consideration of the Second Working Draft of HUC Transition to Autonomy Roadmap dated 3 December 2024 with Annexures, PAC acknowledges that the HUC is overall highly valued as a platform that connects universities and researchers, that provides capacity building, skills, and training on topics relevant to sustainable mountain development and creates networks and linkages between researchers and academics within the HKH region and between the global north and south, as is also noted in the external evaluation. PAC appreciates all the good work done by HUC over the past seventeen years and acknowledges that ICIMOD has been hosting the HUC program from the outset in 2007, for a period of more than seventeen years. PAC strongly believes that it is high time for HUC to stand on its own feet and welcomes the fact that HUC has expressed its desire to become an independent legal entity. PAC supports the vision of a strong and flourishing independent Himalaya University Consortium, working closely in partnership with ICIMOD, to their mutual benefit and support, towards a resilient and prosperous Hindu Kush Himalaya Region. Furthermore, PAC noted that HUC was conceived as a university network consortium, which was intended to be independently hosted, preferably by one of the member universities, after an initial startup period hosted at ICIMOD. PAC appreciates the long-lasting support by ICIMOD to HUC, both financially as well as institutionally; and that PAC also noted that in spite of the achievements there was a lack of clarity in HUC's governance, roles and accountability, with as a consequence potential risk of duplication and lack of accountability. For these reasons, PAC considers it urgent that a decision on its independence is taken in the immediate future, in order for HUC to further evolve and become a truly thriving network consortium.

The ***HUC Transition Roadmap*** Position Paper defines what autonomy means for the HUC and the direct implications in all aspects of the management structure for ICIMOD. It initiates a fundamental shift from a programmatic structure where HUC was a part of ICIMOD's programmes to a partnership between two separate organizations with separate legal entities and distinctive identities. It lays out a concrete, feasible, and detailed time-bound workplan with clearly defined milestones against a 36-month timeline. The Paper charts a financial forecast with a feasible allocation by ICIMOD and a practical estimation for the transition to increased financial autonomy on the HUC's part.

Immediate next steps for the first six months of 2025 are to consolidate staffing of the HUC implement the urgent actions laid out in the Roadmap, and implement detailed recommdations of PAC. Subsequent medium-term actions involve consolidation of information across all Strategic Action Areas as the baseline for planning and execution of activities. Communication between the HUC and ICIMOD, between ICIMOD and its key stakeholders, and between HUC and its community is crucial in change management, aiming to secure and boost ownership and support across sectors and levels of engagement. A third-party observer group, entitled the HUC's Senior Advisory Group, consisting of at least three and no more than five members, to be nominated or self-nominated from the HUC and ICIMOD, and free of conflicts of intersts, will be established to provide mentoring, monitoring, and course correcting. With the Roadmap clearly laid out, the HUC community is empowered to take concrete and coordinated action to strengthen its network and build its sustainability. Likewise, ICIMOD's management and professional staff have clarity in understanding and action to foster collaboration between HUC and ICIMOD to optimise the synergy between the two organisational partners.

Even though the Transition Period is not without practical challenges, and the process to date has challenged the trust equity between the two organizations, strong confidence remains in the internal ability of both organizations torestore and rebuild their mutual trust to successfully navigate the course of action, improve communication, and

arrive at a desirable intended outcome, where there are clear co-benefits. HUC provides unique access to a lively, sustainable and internationally recognized academic network of universities, and continues to make distinctive and valuable contributions to setting the research and practice agenda by the Global South for impactful and meaningful climate action.

ANNEX 1: JTF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND (E-)MEETINGS

Following one of the key decisions at the hybrid meeting of the HUC Steering Committee in Kathmandu and online on 18 April 2024, the ICIMOD-HUC Joint Task Force on HUC's Management Structure and Secretariat's Hosting Arrangements was established, the Terms of Reference of which was jointly drafted, discussed, and agreed between ICIMOD and HUC leaderships. Two members were nominated by ICIMOD, and four members were solicited on a voluntary service basis from the HUC community, representing the HUC Steering Committee, member universities' leadership (Vice Chancellor), Thematic/Cross-Cutting Workgroups, with a balance between HKH members and associate members.

Members of the JTF:

1. Mr. Shekhar Ghimire, Director of Administration, Finance and Operations, ICIMOD, *Co-Chair*

2. Professor Dr. Rosalind Cornforth, Director, The Walker Institute, University of Reading, Steering Committee Member, Associate Members – North America/Europe, *Co-Chair*

3. Ms. Izabella Koziell, Deputy Director General, ICIMOD, *Member*

4. Professor Dr. Attaullah Shah, Vice Chancellor, Karakoram International University, Pakistan, *Member*

5. Dr. Wang Wenling, Assistant Professor, Institute of International Rivers and Eco-Security, Yunnan University, China, Co-Lead of Water Thematic Working Group, *Member*

6. Dr. Jakob F. Steiner, University of Graz, Austria, Co-Lead of High Mountain Data Crosscutting Work Group, *Member*

The JTF met five times, four online (dated 12 July, 15 August, 7 November, and 12 November) and one onsite (8-11 September 2024). At the in-person meeting in Kathmandu, 8-11 September, six JTF members jointly drafted the Position Paper through intensive and open deliberations. The discussions also benefited from comments and input from Dr. Carolina Adler, Executive Director, Mountain Research Initiative (MRI, University of Bern), member of ICIMOD's Programme Advisory Committee, and Dr. Ravi Khetarpal, Executive Director, APAARI, Bangkok.

Other participants:

1. Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, Director General, ICIMOD, HUC Steering Committee Chairperson

2. Dr. Chi H Truong (Shachi), HUC Secretariat Lead

3. Mr. Farid Ahmad, Chief, Evaluation and Learning, ICIMOD

4. Mr. Shreejan Kayestha, Head, Human Resources & Organisation Development. ICIMOD

5. Ms. Prerana Dhakhwa, Business Development and Resource Mobilisation Associate, ICIMOD

6. Mr. Udayan Mishra, Partnership Specialist, ICIMOD

7. Ms. Bhawana Syangden, Programme Officer, ICIMOD

8. Mr. Bijay Kumar Shrestha, Head, Budget and Finance, ICIMOD

9. Ms. Mona Sharma, Business Development & Partnerships Officer, ICIMOD

10. Ms. Kritika Sharma, Web Associate, ICIMOD

The JTF also interacted with:

1. Dr. Amina Maharjan, Senior Specialist Livelihoods & Migration, ICIMOD

2. Dr. David Thomas Potter, Strategic Group Lead, ICIMOD

3. Ms. Erica Udas, Ecosystem Specialist, ICIMOD

4. Ms. Feng Yuan, Communication Officer – China, ICIMOD

5. Dr. Mandira Shrestha, Senior Water Resources Specialist, ICIMOD

6. Ms. Tang Huiling, HUC – ICIMOD Intern, Yunnan University

7. Ms. Yue Pan, HUC – ICIMOD Intern, Yunnan University

Concept Note and Programme.pdf

The Working Draft of the HUC Transition to Autonomy Roadmap was submitted to the HUC Steering Committee for its review and discussion at the meeting on 19 September 2024. The HUC SC took two weeks to review the Working Draft. Upon receipt of a compilation of verbal and written comments from ICIMOD's Directorate and HUC SC, the JTF met online twice, 7 November and 12 November, for a debriefing of the implementation of action points between the end of September and early November and to discuss the revisions of the Roadmap.

Upon receipt of detailed PAC's recommendations dated 6 December 2024, at the third e-meeting of 2024, the SC decided to formally close the JTF. The final edits – incorporation of PAC's recommendations into the Roadmap – was coordinated by the Secretariat among Co-Chair, Prof Rosalind Cornforth, and HUC members of the JTF. The Roadmap was finalized on 20 December 2024.

ANNEX 2A: HUC MEMBERSHIP

According to the HUC Bylaws 2018, there are two types of Membership – institutional and individual. Institutional members are educational institutions (such as universities, colleges, and other higher education institutions) and knowledge organizations. Institutional membership is valid for 6 years. Individual members are called HUC fellows and HUC affiliates. HUC fellows are individual scholars and professionals who received HUC grants and/or completed a HUC capacity-building programmes. HUC affiliates are distinguished scholars and professionals who have a strong interest in and commitment to the HUC's mission and values. These include ICIMOD Mountain Chairs and Co-Leads of HUC Thematic and Cross-Cutting Workgroups and members of Task Forces.

Before October 2015, HUC members joined the Consortium by signing a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with ICIMOD. At the HUC Summit in Kathmandu on 29 October 2015, leaders of thirteen universities in the HKH and outside of the HKH signed the HUC Charter for the first time. From then onward, new members marked their joining the Consortium by signing the HUC Charter.

From 33 institutional members in early 2016 when the HUC Secretariat became an Emerging Regional Programme until the last quarter of 2024, institutional members tripled in number. Of the 107 institutional members of the HUC, 31 members joined after the most recent General Assembly Meeting in October 2018. Their membership is therefore valid; most of these recent memberships came about during COVID-19 mobility restrictions and thus, no Charter signing was held. The membership of 14 institutions whose Heads of Institution signed the HUC Charter in 2018 remains technically valid until 31 December 2024. In total, 46 institutional members (43%) have their membership valid at the time of writing this note. From 1 January 2025, the percentage of valid memberships will go down to 30%.

Approximately 350 individual members – fellows and affiliates -- have their membership valid (100%). A majority of individual members (appx 85%) is located in the Hindu Kush Himalayan countries. Among individual fellows and affiliates, about 20 Co-Leads of Thematic and Cross-cutting Workgroups (list below) are the change makers of the Consortium.

Table 2a.1. HUC Full members

Legend: Members in **bold** are with valid membership (6 years) as per HUC Bylaws 2018.

S.No	Institutions	City	Country	Year joined/ renewed
1	Eshraq Institute of Higher Education	Herat	Afghanistan	2016
2	Kabul University	Kabul	Afghanistan	2017, renewed
3	**Kabul Polytechnic University**	**Kabul**	**Afghanistan**	**2018**
4	Kandahar University	Kandahar	Afghanistan	2017
5	Nangarhar University	Nangarhar	Afghanistan	2017
6	**Laghman University**	**Mihtarlam**	**Afghanistan**	**2021**
7	**Syed Jamaluddin Afghani University**	**Yargul Bela & Salar Bagh**	**Afghanistan**	**2020**
8	**Bangladesh University of Engineer & Technology (BUET)**	**Dhaka**	**Bangladesh**	**2018**
9	East West University	Dhaka	Bangladesh	2017
10	**Jahangirnagar University**	**Dhaka**	**Bangladesh**	**2020**
11	Rajshahi University	Rajshahi	Bangladesh	2017
12	University of Chittagong	Chittagong	Bangladesh	2017, renewed
13	**Far Eastern International University**	**Dhaka**	**Bangladesh**	**2024**
14	**North South University**	**Dhaka**	**Bangladesh**	**2023**
15	**University of Dhaka**	**Dhaka**	**Bangladesh**	**2023**
16	Royal University of Bhutan	Thimphu	Bhutan	2016
17	Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment Research (UWICER)	Bumthang	Bhutan	2017, renewed

18	Institute for Mountain Hazards and Environment (IMHE)	Chengdu	China	2015
19	Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research (IGSNRR)	Beijing	China	2015
20	Kunming Institute of Botany (KIB)	Kunming	China	before 2015
21	Lanzhou University (LZU)	Lanzhou	China	2015
22	Northwest University	Xi'an city	China	2017
23	Qinghai Normal University	Xining	China	2017
24	Sichuan University (SCU)	Chengdu	China	2016
25	Southwest Forestry University (SWFU)	Kunming	China	2017
26	**Southwest Minzu University**	**Chengdu**	**China**	**2021**
27	UNIDO International Solar Energy Centre for Technological Promotion and Transfer	Belgium	China	2015
28	**Wuhan University**	**Hubei**	**China**	**2020**
29	Xinjian Institute of Ecology and Geography	Urumqi	China	2016
30	Yunnan Agricultural University (YAU)	Kunming	China	2016
31	**Yunnan Minzu University**	**Kunming**	**China**	**2018**
32	**Yunnan University**	**Kunming**	**China**	**2018**
33	**Leshan Normal University**	**Leshan**	**China**	**2020**
34	**Sichuan University of Agricultural Science**	**Chengdu**	**China**	**2020**
35	**Chongqing Normal University**	**Chongqing**	**China**	**2023**
36	**A P Goyal Shimla University**	**Shimla**	**India**	**2018**

37	**Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology & the Environment (ATREE)**	**Bangalore**	**India**	**2018**
38	C S K Himachal Pradesh Agricultural University	Palampur, HP	India	2015
39	Forest Research Institute (FRI)	Dehradun	India	2016
40	G B Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development	Almorah, HP	India	2016
41	**G B Pant University of Agriculture & Technology**	**Pantnagar, UK**	**India**	**2020**
42	H N B Garhwal University	Garhwal, UK	India	before 2015
43	**Jawaharlal Nehru University**	**New Delhi**	**India**	**2020**
44	Kashmir University	Srinagar	India	before 2015
45	**Kumaun University**	**Nainital**	**India**	**2018**
46	**Martin Luther Christian University**	**Meghalaya**	**India**	**2020**
47	**Mizoram University**	**Mizoram**	**India**	**2018**
48	National Institute of Hydrology-Roorkee (NIH)	Roorkee	India	before 2015
49	Shri Guru Ram Rai University (SGRR University)	Dehradun	India	2017
50	Shoolini University of Biotechnology and Management Sciences	Sholan, HP	India	2015
51	Sikkim University	Gangtok	India	before 2015
52	SKUAST Agriculture University	Jammu	India	before 2015
53	South Asian University	New Delhi	India	2017
54	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)	Mumbai	India	2015
55	TERI University	New Delhi	India	2016

56	Wildlife Institute of India (WII)	Dehradun	India	2016
57	**Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee**	**Roorkee**	**India**	**2021**
58	**Indian Institute of Technology Mandi**	**Mandi, Himachal Pradesh**	**India**	**2021**
59	**Himalaya Institute of Alternative**	**Ladhak**	**India**	**2021**
60	**Graphic Era Hill University**	**Dehradun**	**India**	**2022**
61	**University of Mandalay**	**Mandalay**	**Myanmar**	**2018**
62	Yangon University	Yangon	Myanmar	2016
63	Yezin Agricultural University (YAU)	Nay pyi Taw	Myanmar	2016
64	**Myitkyina University**	**Myitkyna**	**Myanmar**	**2020**
65	**Mandalay Technological University**	**Mandalay**	**Myanmar**	**2020**
66	**Monywa University of Economics**	**Monywa**	**Myanmar**	**2021**
67	Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU)	Chitwan	Nepal	2017
68	**Far Western University**	**Kanchanpur**	**Nepal**	**2018**
69	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)	Kathmandu	Nepal	2015
70	Kathmandu University (KU)	Dhulikhel	Nepal	before 2015
71	**Nepal Open University**	**Kumaripati**	**Nepal**	**2020**
72	Pokhara University	Pokhara	Nepal	before 2015
73	Tribhuvan University (TU)	Kirtipur	Nepal	before 2015
74	Agriculture University Peshawar	Peshawar	Pakistan	2017, renewed
75	COMSATS Institute for Information Technology	Abbottabad	Pakistan	2015

76	**Ipir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi**	**Punjab**	**Pakistan**	**2020**
77	**Karakorum International University (KIU)**	**Gilgit**	**Pakistan**	**2015, renewed 2024**
78	**PARC Institute of Advanced Studies in Agriculture (PIASA)**	**Islamabad**	**Pakistan**	**2018**
79	Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University	Nawabshah	Pakistan	2015
80	**University of Chitral**	**Chitral**	**Pakistan**	**2018**
81	**University of Peshawar**	**Peshawar**	**Pakistan**	**2018**
82	University of Swat	Swat	Pakistan	before 2015
83	**Abdul Wali Khan University - Mardan (AWKUM)**	**Mardan, KP**	**Pakistan**	**2021**
84	**University of Baltistan**	**Skardu**	**Pakistan**	**2021**
85	**Institute of Business Administration Karachi (IBA Karachi)**	**Karachi**	**Pakistan**	**2023**
86	**Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)**	**Lahore**	**Pakistan**	**2023**

Table 2a.2. HUC Associate members

Legend: Members in **bold** are with valid membership (6 years) as per HUC Bylaws 2018.

S.No	Institutions	City	Country	Year joined/renewed
1	**Western Sydney University**	**Sydney**	**Australia**	**2018**
2	Department of Geoinformatics, University of Salzburg (Z_GIS)	Salzburg	Austria	before 2015
3	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, BOKU	Vienna	Austria	2017
4	**Institute for Global Environmental Strategies**	**Kanagawa**	**Japan**	**2020**
5	**Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies (ASAFAS), Kyoto University**	**Kyoto**	**Japan**	**2023**

6	Mongolia International University	Ulaanbaatar	Mongolia	before 2015
7	International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC)	Enschede	Netherlands	before 2015
8	International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden (IIAS)	Leiden	Netherlands	2017
9	Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB)	Ås in Akershus	Norway	2015
10	The Norwegian University of Science & Technology (NTNU)	Trondheim	Norway	2020
11	Centre for Development and Environment (CDE, University of Bern)	Bern	Switzerland	2017
12	University of Central Asia (UCA)	Khorog	Tajikistan & Kyrgyzstan	2015
13	Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)	Bangkok	Thailand	2015
14	University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)	Scotland	UK	before 2015
15	Walker Institute, University of Reading	Reading	UK	2017
16	**University of Bristol**	**Bristol**	**UK**	**2020**
17	India China Institute at The New School	New York	USA	2016
18	University of Arizona	Arizona	USA	2017
19	University of Colorado, Boulder	Boulder	USA	before 2015
20	Yale Himalayan Initiative	Connecticut	USA	2017
21	**The College of William and Mary**	**Virginia**	**USA**	**2024**

Table 2a.3. Co-Leads of Thematic and Cross-cutting Workgroups

Samples of outputs are at the bottom of the list

Sq. No	Title of TWG/ CCW	Prefix/ Title	Full Name	Gender	City, Country	Position	University/ Institution	Notes
1	Mountain Agriculture TWG	Dr.	Chubbamenla Jamir	F	Delhi, India	Project Director	Climate Studies and Knowledge Solutions Center, Department of Science and Technology, Government of Nagaland, India	The first TWG, est since 2017, constantly active and highly productive, with good application/implication for policy. Recently produced three Policy Briefs for Bhutan, Northeast India, and Nepal on Millets (FAO International Year of Millets). Grady contributed a small grant from U Reading to TWG activity.
2		Dr.	Grady Walker	M	Reading, the United Kingdom	Visiting Research Fellow, School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science	The Walker Institute, University of Reading	ICIMOD's GRAPE syncs very well with this TWG.
3	Mountain Heritage and Tourism TWG	Dr., Associate Professor	Bhawna Bali	F	Delhi, India	Ambedkar University Delhi	School of Global Affairs	Highly innovative and collaborative, working closely with Mt Agriculture TWG. Two Co-Leads from India and Pakistan work in sync; rare collaboration. Bringing in heritage, a new dimension in climate change-induced DRR.

This TWG contributes directly to ICIMOD's work on Tourism (Anu K Lama, SG2). |
| 4 | | Dr. Associate Professor | Adnan Dogar | M | Muree, Pakistan | Chair, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management | Kohsar University Murree | |

5		Dr.	Hayley Saul	F	York, UK	Senior Research Fellow, Deputy Director for the Heritage for Global Challenges Research Center	York University	
6	Cryosphere and Society TWG	Dr. Professor	Guy Howard	M	Bristol, UK	Director, Cabot Institute, Global Challenges Research Chair in Environmental and Infrastructure Resilience	Bristol University	U Bristol brought in the LaharFlow modelling tool and adapted it with HKH conditions to analyse debris flow. The TWG made the first attempt to bring Society into the same equation, together with Cryosphere. Another cluster within C&S TWG (Bremen U and Innsbruck U) offered training on Open Glacier Mapping Modelling, an open geospatial tool freely accessible.
7		Dr. Associate Professor	Muhammad Shafique	M	Peshawar, Pakistan	Director, GSAG Lab, National Centre of Excellence in Geology	University of Peshawar	ICIMOD's Cryosphere unit has not found ways to uptake the innovations offered by HUC community.
8	Water	Dr. Professor	Christopher A. Scott	M	Philadelphia, USA	ICIMOD Mountain Chair 2017-2019, Goddard Chair, Director	Dept of Ecosystem Science and Management, Pennsylvania State University	One of the earliest operational TWGs, initiated by SAWI Phase II WB grant. Wenling (and Biraj, see below) were two fellows of the SAWI-II Water Leadership programme and stayed on to build HUC community. Chris contributed a small

								grant from MRI and water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus. Western Sydney University brought a small grant to support this Water Group.
						Americas Water-Energy-Food Nexus Alliance		
9		Dr. Assistant Professor	Wenling Wang	F	Kunming, China		Institute for International Rivers and Eco-Security, Yunnan University	
10		Dr. Professor	Arun Kansal	M	Delhi, India	Dean, Academics	TERI School of Advanced Studies	
11	Energy	Dr. Associate Professor	Biraj Singh Thapa	M	Kathmandu, Nepal	Team Lead, Green Hydrogen Lab	Kathmandu University	Biraj used to be part of Water TWG, eventually spinning off to lead Energy TWG, bringing in 6-year NOHRED-II project, in collaboration with NTNU, Wuhan U, and other universities.
12	DRR & Resilience Curriculum Cluster	Dr. Associate Professor	Indrajit Pal	M	Bangkok, Thailand	Chair, Dept Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Management	AIT	One of the highly productive TWGs, focusing on curriculum building, has recently published an edited volume.
13		Dr. Professor	Jacquleen Joseph	F	Mumbai, India	Dean, Jamsetsji Tata School of Disaster Studies	TATA Institute of Social Sciences	
14	Environmental Humanities	Dr. Professor	Dan Smyer Yu	M	Kunming, China	Outgoing TWG Co-Lead	Yunnan University	The most ground-breaking and prolific TWG of the HUC. It placed the HKH firmly on the global map in the environmental humanities field (not ICIMOD's strength). Three edited volumes engaging early/ mid-career, female, and indigenous scholars
15		Dr. Professor	Jelle J P Wouters	M	Paro, Bhutan	Director, Center for Himalayan Environmenta	Royal Thimphu College, RUB	

					l Humanities, Incoming TWG Co-Lead		and artists. Sent two Bhutanese to Oxford and Cambridge and a Sikkimese Lepcha to Harvard, all female.
16		Dr. Professor	Joy L K Pachuau	F	New Delhi, India	Centre for Historical Studies	Jawaharlal Nehru University, India	More in-house communications are required to raise ICIMOD's awareness of the value additions of this TWG.
17	Education for Sustainable Mountain Futures Cross-Cutting Workgroup	Dr. Professor	Padma Sarangapani; C/O Prof Rekha Pappu	F; F	Mumbai, India	Chairperson, Centre for Excellence in Teacher Education	TATA Institute of Social Sciences	Another ground-breaking group, bringing mountain voices to the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) global community. Active in WCRP My Climate Risk Education Workgroup and its Colonialism and Climate Change/Climate Science series. More in-house communications are required to increase ICIMOD's awareness of the value this CWG brings regarding youths, education, climate literacy, and climate justice.
18		Dr. Associate Professor	Tayyaba Tamim	F	Lahore, Pakistan	Director Academics, Syed Ahsan and Syed Maratib Ali School of Education	Lahore University of Management Science	
19		Dr. Professor	Ganga Gautam	M	Kathmandu, Nepal	former Director of the Open Education Center	Tribhuvan University	
20		Dr. Professor	Tashi Gyeltshen	M	Sherubste, Bhutan		Sherubste College of Education	
21		Dr.	Isabelle Providoli	F	Bern, Switzerland	Centre for Development and Environment	University of Bern	

22	Indigenous Local Knowledge and Locally-led Adaptation Cross-cutting Workgroup	Dr.	Binaya Raj Shivakoti	M	Kanagawa, Japan	Senior Adaptation and Water Specialist	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies	Upcoming cross-cutting workshop, in planning phase. Highly innovative; brought in local radios/broadcasters in local languages to climate change communication, the only operational contact with Japan-based scholarship, APN and AP-PLAT.
23	High Mountain Data Cross-Cutting Workgroup	Dr.	Jakob Frederick Steiner	M	Austria	Fellow, Institute of Geography and Regional Science	University of Graz	Jakob has been a member of Cryosphere and Society TWG and recently spun off to establish cross-cutting group, paving the way for a broad-base, bottom-up/participatory, multil/transdisciplinary future-fit approach in data co-production and governance. Completed an MRI grant called HiRISK.
24	Rangelands	Dr. Associate Professor	Ghulam Raza	M	Pakistan	Head, Department of Natural Resource Management	University of Baltistan, Skardu	One two newest TWGs that was established in 2024, hosted by Lanzhou University, gathering scholars in animal science and rangeland management from Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Works closely with SG2 AA-D Rangelands from the conceptualizing phase onward.
25		Dr. Professor	Ruijun Long	M	China		Lanzhou University, Lanzhou	
26	Sustainable Mountain Settlement	Dr. Assistant Professor	Wenling Wang	F	China	Institute of International Rivers and Eco-securities	Yunnan University, Kunming	One of two newest TWGs, established in 2024, hosted by Yunnan University, gathering scholars in urban planning, natural resource management, architecture, etc. from Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Myanmar and Pakistan. Works closely with SG2 AA-C Sustainable Mountain Settlement from conceptualizing phase onward.
27		Dr. Professor	Zain Ul Abedin	M	Pakistan	Former Dean, Faculty of Architecture and Design; Vice President Museums Association of	COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI)	

					Pakistan (MAP)		
28		Dr. Professor	Sangeetha Singh	F	Nepal	Institute of Engineering, Pulchowk; Former Member of Planning Commission, Government of Nepal	Tribhuvan University	

Publications by Himalayan Environmental Humanities TWG

Yu, D. S. and E. de Maaker (Eds.). 2021. *Environmental Humanities in the New Himalayas: Symbiotic Indigeneity, Commoning, Sustainability.* London & New York: Routledge. READ HERE

Yu, D. S. and J. J. P Wouters (Eds.). 2023. *Storying Multipolar Climes of the Himalaya, Andes and Arctic: Anthropocenic Climate and Shapeshifting Water Lifeworlds.* London & New York: Earthscan from Routledge. READ HERE

Policy briefs by Mountain Agriculture TWG

Rai, B. B., U. Yangchen, and T. Tobgay. 2023. "Pathways to enhance millet production and consumption in Bhutan." The Himalayan University Consortium and the University of Reading. READ HERE

Shrestha, R. K., B. K. Joshi, D. Gauchan, D. B. Kathayat, G. C. Arun, S. Marahatta, N. Pudasiani, and O. Sharma. 2023. "Revitalising millets for rural transformation in Nepal." The Himalayan University Consortium and the University of Reading. READ HERE

Chowdhury, A. M., M. Kikon, R. Jagannath, P. K. Swain, C. Jamir, A. Dogar, H. Saul. 2023. "Revitalising millets in Northest India: A healthy choice." The Himalayan University Consortium and the University of Reading. READ HERE

Publications by High Mountain Data CWG

Reports, many of which are in local languages available at https://hirisk.org/ During the past three months since Sep 2024, the CWG produced reports catering to government stakeholders and agencies in Tajikistan, Pakistan, India and Bhutan that are not published for reasons of sensitivity. The portal has a repository that includes publications from HUC colleagues (https://hirisk.org/publications_academic/)

Chapter on Mountain Risk Management: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780443132155000036

Strategy Paper for global precipitation monitoring and modelling, from which follows capacity building in the region funded the next decade: https://journals.ametsoc.org/view/journals/bams/aop/BAMS-D-23-0242.1/BAMS-D-23-0242.1.xml

Strategy paper for mountain monitoring (where Langtang is also mentioned as a key site, see cover below as it will be launched only next week), we also continue to publish on Langtang naturally with HUC affil, with partners in the UK and Switzerland (https://www.nature.com/articles/s43247-024-01624-z , https://egusphere.copernicus.org/preprints/2024/egusphere-2024-2805/).

Himalayan Lake Monitoring Strategy, currently in review, led by Chinese Academy of Sciences with Universities in UK, Switzerland, US and regional partners from all RMCs, incl HUC as the regional balance.

Currently co-leading baseline publications on socio-economic variables for mountain studies (MRI) and elevation-dependent climate change (https://agu.confex.com/agu/agu24/meetingapp.cgi/Paper/1695397).

The European Union, the World Drought Atlas, in which HUC CWG contributed the chapter on the HKH: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9da1cb20-b090-11ef-acb1-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

White paper for mountain monitoring with MRI today, where Langtang in Nepal is one of the examples: https://boris-portal.unibe.ch/entities/publication/2d2f1019-cb1d-4bfc-9949-a35bc3c4e16b

ANNEX 2B: HUC LEADERSHIP

List of HUC Steering Committee Members as of November 2024

A HUC Steering Committee member serves a 3-year term, renewable once, for a maximum of 6 consecutive years.

All current SC members are serving within their valid term duration, with proper nomination records.

Sq No.	Country/ Area	Name (Gender), *Institutional Affiliation*	Year of joining the first term	Remarks
1	Afghanistan	**Habibullah Habib** (M), *Kabul University*	2020	Currently serving the second term, ending 2025, a new SCM is expected to join in 2026.
2	Bangladesh	**Rezaur Rahman** (M), *Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology* (BUET)	2020	Requested to seek nomination for new SCM starting 2025.
		Sara Nowreen (F), *BUET*	Incoming, commencing 2025	Endorsed by SC by e-voting.
3	Bhutan	**Nidup Dorji** (M), *Royal University of Bhutan*	2020	Currently serving the second term, ending 2025, a new SCM is expected to join in 2026.
4	China	**Peng Liu** (M), *Yunan University*	2024	Currently serving the first year of the first term, ending 2026; subject to renewal for a second term, ending 2029.
5	Nepal	**Tri Ratna Bajracharya** (M), *Tribhuvan University*	2022	Currently serving the third year of the first term. At SC meeting in Kathmandu, 18 April 2024, indicated a willingness to renew for the second term, ending 2027.
6	Myanmar	**Nang Hseng Hom** (F), *Yenzin Agricultural University*	2020	Currently serving the second term, ending 2025.
7	Pakistan	**Tahira Yasmin** (F), *Pakistan Agriculture Research Council*	2021	Currently serving the first year of the second term, requesting to step down due to structural change at home institution at SC meeting in Kathmandu, 18 April 2024 (virtual participation)
		Syed Habib Ali Bokhari (M), *Kohsar University Murree*	Incoming, commencing 2025	Endorsed by SC e-voting.
8	Asia/ Pacific	**Nichole Georgeou** (F), *Western Sydney University*	2021	Currently serving the first year of the second term, ending 2026.
9	Europe/ America	**Rosalind Cornforth** (F),	2021	Currently serving the first year of the second term, ending 2026.

		The Walker Institute, University of Reading	
10	ICIMOD	**Pema Gyamtsho** (M), *ICIMOD*	Chair of SCM as per HUC Bylaws 2018, requested to step down at the SC e-meeting on 19 September 2024. An Acting Chair was expected to join on 1 November 2024 until the General Assembly.
	HKH	**Attaullah Shah** (M) *Karakoram International University*	Acting Chair of the HUC Steering Committee, joined since 1 November 2024
11	HUC Secretariat	**Chi Huyen (Shachi) Truong** (F)	ex-officio, Member Secretary

Description of the HUC Steering Committee

Excerpt from HUC Bylaws 2018

The Steering Committee is the highest governing body of the HUC and has general responsibility for HUC's development and for its main priorities.

The Steering Committee consists of elected individuals, numbering at least five and not more than eleven, including one representative from each of the eight HKH countries and two representatives from non-HKH members.

Each member of the Steering Committee serves a three-year term, renewable once, based on his/her performance and upon approval by members at the General Assembly Meeting.

Responsibilities of the Steering Committee

The SC develops and recommends the strategic plan and major initiatives for the Consortium, and oversees the implementation of the strategic goals set by the General Assembly Meeting and the work of the focused project teams or committees. The SC develops and directs the annual work plan of the Consortium, including a clear timeframe for starting and completing each project undertaken by the teams or committees. The SC shall provide guidance and approve proposals, documents on procedures and action plans prepared by the Secretariat and task forces.

The SC has the authority and primary responsibility for:
- strategic planning and setting institutional priorities;
- organizational development and institutional accountability, including making recommendations on membership fees and other charges;
- recommendation of new members to General Assembly for approval;
- fundraising, finances, and budgeting for the Consortium's activities;
- public and external relations;
- drafting recommendations for amendments of HUC Bylaws and the HUC Charter.

Election of the Steering Committee

The members of the SC are elected by the General Assembly from slates of nominees collected by the Secretariat. All members of the General Assembly are eligible to nominate individuals to serve as SC member. Members' representatives in an HKH country may establish, through consensus, a procedure to nominate a country representative through the country chapter. Women and people of socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are strongly encouraged to be nominated for the SC.

The Director General of the International Centre of Integrated Mountain Development serves as the Chair of the Steering Committee, while the ICIMOD Deputy Director General represents the Chair during his/her unavailability. The Lead of the Secretariat serves as the Member Secretary of the Steering Committee.

Nominees to the SC should have the following qualifications:
- commitment to the mission and values of the HUC;
- willingness to devote time and energy to the HUC;
- professional experience in higher education and/or public service;
- high credibility with key HUC constituencies;
- demonstrated judgment;
- freedom from conflicts of interest;
- professionalism and personal integrity.

HUC Governance chart
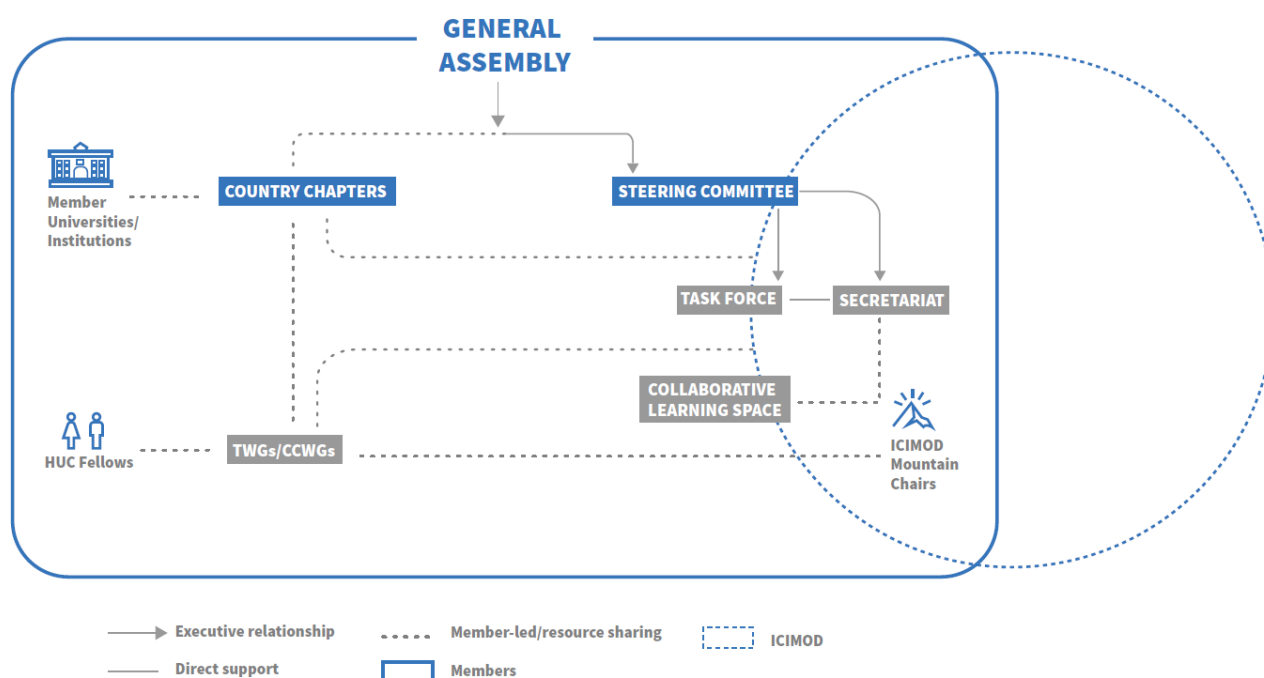
ANNEX 3. HUC'S GLOBAL PARTNERS IN BUSINESS-AS-USUAL OPERATION

The HUC is a regional and global network, with members and fellows spreading across 17 time zones. In addition to 21 associate members, the HUC has built connections and linkages with similar consortia and alliances such as the UArctic, a network of almost 200 university members in/about 8 Arctic countries, the Conservation and Sustainability Consortium of Academic Institutions (CASCADE, hosted by Newcastle University), International Universities Climate Alliance (IUCA, hosted by the University of New South Wales), Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research, and the Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI). Through interaction with these networks and consortia, the HUC shares with like-minded partners its experience in partnership building and leadership nurturing. HUC's participatory, bottom-up, member-led and resource-sharing mode of operation has become a good practice in building communities of practice in the Global South. The recognition of HUC's important contributions to multiscale, multi-actor, and socio-economically embedded climate governance amongst global partners is demonstrated in the fact that the HUC hosts the Himalayan Hub of the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) 'My Climate Risk' Lighthouse Activity. The Secretariat Lead, Dr. Chi Huyen (Shachi) Truong, was selected, through open global competition, to serve as a member of the Informal Advisory Group on Technical and Scientific Cooperation of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). Through the HUC network, members of the HUC community spoke at various COPs and global key events, as demonstrated in the 2023 HUC Story cited below.

Over the past three years, however, some aspects of the HUC global partnerships have faced difficulty due to a lack of clarity in the new organizational structure at ICIMOD. The draft MoU with the UArctic has been pending for more than 2 years without being approved for renewal, and key partner such as the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Polar Research (NPV) hesitates to propose an institutional partnership agreement to establish a collaboration between HUC Academy and the NPV International Summer School in Svalbard. Existing MoUs such as the tripartite MoU between Aga Khan Foundation, University of Central Asia, and ICIMOD, MoU between ICIMOD and SAARC University, between ICIMOD and United Nation University Bonn remain largely inactive. In a similar manner, Japan-based partners in the circle of Asia Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Information Platform (AP-PLAT) feel unsure about going forward in the collaboration with HUC without clear communication from ICIMOD.

From the mountains to the world: the Himalayan University Consortium embodies inclusiveness and an HKH-to-global agenda

Beyond the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, researchers, practitioners and communities across the globe are calling urgent attention to further severe crises, including the humanitarian crisis, and the data/knowledge/science crisis.

In Afghanistan, by the end of 2023, 4.2 million people were displaced as a result of conflict and violence and 1.5 million as a result of disasters – including earthquakes and droughts – according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Many of the displaced people live in refugee camps, where they face disease, food insecurity, poverty and unsafe conditions.

Sameera Noori, Deputy Director of Citizens Organization for Advocacy and Resilience (COAR), a humanitarian assistance organisation in Afghanistan, has been working to document the conditions of displaced people, including those living in refugee tents, during the climate and other crises.

As a HUC alumnus, in 2023 Sameera attended the World Climate Research Programme's Open Science Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, where she presented this work, with a talk entitled 'Silver lining in a cascading crisis: Interdisciplinary knowledge production for impactful climate science in Afghanistan'. The presentation aimed to bring to the attention of a global audience the specific multiple crises happening in the country, at the intersection of climate change, conflict and large-scale displacement.

Sameera's talk included details of her work on the collaborative stakeholder survey, which involved interviews with local communities, environmental experts and government officials. This landmark survey provided detailed insights into how rising temperatures and erratic weather patterns compound resource scarcity, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Sameera's work and attendance at the conference showcased her major contribution to humanitarian work and brought to light the strength of the HUC network and capacity-strengthening opportunities.

ANNEX 4A: SURVEY ON AREAS OF ICIMOD-HUC COLLABORATION

In early September 2024, the JTF launched a survey on potential areas of collaboration between the HUC community and ICIMOD SG units. The survey consisted of 5 questions and was circulated to about 120 professionals in the Strategic Groups and Communication unit in ICIMOD. There were 40 responses (33%). About half of the respondents (52.%) identified themselves as mid-career professionals and 12% as early-career professionals. One-third of the respondents were Intervention Managers. With this distribution of respondents in their career stages and managerial positions, the survey captured the opinions of the mid-to-senior management clusters in ICIMOD. Less than ten respondents (8) were comfortable enough to give their names, and more women (5) than men (3) gave their names in their responses.

Network and alliances and youth engagement are the two overlapping **competencies** between the HUC and ICIMOD that most respondents think the two organizations should collaborate (75% and 67.5% respectively). This is followed by Livelihoods and socioeconomic processes (60%), Water resource and cryosphere (57.%), Environmental and mountain governance (55%), Ecosystem (52.5%) and Policy translation and science-policy dialogue (52.5%). However, only 47.5% respondents think the two organizations should collaborate on Mountain hazards and DRR aspects.

Regarding the competencies HUC has but ICIMOD does not, 97.5% of respondents think ICIMOD should benefit from HUC's expertise in education and e-learning, but only 32.5% and 15% of respondents think the organization should make use of HUC expertise in Humanities and the arts and Public health respectively.

On the open-ended question ***What other thematic areas do you think ICIMOD and HUC could explore for collaboration to assist in delivering ICIMOD-specific outcomes?*** respondent provide a wide range of suggestions. The majority of suggestions may fall onto Livelihoods and socio-economic processes such as mountain economy and resilient mountain-specific solutions; circular economics with a focus on waste, water, and sanitation; resilient towns/cities from disasters and hazards; mountain agriculture and forestry focusing on resilience solutions; digital innovation in mountain economy; investments; ecosystems assessments, environmental and ecosystems valuation; research on vegetation and water yield (ecohydrology); human mobility and climate change; climate actions focusing on adaptation and resilience building; renewable energy; tourism; hydropower. Some respondents highlighted the need for more inclusive and sustainable mountain development; social inclusion, with targeted capacity building for underserved areas, Indigenous and Dalit women and youths. Other thematic areas suggested are air quality; transboundary water governance; innovation and technology transfer, digital platforms; culture and traditions; global processes of Multilateral Environment Agreements, diplomacy, and international relations. A good number of responses draw attention to approaches and methodologies, such as cross-cutting and interdisciplinary themes; nexus between different thematic areas such as biodiversity-climate change-water-livelihoods; and citizen science, while others emphasized the need for talent development; HKH-focused curricula; knowledge management and communication; data publishing and sharing; integration of mountain topics into education systems; and regional network of youth for future leadership.

Table 4a.1 describes the frequency of responses regarding the institutional incentives to boost ICIMOD's engagement of the HUC. Almost 68% of respondents place joint planning between HUC and ICIMOD's units as the most important institutional incentive. An equal percentage of respondents regard career development opportunities offered by the HUC members as an important incentive for ICIMOD early/mid-career professionals. Allocating appropriate staff time, featuring ICIMOD-HUC collaboration in institutional reporting and external profiling, and providing matching funds for collaborative activities are considered as relevant incentives. However, only 18% of respondents recognise the importance of the incorporation of HUC-specific indicators in institutional planning and reporting as relevant.

Incentives	Frequency	Percentage
Making joint planning with HUC mandatory for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities in relevant topics	23	67.65%

Utilizing the opportunities for career development offered by HUC members for ICIMOD's early/ mid-career professionals	23	67.65%
Allocating appropriate staff time for component leads, intervention managers, and professionals for joint planning and co-delivering with the HUC	20	58.82%
Featuring ICIMOD-HUC collaborations in institutional reports and regional and international profiling	19	55.88%
Providing matching fund from ICIMOD's core allocated to the HUC or earmarked by donors for the HUC and resources mobilised by the HUC TWGs for ICIMOD units to scale up at the regional level	17	50%
Incorporating the HUC-specific indicators across the institution through planning and reporting	6	17.65%
Other	3	8.82%

Table 4a.1. Institutional incentives for ICIMOD-HUC collaboration

Table 4a.2 summarizes respondents' preferences about specific ways for collaboration between ICIMOD and HUC. Co-generation of knowledge and evidence through collaborative research is considered by 79% of respondents as the most important way of collaboration, followed by the joint development of mountain-focused, HKH-specific curricula, joint capacity-building programmes and e-learning, and joint execution of young professional placement programme (73.5% each). However, only 35% of respondents emphasise regional and global joint messaging and co-branding.

Ways of collaboration	Frequency	Percentage
Co-generate knowledge or evidence through collaborative scientific research	27	79.41%
Jointly develop mountain-focused, HKH-specific curricula	25	73.53%
Jointly conduct capacity-building programmes and e-learning	25	73.53%
Jointly coordinate young professional placement programmes at ICIMOD strategic partners in regional member countries with value additions such as leadership training	25	73.53%
Jointly produce thematic assessments	23	67.65%
Host visiting scholars (interns, graduate students, post-doc) from HUC members at ICIMOD units	23	67.65%
Co-design solutions and jointly facilitate climate decision-making and action	20	58.82%
Jointly craft public messaging and co-branding in the HKH and on the global stage	12	35.29%
Other	1	2.94%

Table 4a.2. Specific ways of collaboration between ICIMOD and HUC

In response to the open-ended question on ***specific ways to improve the in-house operation of the HUC in the context of being hosted by ICIMOD,*** respondents' suggestions can be grouped into three areas: planning and coordination; Secretariat staffing and efficiency; and communication. Many respondents stress the importance of having an institutional plan to engage the HUC, with a clear division of duty and purpose of deliverables, and the incorporation of HUC-specific indicators in ICIMOD reporting and planning. Joint planning between HUC and SG units is seen as a must for efficient and successful collaboration: "result-oriented planning must involve AA coordinators and intervention managers instead of individual team members," appointing "HUC focal points in each Action Area,"

"planning must avoid and eliminate duplications and ad-hoc engagements," and it must be based on "value-addition to ICIMOD and closely match regional prioritization." Respondents proposed joint yearly and biannual planning meetings and regular (quarterly) progress updates. A respondent proposes an overhaul of the HUC Secretariat, to be staffed with highly competent staff, and another suggests the Secretariat is to be headed by a scholar with respected academic records.

Regarding **internal communication**, a respondent highlights "trust issues [need] to be resolved between the Secretariat and ICIMOD Directorate." Some respondents suggest starting by clarifying "the role of the HUC to all staff," explaining "what HUC is and what it does," "clarifying HUC's mandates, scope, and strengths," "who are HUC's partners and what is the goal to have those partners," "the relationship [between HUC and ICIMOD] and working modality." Other respondents emphasise the necessity of transparency and timeliness of communication, the importance of more communication channels and visibility of HUC across ICIMOD, and advocacy for HUC in-house. Respondents suggest that HUC "focus on a few highly important topics and communicate that well with ICIMOD professionals." A respondent suggests that communication needs to be from ICIMOD's Deputy Director General regarding three Whats – "What is HUC doing? What do you need from HUC? And What is the HUC's offer to ICIMOD?"

To increase the efficiency of coordination as well as in-house visibility, many respondents propose the HUC Secretariat to be proactive instead of reactive, conduct frequent in-person meetings to share the work of HUC TWGs/CWGs beyond events, organise brown-bag talks by HUC members and affiliates, and a HUC periodic newsletter would be beneficial to promote in-house collaboration.

Regarding communication with **external partners in and outside of the HKH region and co-branding**, some respondents think "HUC should have its own branding," "HUC should claim that it is a separate entity," that HUC should have "its independent communication" and "a designated Communication Officer is needed." Other respondents, however, think that while "HUC can communicate with member universities, it is not HUC's mandate to communicate with [ICIMOD's] external partners in RMCs." Some suggest "developing a joint communication strategy," "hosting co-branded events, workshops, and conferences," and "organizing side events/sessions in regional and global events that bring the best of ICIMOD and HUC together." Many respondents highlight the importance of "mutual recognition and acknowledgement" by both ICIMOD and HUC and strategic partnership development between the two.

A respondent shifted the focus to serving HUC members, "HUC should implement a centralised system for managing and distributing resources, such as research data, and external expertise. By streamlining access to resources, the consortium can avoid delays and ensure all members have the necessary support for their projects, leading to more coordinated and efficient collaborations." The open database of the HUC expertise, another respondent suggested, can in turn serve ICIMOD SGs and facilitate more internal interaction.

Respondents share a mixed impression about the conceptual **relationship between ICIMOD and HUC.** Some respondents hold the understanding that HUC is a part of ICIMOD, "HUC is a flagship programme of ICIMOD," and that "HUC should not be separate from ICIMOD but embedded under thematic areas," "HUC and ICIMOD should be one and treated as one," and share concern that "HUC's operating independently of ICIMOD may give ICIMOD a bad reputation." Others suggest the HUC Secretariat should continue to be hosted in the ICIMOD premises, ICIMOD is to "sign an output-based agreement with the HUC Secretariat," "a working committee should be formed for the coordination" between ICIMOD and HUC, and the HUC should "independently seek external funding" to ensure continuous fund flow to the consortium. Regarding financing, a respondent remarks, "If we [ICIMOD] are to provide finance to the HUC, then we need to be very clear that HUC will deliver results in line with our MTAP and support our other activities." The same respondent thinks: "We should push for HUC to provide an increasing percentage of their own resources through fundraising with time as a diversified funding base will improve the resilience of the network and increase ICIMOD's opportunities to partner with other funders and collaborate."

In conclusion, the following quotations capture a range of views among ICIMOD's mid-to-senior managers, in their own words,[2] about HUC and ICIMOD and their potential synergies. The quotations also indicate the level of buy-ins among managers and their hopes and aspirations concerning the HUC:

HUC is a powerful network if it can be wisely used. However, currently, it is working in silo.

I always thought that HUC was part of ICIMOD. ICIMOD has long emphasised youth leadership and mountain-specific education as crucial for mountain development. This can only be achieved through working with a network of universities. HUC provides this network and we should see how to make use of it.

HUC and its network are huge assets that ICIMOD can mobilise to promote mountain issues and voices. Similarly, ICIMOD can be a good host in promoting the HUC platform and its activities.

HUC Strategy should be developed to incorporate some of the key ICIMOD activities of each intervention during the planning process. HUC can uptake the knowledge or training materials developed by ICIMOD's themes.

HUC should be promoted as an academic regional network that ICIMOD supports to build knowledge-generation capacities in the region. ICIMOD should use the HUC network members to represent mountain voices in global platforms.

ICIMOD should capitalize on HUC's network of academic institutions and universities to promote ICIMOD's work, and to make strategic partnerships with key institutions whose work also aligns with that of ICIMOD.

ICIMOD should create a platform for university consortiums at RMCs to raise evidence-based mountain voices in the region and outside of the HKH

ICIMOD should tap into HUC's expertise from academia and showcase its valuable network through dedicated web pages and social media handles.

ICIMOD could harness the network of HUC with a wide range of universities. The collaboration will be based on need and anticipated outputs which could be better delivered through universities.

ICIMOD and HUC should complement rather than compete with each other.

ICIMOD and HUC should co-brand through strategic partnerships with international institutions and organisations outside the HKH. This will not only strengthen the co-brand but also explain their reach and influence beyond the region.

ICIMOD and HUC should collaborate to produce co-branded publications on critical regional issues, such as climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable development, tailored for external partners. These reports should be region-specific, with practical recommendations for government bodies and international organisations.
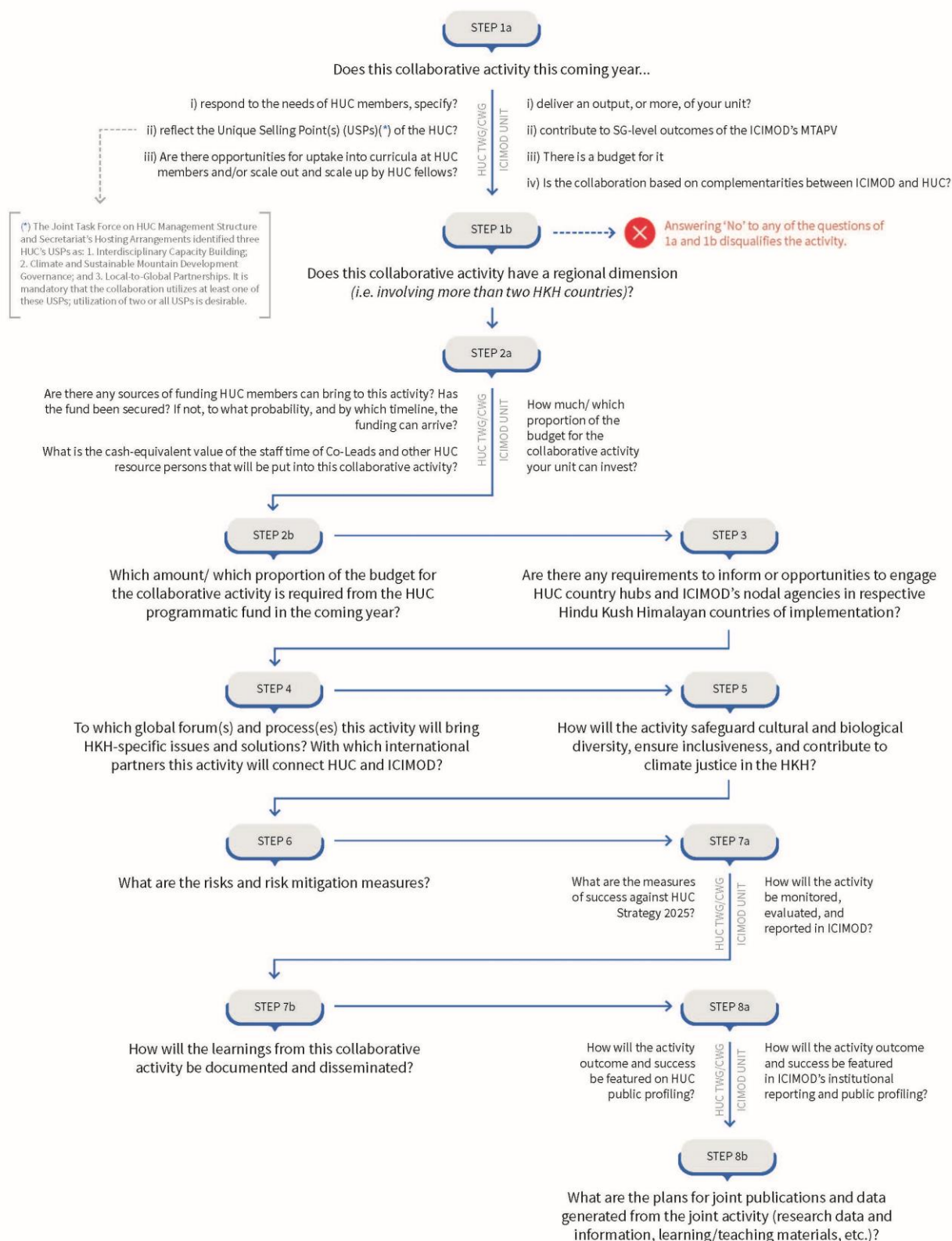
ICIMOD and HUC should provide external partners with regular updates and briefings on ICIMOD-HUC collaboration through co-branded emails, virtual meetings, or newsletters, and engage with regional and international media outlets through co-branded press releases, interviews, and opinion pieces.

ICIMOD has tried different ways to establish regional institutional mechanisms for regional collaboration. We experienced notable setbacks in our plans for high-level politically laden institutions such as the HKH Council or HKH Summit. Perhaps starting from building a university network like the HUC may be more realistic. In this sense, I wonder if the continued endorsement of the HUC may serve ICIMOD's purpose.

The HUC network can be a good platform for engaging diverse expertise in new areas of work for ICIMOD. For instance, where the geopolitical situation makes it difficult for ICIMOD to deep dive into a topic, HUC can support ICIMOD by mobilising its members to build trust and an enabling environment of work.

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[2] Minor language editing was provided for clarity.

ANNEX 4B: EIGHT-STEP JOINT PLANNING PROTOCOL FOR HUC-ICIMOD COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

STEP 1a

Does this collaborative activity this coming year...

HUC TWG/CWG
i) respond to the needs of HUC members, specify?
ii) reflect the Unique Selling Point(s) (USPs)(*) of the HUC?
iii) Are there opportunities for uptake into curricula at HUC members and/or scale out and scale up by HUC fellows?

ICIMOD UNIT
i) deliver an output, or more, of your unit?
ii) contribute to SG-level outcomes of the ICIMOD's MTAPV
iii) There is a budget for it
iv) Is the collaboration based on complementarities between ICIMOD and HUC?

(*) The Joint Task Force on HUC Management Structure and Secretariat's Hosting Arrangements identified three HUC's USPs as: 1. Interdisciplinary Capacity Building; 2. Climate and Sustainable Mountain Development Governance; and 3. Local-to-Global Partnerships. It is mandatory that the collaboration utilizes at least one of these USPs; utilization of two or all USPs is desirable.

STEP 1b ⊗ Answering 'No' to any of the questions of 1a and 1b disqualifies the activity.

Does this collaborative activity have a regional dimension (i.e. involving more than two HKH countries)?

STEP 2a

HUC TWG/CWG
Are there any sources of funding HUC members can bring to this activity? Has the fund been secured? If not, to what probability, and by which timeline, the funding can arrive?

What is the cash-equivalent value of the staff time of Co-Leads and other HUC resource persons that will be put into this collaborative activity?

ICIMOD UNIT
How much/ which proportion of the budget for the collaborative activity your unit can invest?

STEP 2b

Which amount/ which proportion of the budget for the collaborative activity is required from the HUC programmatic fund in the coming year?

STEP 3

Are there any requirements to inform or opportunities to engage HUC country hubs and ICIMOD's nodal agencies in respective Hindu Kush Himalayan countries of implementation?

STEP 4

To which global forum(s) and process(es) this activity will bring HKH-specific issues and solutions? With which international partners this activity will connect HUC and ICIMOD?

STEP 5

How will the activity safeguard cultural and biological diversity, ensure inclusiveness, and contribute to climate justice in the HKH?

STEP 6

What are the risks and risk mitigation measures?

STEP 7a

HUC TWG/CWG
What are the measures of success against HUC Strategy 2025?

ICIMOD UNIT
How will the activity be monitored, evaluated, and reported in ICIMOD?

STEP 7b

How will the learnings from this collaborative activity be documented and disseminated?

STEP 8a

HUC TWG/CWG
How will the activity outcome and success be featured on HUC public profiling?

ICIMOD UNIT
How will the activity outcome and success be featured in ICIMOD's institutional reporting and public profiling?

STEP 8b

What are the plans for joint publications and data generated from the joint activity (research data and information, learning/teaching materials, etc.)?

ANNEX 5A: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF POSITION PAPER ON HUC'S GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION, APRIL 2024

This ***Position Paper on the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC)'s Governance and Resource Mobilization*** was prepared by the Sustainability and Resource Mobilization Task Force (STF) to communicate the collective deliberations and aspirations of the community regarding the future sustainability of the HUC. The paper was written against the backdrop of a thorough independent assessment review of HUC commissioned by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The paper discusses the functional status of the Consortium, the proposals for chairpersonship, the role of the Secretariat, membership, resource mobilisation, and communication.

The central recommendation of the STF is that the HUC remains as a programme under the overall administrative structure of ICIMOD until 2030 with adequate funding and staffing of the Secretariat and a greater degree of financial and administrative autonomy to mobilise resources to respond to member needs and institutional arrangements. As we are requesting that the HUC remain under the administrative structure of ICIMOD, we should also acknowledge alignment with ICIMOD's research priorities. Greater autonomy for the HUC will enable it to pursue its own educational and research interests and capacity-building objectives insofar as they extend beyond ICIMOD's portfolio. The HUC and ICIMOD will discuss and define budgetary parameters based on an agreed growth trajectory and practical pathways for the transition to financial independence by 2030. A coherent reporting mechanism is required to capture and report on HUC members' contributions to the Consortium and its activities and thereby showcase the growing ownership and distributive leadership among members. An evidence-based evaluation will enable HUC to identify its core attributes that are most valued within the HUC community.

The STF recommends the establishment of an HUC Chairperson who will provide vision and commitment to enhancing the impact of the HUC as a regional and global network on mountain research and knowledge. To demonstrate the ownership and responsibilities of HUC members, the STF recommends a nominal membership contribution in-cash or in-kind for institutions and fellows, and associate members are encouraged to provide on-time membership fees.

Resources are crucial for the immediate collaborative activities as well as the medium- and long-term sustainability of the Consortium. Their mobilisation should be the responsibility of member universities, Thematic and Cross-cutting Working Group (TWG/CWG) co-leads, country chapters, and individual scholars, under the guidance of the Steering Committee with active facilitation by the Secretariat. Resources are to be mobilised from institutional funding and country-level grant-making mechanisms, competitive proposal development led by members, member-pledge funds within one's institution, contributions by associate members, HKH diaspora intellectuals and professionals, and income generative activities, with adequate attention to an establishment of the HUC endowment fund. The STF emphasises recognition of non-monetary resources: intellectual and institutional capital, access to the field and data, command of local languages, and indigenous heritage and expertise. Academic exchange and mobility of researchers and teaching faculty must be viewed as a knowledge circulation system whereby valuable resources are generated.

Communication is key in showcasing the HUC's holistic achievements. The vitality and success of the Consortium depend greatly on the active engagement of its members and communities. The STF acknowledges the importance of developing an impactful communication strategy where members and TWG/CWG co-leads proactively contribute to effective communications. It recommends amplifying the dissemination of members' and fellows' work, expertise, and interests to encourage collaborative engagements in research, teaching innovations, community outreach, and effective policy deliberation. This includes projecting their scholarly impact and visibility more directly in regional and global fora dedicated to the science translation and science policy dialogue processes.

VIEW THE FULL POSITION PAPER HERE

ANNEX 5B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF HUC, FEBRUARY 2024

Evaluation Purpose

In September 2023, following a competitive bidding process, ICIMOD commissioned IOD PARC to conduct an independent evaluation of the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC). IOD PARC's evaluation was guided by the Terms of Reference (ToR) developed by ICIMOD and covered the period between Medium Term Action Plans (MTAP) III and IV (2013 – 2022). The evaluation of the HUC was designed in line with the ToR and assessed the relevance, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact, and sustainability of HUC. The purpose and main objective of the evaluation is to provide insights to ICIMOD on how it can better manage the HUC and optimize its contributions to ICIMOD's Strategy 2030 and MTAP V (2023-2026). Its specific objectives are to:

- Assess the tangible contributions of SANDEE and HUC as envisaged in their charters to ICIMOD's mission and objectives as the organization that finances both the networks.

- Take a comprehensive stock of tangible learnings from SANDEE and HUC in the period in which they have been supported by ICIMOD.

- Evaluate the present structure of both networks in terms of their delivery mechanisms and assess the value for money in terms of managing and delivering results within their given mandates. And provide viable recommendations on how SANDEE and HUC can be better managed and organized to support their contributions to Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region and ICIMOD mandate and result targets.

- Review the recommendations of previous evaluations and see to what degree they have been implemented and/or remain relevant.

Intended Audience

This report has been written for the consideration of and review by ICIMOD Senior Management, ICIMOD Board, ICIMOD Support Group and the HUC Steering Committee.

Methodology

The HUC evaluation was conducted between September – December 2023. Data was gathered utilizing a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods including a document and literature review, online surveys with HUC management and alumni, key informant interviews and case studies. All interviews for the HUC were conducted remotely using virtual tools. Further details of the methodology are provided in the main body of the report.

Management of the evaluation

The evaluation of the HUC was led by Mandakini Surie under the team leadership of Dr. Ram Bastakoti and with the research support of Pragya Pokharel and quality assurance of Dr. Roeland Hemsteede. As team members were based in Nepal, India and the Netherlands, weekly meetings were conducted to ensure regular communication and tracking of progress. Regular check in meetings with ICIMOD SPMEL team ensured smooth communication between the team and ICIMOD particularly in terms of progress of the evaluation. The initial findings of the evaluation were presented to ICIMOD senior management on 13 December 2023.

Key Finding

Relevance: There is a strong alignment between the HUC, its charter and activities with ICIMOD's mandate, Strategy 2030 and MTAP V (2023-2026) in terms of facilitating regional collaboration between universities and academics, knowledge exchange and joint research amongst academics and experts on issues related to sustainable mountain development and supporting capacity building and training of the next generation of researchers and practitioners. However, these contributions are not being captured due to a lack of consistent tracking and reporting of results particularly at outcome level. HUC offers ICIMOD a platform for amplifying its research and knowledge outputs but to realize this potential, ICIMOD needs a more explicit strategy for leveraging HUC's network effectively.

Effectiveness: The HUC's core activities including training and capacity building, networking, and research collaboration, align well with ICIMOD's mandate. But as discussed in the section on Relevance, the absence of a concrete results framework hampers demonstrating achievements and impact. While HUC has grown as a network of nearly 100 universities and has a network of over 200 fellows, its effectiveness has been hampered by reliance on a sole source of funding and an over reliance on the dynamism of its small Secretariat. To enhance effectiveness, HUC needs revitalized membership engagement, a sustainability strategy, and clearer expectations from ICIMOD about how HUC's results contribute to ICIMOD's Strategy 2030 and MTAP V.

Efficiency: Since its inception HUC has been reliant on ICIMOD core funding to sustain and support its core activities. In the last few years, this core funding has reduced from $944,393 in 2017 to $203,902 in 2020 and then back up to $318,993 in 2022.[3] This decline in budget has coincided with efforts by the HUC Secretariat to leverage contributions from its members, as seen particularly in the Thematic Working Groups. While HUC has been able to raise modest resources (cash/in-kind contributions) from its members, the lack of documentation of these contributions and a clear results assessment, limits insights into value for money and efficiency. The reduction in core funding raises questions about the extent to which HUC can be expected to fulfil its mandate and creates a need for ICIMOD and HUC to establish realistic expectations with regards to holding HUC accountable for achieving specific results in line with resources provided. There are also clear untapped synergies between HUC and ICIMOD. Notably, ICIMOD does not fully utilize HUC to disseminate the knowledge it has and research it conducts, and HUC does not actively feed its knowledge and network into ICIMOD which could help improve ICIMOD's own programming. To improve efficiency and VfM, stronger institutional linkages (communication and reporting) are needed between ICIMOD and HUC so that ICIMOD can draw on the expertise of HUC's membership to support its work. HUC also needs to put in place a system that captures the in-kind and cash contributions made by members to the consortia and its activities.

Coherence: There is a clear synergy between the vision, mission, and objectives of HUC and ICIMOD, but operational integration lacks clarity, impacting day-to-day management, roles, communication, and reporting. As an independent member-led university consortium, the HUC's mandate requires it to operate independently in service of its membership, yet its institutional hosting by ICIMOD and core funding relationships have not translated smoothly into operational integration. This has created clear challenges for ICIMOD senior management, particularly as it has transitioned to a new strategy and MTAP and is looking at how to use its resources and funding more effectively. Establishing a clear results framework aligning HUC outputs with ICIMOD's outcomes is crucial to realise the potential contributions of HUC to ICIMOD. At a corporate level, there is an urgent need to clarify key aspects of the network relationship between ICIMOD as the host of the Secretariat of the HUC in terms of day-to-day organisational and financial management, communication and monitoring and reporting of activities. This is the highest order of priority for ICIMOD and HUC.

Impact: The HUC is widely acknowledged by its members and program alumni for its strengths in establishing a robust network of universities within the region; focusing attention on sustainable mountain development issues, facilitating people to people connections among individuals, and significantly contributing to the training and capacity

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[3] ICIMOD Annual Progress Report 2021.

building of young academics and researchers on issues related to sustainable mountain development. However, the absence of a comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework has hindered the adequate documentation of these impacts. It is imperative for the HUC to enhance its efforts in effectively capturing the impact of its initiatives, events, and programs. This will reinforce the value proposition for its members, ICIMOD and other stakeholders.

Sustainability: The sustainability of the HUC has been a concern for both ICIMOD and the consortium since the HUC became formally hosted at ICIMOD. Members and alumni highly appreciate HUC for its dedication to sustainable mountain development, its transdisciplinary approach, and its pivotal role in nurturing young professionals and academics in the region. However, despite a consistent rise in membership and recognition that some consortia members contribute resources (in-kind/cash) to support HUC activities, HUC remains reliant on ICIMOD for its sustainability. This raises questions about the extent of ownership, active engagement and commitment among consortia members. While the evaluation acknowledges that the issue of membership fees and of hosting of the consortia in another institution/country is complex given the geopolitics in the HKH region, at the same time it is evident that the current situation is not sustainable and a longer-term strategy to ensure the future viability of HUC is needed. In June 2023, the HUC formed a Task Force on Sustainability task force to explore strategies, membership fees, resource mobilization, and potential hosting alternatives for the Secretariat between 2025-2030. This represents a crucial opportunity for ICIMOD, the HUC Steering Committee, and the Secretariat to collaboratively discuss the future trajectory of the HUC.

Lessons Learnt: Key lessons from the literature review on the functioning of consortia as well as other networks such as HUC highlight the critical importance for consortia such as the HUC to have clearly defined (i) legal and institutional status, (ii) governance and accountability structures and (iii) membership structure. In addition to the literature review, KII and survey responses illustrate the need for (i) a Secretariat that is appropriately resourced in terms of staff and funding; (ii) clarity of governance and organisational structure within the consortium; (iii) clear expected roles and responsibilities of consortia members especially in terms of their contributions to the network; (iv) clear lines of communication, reporting and accountability within the consortia as well as with its host institution; (v) the need for the consortia to have a clear implementation plan with annual goals, milestones and targets that is reviewed by consortia members on annual basis; (vi) regular performance reviews and evaluations that assess the progress of the consortia in meeting its overall goal and mission and (iv) most importantly an organisational and membership model that enables the consortia to be sustainable.

Recommendations

Recommendations are directed at ICIMOD as the commissioners of this evaluation and where appropriate to the HUC. The recommendations are structured and prioritised in line with the evaluation criteria. However, recommendation 8 (Coherence) on clarifying the relations and expectations between ICIMOD and HUC has the highest priority as none of the other recommendations, e.g., around clarifying results etc., can be implemented until these relations and expectations are formalised and clarified.

Criteria	Recommendation	Priority	Addressed to
Relevance	1. HUC and ICIMOD jointly formulate a results framework based around critical issues that are aligned with both HUC and ICIMOD's mandates.	High	ICIMOD and HUC
	2. At relatively low effort but high reward/benefit, HUC should revive its newsletter to its members and associate members, where members including ICIMOD can highlight recent publications, events,	Medium	HUC

	opportunities and calls for input so that the consortia is aware of asks/offers from ICIMOD in terms of knowledge and services.		
Effectiveness	3. HUC develop a clear and structured plan of what outcomes and results it wants to achieve and sets in place a mechanism by which these outcomes can be captured from member activities.	High	HUC
Efficiency	4. ICIMOD devise an internal strategy on how to more actively draw on HUC member expertise and utilize the network to disseminate ICIMOD knowledge, research, and policy outputs.	Medium	ICIMOD
	5. HUC develop a mechanism through which members can report which allows it to capture the value of contributions cash or in kind from its members to consortia activities.	High	HUC
	6. HUC review how the different governance bodies within the HUC i.e. the General Assembly, Standing Committee and Secretariat are delivering against their respective mandates; and devise a sustainability and resource mobilization strategy endorsed by members.	High	HUC
	7. To improve communication with its members, ICIMOD, and a broader community of stakeholders, HUC should revive its newsletter to its membership. This can be a mechanism through which ICIMOD can disseminate its research, publications, showcase projects and put in calls for expertise from the network.	High	HUC
Coherence	8. ICIMOD and HUC clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations vis a vis communication, reporting, and other organisational and management aspects in line with their respective mandates.	Highest Priority	ICIMOD and HUC
	9. ICIMOD devise an internal strategy on how it can build synergies and leverage the two networks in service of MTAP V and ICIMOD Strategy 2030.	Medium	ICIMOD
Impact	10. HUC develop an overall strategy for network development that addresses the core issues of (i) revitalizing the network membership; (ii) reducing reliance on the Secretariat to drive activities and (iii) identifies strategies for financial sustainability.	High	HUC
	11. HUC conduct an outcome or impact study and devise a more structured way of capturing how its activities, trainings, etc have contributed to its results framework.	High	HUC
	12. HUC develop a results and impact monitoring strategy alongside a communication plan to more effectively capture and report impact stories from within the network.	High	HUC
Sustainability	13. ICIMOD and HUC to review and revise the governance structure for HUC in line with EQ 10 under coherence.	High	ICIMOD/HUC
	14. HUC to expedite the work under its financial sustainability task force.	High	HUC
Lessons Learnt	15. HUC consider, and address issues related to registration, governance, and membership as a part of the sustainability task force.	High	HUC

IOD PARC hopes that the evaluation findings and recommendations will provide ICIMOD and HUC will useful insights on the governance, management, and future sustainability of the network.

Next Steps

As per the timeline agreed with ICIMOD, this report was submitted to ICIMOD on 20 December 2023 for feedback and input. Following the receipt of comments on 16 January 2024, IOD PARC submitted a revised final report to ICIMOD on 31 January 2024.

ANNEX 6: PAST FINANCIAL TRENDS

Between 2018 and 2023, the average annual expense of the HUC provided by the ICIMOD core budget was US$227,801. The total income during the same period from donor-earmarked projects is US$2,105,188 or US$300,741/per annum. In addition, from 2018 onward, HUC Associate members made cash contributions to the HUC activities at an average US$30,000/per annum. Full members from India, China, Pakistan, and Nepal made in-kind contributions by hosting HUC General Assembly meetings and other events. For each US$1 ICIMOD spent from its core budget for the HUC, the cash return-on-investment was from US$1.3 to US$ 1.5; the ratio would have been 1::2 if member in-kind contributions were accounted for in the financial reporting system.

HUC Spending Trend and Projection

Category	Year 2018 Actual	Year 2019 Actual	Year 2020 Actual	Year 2021 Actual	Year 2022 Actual	Year 2023 Actual	Year 2024 Projection	Average annual Expenses (2018-2023)	Percentage
Staff Cost	81,729	118,828	158,916	169,329	103,882	99,776	93,319	117,968	52%
Consultants/Contracts	17,104	22,119	34,126	43,555	100,258	23,096	50,400	41,523	18%
Travel & Transport	3,451	6,172	751	836	1,868	20,651	10,936	6,381	3%
Equipment and Building	-	1,330	-	-	2,097	-	-	490	0%
Workshop/Networking	65,509	59,754	8,692	18,752	19,055	78,155	78,684	46,943	21%
IT/Communication	46	142	40	2	131	-	-	51	0%
Material Supplies/Services	5,219	1,635	1,377	26,556	2,776	6,653	2,579	6,685	3%
Partners- Managed Funds		380	-	13,196	26,989	-	6,000	7,761	3%
Total	**173,058**	**210,359**	**203,902**	**272,225**	**257,055**	**228,332**	**241,918**	**227,801**	**100%**

Description			Average Annual Allocation	Percentage
Secretariat running Cost			44,195	18%
Programmatic Cost (incl travel)			204,693	82%
		Total	**248,887**	

Project	Donor	Income								
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total	
SAWI	The World Bank	-	965,302.20	-	254,692.48				1,219,994.68	
Strengthening Regional Scientific Cooperation through Himalayan University Consortium (HUC)	SDC	403,259.89	401,914.22	155,927.41	54,716.79				1,015,818.31	
NORHED II NTNU Programme 2021-2026	NORHED					25,813.22	-	43,563.00	69,376.22	

Project	Donor	Expenditure								Balance
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total	
SAWI	The World Bank	546,975.72	473,406.10	199,612.86					1,219,994.68	-
Strengthening Regional Scientific Cooperation through Himalayan University Consortium (HUC)	SDC	-	575,784.03	436,198.99	3,835.29				1,015,818.31	-
NORHED II NTNU Programme 2021-2026	NORHED					5,258.00	8,421.87	23,722.81	37,402.68	31,973.54

ANNEX 7: NARRATIVE OF HUC BUSINESS-AS-USUAL OPERATION AND PRE-TRANSITION ANNUAL BUDGETARY PRACTICE

The HUC is a member-led network operating on a resource-sharing basis. Except for Secretariat's staffing and governance such as meetings of the HUC Steering Committee, Country Chapters, General Assembly and Special Task Forces, a HUC activity only takes place when at least one member contributes resources in cash or in kind. It is, therefore, a lean and highly cost-effective network, and evidence for thriving transformative partnerships.

The HUC activities comprise three broad groups: i) governance: meetings of the Steering Committee, General Assembly, and Country Chapters where active, meetings and activities of special Task Forces; ii) HUC Academy and/or intensive capacity building programmes; and iii) Communities of practice, including Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) and Cross-cutting Workgroups (CWGs).

1. HUC governance and the Secretariat

Before 2013, the HUC Secretariat consisted of 3 full-time staff members: i) an international staff (P5) who served as Programme Coordinator/ Secretariat Lead; ii) a Programme Associate/Membership Officer, in charge of membership, administration, and logistics; and iii) a media Associate in charge of HUC website and portal, in addition to 30% staff time of a Programme Officer in charge of contract and partnership and 50% staff time of a Communication Officer. Total annual budget for staffing ranges would range from USD100,000 to USD120,000 without staff time of Themes professionals who collaborate with the HUC. With professionals' stafftime, it may reach USD150,000 or USD180,000 per year.

The most recent General Assembly meeting took place at ICIMOD in 2018, when GA decided that GA would meet every other year on a resource-sharing basis. Estimation of cost for a GA meeting is USD60,000-80,000, at times hosted by a member, e.g. G B Pant Institute hosted the 2016 meeting in Delhi, and Sichuan University hosted the 2017 meeting in Sichuan, both provided local hospitality ranging from USD40,000 to USD80,000 respectively. A meeting of SC, if taken place in the HKH, costs approximately USD20,000, most often hosted by a member. The SC Meeting in April 2023 was hosted by Lanzhou University, which covered local hospitality, approximately half of the costs.

As soon as COVID-19 induced mobility restriction was lifted in China in 2022, the HUC Secretariat requested ICIMOD for a proper budget to organize a General Assembly meeting to refresh the membership across the HKH region. Unfortunately, this request was declined. In lieu of GA meeting, the Secretariat organized country-based member engagement events in India and Pakistan in 2023 and Bangladesh in 2024 to boost the membership.

2. HUC intensive capacity building programmes

Before COVID-19, HUC organized in-person intensive capacity building programmes titled HUC Academy, featuring mountain focus, inter- and transdisciplinarity, fieldwork, and leadership. A 10-day programme catering to 20 participants from RMCs would cost approximately USD120,000. During COVID-19, HUC was the first unit in ICIMOD that adopt online learning using virtual platform. It organized quality hybrid programmes when knowledge was imparted through virtual means and practicum of skills was held in-person in participating universities. After COVID-19, the HUC continues hybrid capacity building modality with a virtual international/regional component and field-based country-wise component. This helps bring down the cost to USD60,000-USD80,000 per programme. In 2024, a partnership led by the University of Toronto contributed USD118,000 to the Understanding Risk Himalayan Data Field Lab, whereas HUC ICIMOD matched approximately USD80,000. The one-month intensive event catered to 120 participants from 19 countries working on the intersection between sciences, social sciences, and the humanities to enhance understanding of climate risks. Unfortunately, the financial reporting system of ICIMOD does not capture the cash contribution by partners.

3. Collaborative activities between ICIMOD's units and HUC communities of practice

HUC TWGs/CGWs are clusters of individual fellows from the HKH and outside of the region, sharing similar scholarly interests. These groups originated from the institutional grants funded by the World Bank SAWI-II and SDC grants earmarked to the HUC between 2017-2019. The Groups operate on a member-led and resource-sharing principle. There are 8 active TWGs and 2 active cross-cutting Workgroups (see Annex 3A, Table 3a.3). These groups operate on a member-led and resource-sharing basis. Some, but not all, of these groups work on the topics that are

relevant to ICIMOD's result framework. Even for those activities that are clearly aligned with ICIMOD's result framework, collaboration may not happen due to a lack of interest from ICIMOD's side. However, most of activities were planned jointly with ICIMOD's units and co-delivered with them.

Until 2024, HUC would match a certain portion of funds depending on the resources members bring and activities. For example, members of TWG on Cryosphere and Society from Innsbruck University brought USD35,000 and HUC matched USD8,000, for the OGGM Training workshop in Lahore in mid-March 2023. The Walker Institute (University of Reading) contributes GBP15,000 to Mountain Agriculture TWG's upcoming activities in May 2023 and HUC matched approximately USD6,000 as part of a regional write-shop on national and sub-national policy briefs in millets. In 2024, High Mountain Data group contributed CHF9,000 grant from Mountain Research Initiative as part of HiRISK project; and Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern, contributed CFH6,000 from the Leading House of Asia and Iran as part of the Education for Sustainable Mountain Futures Working Group. In a similar manner, Yunnan University hosted three meetings of the HUC – meeting of the HUC Task Force on Sustainability and Resource Mobilization in March 2024 and two back-to-back events, Inception Meeting of the HUC Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Mountain Settlement and the Inception of Mountain Sub-Committee of the South and Southeast Asian University Network, October 2024, totaling approximately USD50,000. Some if not most of these cash contributions do not pass through ICIMOD and there is no reporting system to capture members' contributions in the financial reporting. In order to match the collaborative activities of 8-12 TWGs/CWGs, a budget of USD100,000-150,000 per annum would be required.

For the upcoming year 2025, from six to eight units of SG2 indicated their need to collaborate with the HUC for joint activities. A budget of approximately USD120,000-USD150,000 is required from Core to match the proposed collaborations. This is about double the amount allocated in the forecast in Annex 7, approximately USD75,000 is budgeted for ICIMOD-HUC collaborations during the transition period.

In summary, an estimation of approximately USD350,000-USD400,000 would cover all HUC business-as-usual activities in a year, with the expectation that HUC members would contribute from around USD50,000-USD80,000 in cash and in-kind.

ANNEX 8: HUC SECRETARIAT FUNCTIONS AND OPERATION

The function and responsibilities of the HUC Secretariat are described in the HUC Bylaws 2018 as follows:

The HUC Secretariat is responsible for administrative and financial operations and organizational tasks, and for providing support to HUC's governance bodies. The Secretariat works closely with the Steering Committee on all matters pertaining to HUC administration. It supports the preparation for Steering Committee's meetings and General Assembly Meetings and is present at the meetings of these bodies.

The Secretariat is provided as an in-kind contribution by or through the good offices of one or more HUC members. The ICIMOD continues to host and provide operational costs for the Secretariat. It is led by a fulltime Secretariat Lead, with the assistance of a Programme Associate. Members may contribute short or long term staff to the Secretariat to carry out administrative or research work sponsored by the HUC or its members.

The Secretariat's tasks are to:
- report to the Steering Committee and presents annual plans and budgets to the Steering Committee for discussion and approval;

- maintain a membership registry;

- serve as first point of contact for potential new members;

- oversee preparations and provide secretarial functions for all SC and General Assembly meetings, and keep and distribute minutes of actions taken in those meetings;

- maintain and keep adequate and correct accounts of the activities of the HUC Secretariat and report on overall HUC financial activities;

- register and report on all activities carried out under the sponsorship of HUC on an annual basis;

- manage and upkeep the HUC Online Portal;

- perform other duties prescribed by the General Assembly and the Steering Committee.

End of excerpts.

Before March 2016, the HUC Secretariat was placed under Communication unit, the Head of which was responsible for coordination, with the assistance of a Programme Associate. Between March 2016 and early 2018, the HUC was an Emerging Programme of ICIMOD, with a full-time Programme Coordinator/ Secretariat Lead and a Programme Associate (Membership Officer). From 2018 to 2021 (MTAPIV), the HUC was placed under Regional Programme Six – Mountain Knowledge and Action Networks (MKANs). In addition to the two full-time positions, the HUC Secretariat was supported by a Programme Officer, a Communication Officer, and a Media Associate (for HUC website and portal). Under the new structure, HUC was a sub-component (half a component) under an intervention of AA-E, with five layers of approval above it. It would take at least 3-4 months, if not 6 to 8 months, for an institutional agreement (contract) to complete, and from 3 months up to 9 months for reimbursements to be paid out to individual fellows.

Starting from 2022, HUC received a budget of about 40% of its annual business-as-usual and thus the PC and PA made a professional decision to forego 3 months of their salaries to keep the HUC member activities afloat. By October their salaried staff time was up, however, the salaries were continued to be paid until the end of the year.

Since October 2023, the Programme Associate/Membership Officer left the Secretariat. Since then, short-term (3 months, 6 months, then another 3 months) Programme Associates have been filling, taking care of logistics and administrative matters, but not membership matters. The contract of the Programme Associate ends on 31 December 2024. Since September 2024, HUC no longer had a Communication Officer. The Media Senior Associate who used to be working full-time for the HUC website and portal at the time of hiring (2018) has a minimal number of staff time days to oversight vendor contracts for upkeep of digital facilities. The person continues to assist in membership matters and HUC communications outside of her ToR and her regular office working hours purely based on personal goodwill and dedication.

ANNEX 9: TRANSITITON TO AUTONOMY OF APAARI

The Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) was established in 1990 as an initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Since the mid-2000s, APAARI embarked on a journey of transition to autonomy in both legal status and financial independence. The transition period (2017-2023) took numerous and intensive deliberations within APAARI membership and between APAARI leadership and FAO. In 2024, after 4 years since FAO discontinued its financial support, APAARI has transformed into an autonomous organization – with the pipeline legal status (Q-IGO) registered with the Government of Thailand – and financial independence. In 2023, APAARI gross revenue stood at USD1,253,000, 19% of which came from membership subscriptions, 75% from invoiced project income, and 5% from grants and donations. Between July 2023 and June 2024, APAARI organized 61 technical and stakeholder engagement events, co-organized 16, and attended 112 key regional and global meetings.

APAARI maintains its core values of being apolitical, membership-based, and multi-stakeholder engaging. Its Executive Committee consists of 12 Members. The Secretariat Office, located in Bangkok, consists of 7 staff members and 3 consultants. APAARI's 10th Constitution revised membership categories to include UN Member States and Associate Members (both Inter-governmental organizations and international organizations). ICIMOD is a good-standing member of APAARI and pays its membership due regularly.
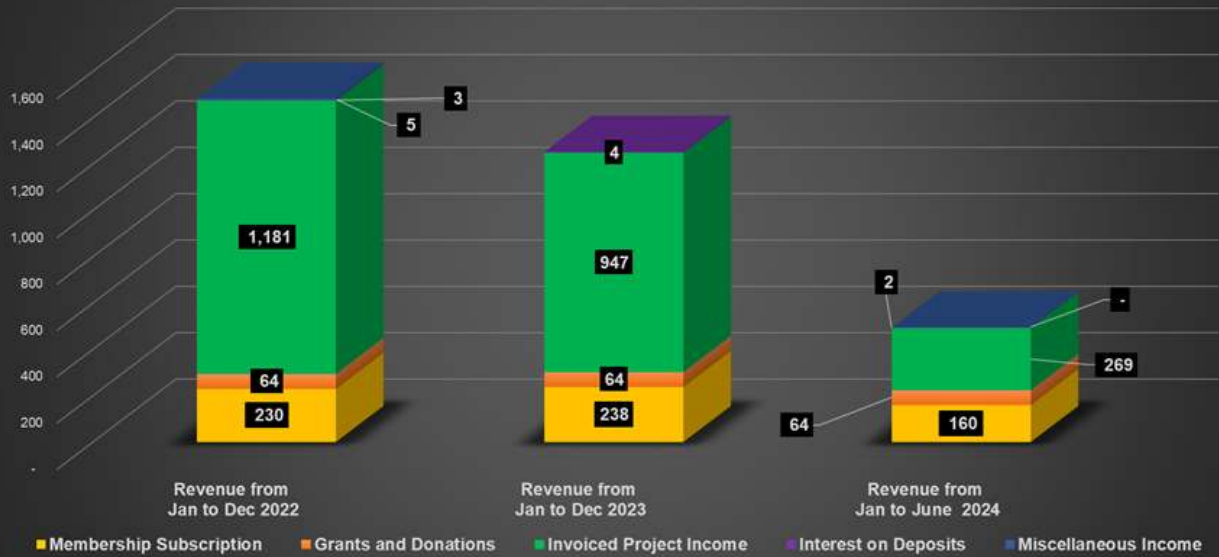
At the virtual presentation delivered to the JTF on Tuesday 10 September, Dr. Ravi Khetarpal, Executive Director of APAARI, suggested HUC's and ICIMOD's leadership, if interested, to define the mechanism for the HUC benefits from the same legal status as APAARI. The HUC can consider joining APAARI as an Associate Member or an Alliance. Another possible option is to sign a tripartite agreement between APAARI, ICIMOD, and the HUC. Through the agreed mechanism, the HUC can continue its branding while participating in APAARI activities and projects and jointly mobilize resources. Other operational matters of hosting the Secretariat and financial management will need to be discussed between the two organizations.
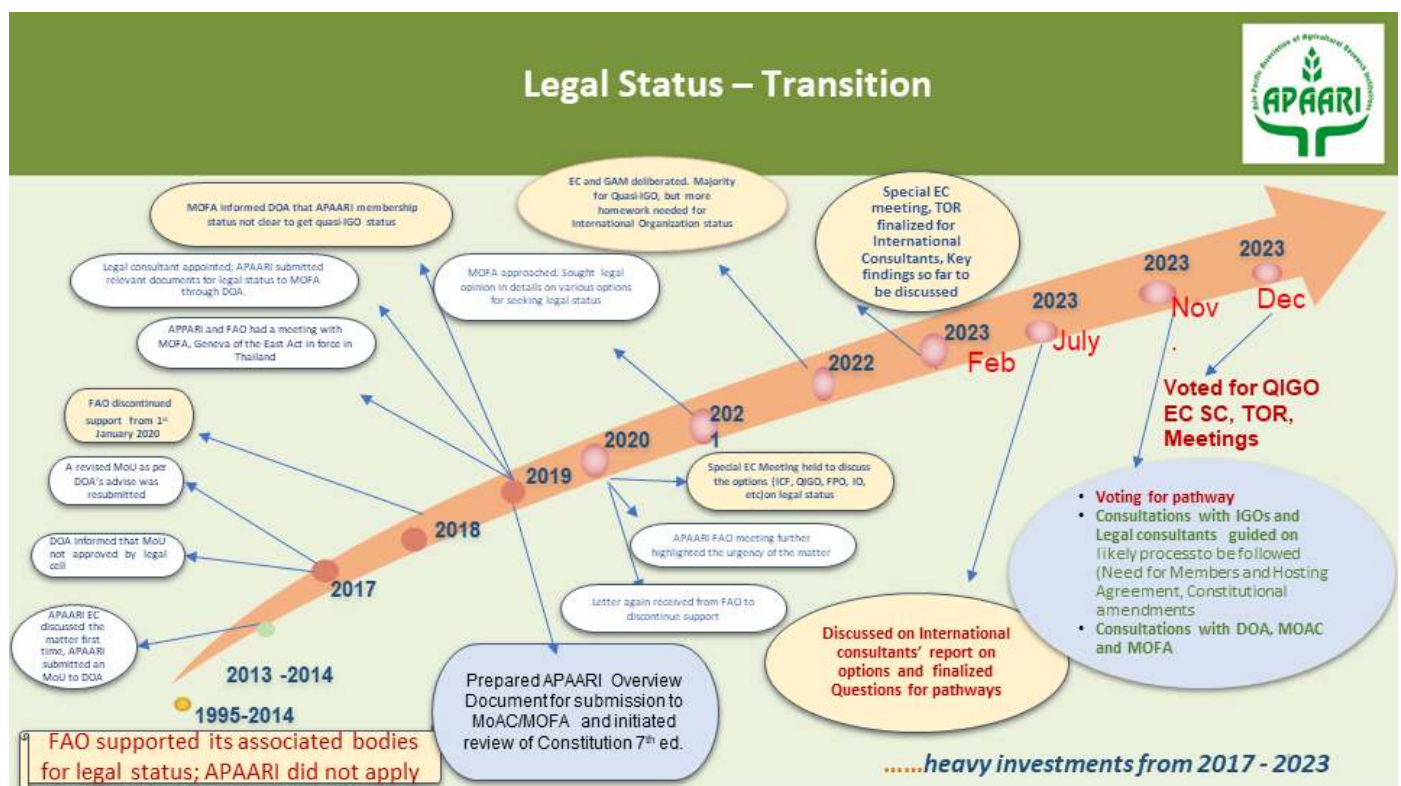
Finance Update

Head-wise Gross Revenue Actual 2022, 2023 and 2024 (USD in '000)

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