



HIMALAYAN UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM CHARTER

Himalayan University Consortium Charter

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

HKH	Hindu Kush Himalayas or Hindu Kush Himalayan
HUC	Himalayan University Consortium
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
ICT	Information and communications technology
SG	Steering group
SMD	Sustainable mountain development

Background

The Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) was founded in 2007 with the goal of building a dynamic mountain knowledge partnership among the universities of the HKH region and other organizations and institutions – both within and outside the region – concerned with sustainable mountain development (SMD) in the Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH)¹ and adjoining mountainous regions. From the outset, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) has hosted the Secretariat of the HUC and facilitated its activities. The members of the HUC share many common values and concerns regarding opportunities and challenges for research, education and training relating to regional SMD. However, the universities in the HKH vary considerably in many aspects. Some have existed for a century or more, with a wealth of resources such as multi-discipline research centres, experienced scholars and professionals, experience in capacity building, and research and extension capabilities. Others have been established over the past decade. Some universities have long-established collaborative bilateral relationships with universities in Europe or North America; others have no such relationships.

There have been limited interactions and collaboration between HKH universities, even within individual countries. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that the universities are distributed across a mountainous region that is not easily accessible and has inadequate communications facilities, a problem that is partially being addressed through the application of information and communication technology (ICT).

A major factor behind the slow pace of SMD in the HKH is a lack of professionals who can undertake high-quality research and support sustainable mountain development, and poor international cooperation. There is considerable scope for increasing collaborative activities between academic and research institutions in the HKH and their counterparts in other parts of the world. Such collaboration would promote growth and dissemination of knowledge and help improve livelihoods and economy in the context of SMD.

What HUC Stands For

Vision:

To support sustainable mountain development in the HKH, in balance with the interests of surrounding lowlands, and to contribute to global knowledge through collaborative research, education, and training.

Mission:

To establish an effective network of universities in the HKH, in collaboration with academic, research and knowledge exchange institutions both within and outside the region, to engage top-notch professionals who can undertake high-quality research, education, teaching, and knowledge dissemination.

Objectives:

1. To have an effective structure for networking and collaboration at the regional (HKH) and sub-regional level;
2. To undertake research and knowledge exchange activities to support SMD in HKH and contribute to global knowledge;

¹ Hereafter, in this Charter, HKH will refer to the Hindu Kush Himalayas and adjoining mountainous regions.

3. To collaborate on education and training activities to develop skills, knowledge and human capital to support SMD in the HKH;
4. To foster regional collaboration and cooperation on SMD; and
5. To link local, regional and global knowledge systems to support SMD in the HKH

Functions:

All functions of the HUC will be collaborative, and will include:

1. Research on key topics in SMD in the HKH, leading to increased knowledge that informs the other functions, including scholarships and other mechanisms that enable students and/or staff at one HUC member institution to undertake research with/at another;
2. Education, including upgrading of existing curricula (from individual modules to entire degrees), joint development and delivery of new courses (e.g., field courses, face-to-face, blended delivery using ICT);
3. Training and capacity building, including student and staff exchange, and summer schools and other short courses for diverse audiences, e.g., academic (scientific knowledge and methodologies), managers, policy makers;
4. Knowledge dissemination and exchange, including a website, publications for various audiences (e.g., papers for peer-reviewed journals, reports, policy briefs), workshops, and conferences
5. Resource mobilisation, both in-kind and financial, from members and other sources, to ensure the implementation of the other functions.

Organization and Structure:

Approach:

The HUC structure comprises its member institutions, secretariat, and a steering group, as well as an open-ended array of focused project teams from the member institutions. The HUC represents a consensual alliance or consortium of organizations with a common vision, not a contracted or legally bound entity.

At present, ICIMOD acts at the secretariat of the HUC, collaborating with HUC members to operate and further develop the HUC. Over time this can be changed and the secretariat may move to other organizations.

HUC Membership

HUC has two membership categories: full members and associate members. There are two membership types within each category.

Full Members

Members may be

- 1) Universities with mountain-related or oriented curriculums from the eight countries that constitute the Hindu Kush Himalayan region;
- 2) Research and/or knowledge organizations in the Hindu Kush Himalayas that share the vision of the HUC.

Associate members

- 1) Universities from other parts of the world that share the vision of the HUC and have an abiding interest in the HUC and/or have academic programmes that match those of HUC
- 2) Research and/or knowledge organizations from other parts of the world that share the vision of the HUC and have an abiding interest in the HUC and/or academic programmes that match those of HUC

Universities

‘Universities’ refer to institutions of higher education that have their own registered students.

Research/Knowledge Organizations

This includes knowledge organizations and research institutions with a focus on mountains and related research.

Membership rights and responsibilities

Membership in the HUC is voluntary, and entails rights and responsibilities for the member. Membership is for three years and is renewable. Each member of the HUC chooses specific individuals to represent them at HUC meetings and on advisory committees, temporary task forces and sharing communities/interest groups.

Participation

Both full members and associate members may participate in and lead the development of HUC consortium activities, and all members have the right to participate in consortium activities.

Eligibility Criteria

While selecting applications for membership, the steering group is guided by the following criteria:

- Demonstrated commitment to the HUC’s goals and values and ability to actively contribute to the development of the HUC and its programmes
- Willingness to provide in-kind support, services, or material resources that can aid the operation and development of the HUC including providing access to academic publications
- Links to major HKH constituencies

These criteria constitute a checklist, though no applicant for HUC membership is expected to meet them all. These criteria apply to both full members and associate members.

Secretariat

The secretariat is hosted by ICIMOD for the time being. A programme manager heads the secretariat, while one or more full-time programme coordinator/ executive and programme associate/assistant perform the day-to-day work. The secretariat is responsible for administrative and financial operations and has publicity and organizational tasks. The programme manager will participate in HUC activities as member-secretary and will take a proactive role in taking those activities forward, which includes providing technical assistance to the steering groups, advisory committees, task forces and sharing communities/interest groups. The secretariat will also be responsible for planning and executing the annual meeting. Members may contribute short-term staff to the HUC to carry out administrative or research work sponsored by the HUC or its partners. The secretariat is the first point of contact for potential new members.

Tasks for the Secretariat are:

1. Establish task forces or focused project teams to accomplish activities specified in the Action Plan;
2. Coordinate the work of the advisory committees, task forces, and interest groups, including evaluation of initiatives and projects;
3. Prepare practice, programmes, and services for approval by Steering Group during at the annual meeting;
4. Monitor and evaluate the progress of approved initiatives and projects;
5. Facilitate communications at all levels between committees, and with organizations supporting the work of the HUC both in the region and outside.

Steering Group

Role:

The steering group (SG) develops and recommends the strategic plan and major initiatives for the Consortium, and oversees the implementation of the strategic goals set by the annual meeting and the work of the focused project teams /committees.

The SG develops and directs the annual work plan of the consortium, including a clear timeframe for starting and completing each project undertaken by the team/ committee.

Representation:

The steering group shall include:

- three representatives from the full member institutions;
- one representative from the associate member institutions; and
- one representative from the member institution as the host of the secretariat
- a member-secretary

The chairperson will be elected from among the steering group members on an annual basis.

Each SG member is elected for a three-year term, which can be renewed once. Elections take place during the HUC annual meeting after the SG outlines a process for nominating candidates. Interested candidates are requested to express their wish to be nominated two months ahead of the Annual Meeting.

Tasks

The steering group shall provide guidance and approve proposals, documents on procedures and action plans prepared by the Secretariat and task force/groups. The Steering Group shall also perform the following tasks:

1. Approve an updated strategic plan and a list of major initiatives to be pursued, and propose them at the annual meeting;
2. Make recommendations on policy to General Body's approval;
3. Provide inputs in identifying new areas for collaboration and opportunities for resource mobilization;
4. Recommend new members to General Body for approval;
5. Formulate procedures for implementation of the Charter.

Advisory Committees, Task Forces, and Interest Groups

The steering group may appoint standing advisory committees, temporary task forces and sharing communities/Interest groups to facilitate communication and the work of the consortium.

Members will typically, though not universally, include a representative from each of the partner universities. Each advisory committee includes a steering group representative who acts as a liaison between the advisory committee and the steering group.

Processes

The steering group will conduct meetings, either face to face or via Skype/video, at least twice a year.

Priorities, operations, project selection, finance, and other ad hoc items will be reviewed. Planning for specific focused annual meetings, including meeting location, timing, agenda, and documentation, will be coordinated by the secretariat with facilitative oversight from the steering group.

Resources

All transactions both in kind and financial and utilization will be fully transparent. In specific settings, resources may also be developed through international donors or professional society funding or grants.

Annual Meeting

To promote the exchange of knowledge and spur collaboration among the members, an annual meeting / conference will be held in one of the member countries, and will serve the following primary purposes:

- Provide updates and review of existing focused projects;
- Orchestrate dialogue identifying key areas and priorities for future focused project efforts; and
- Consider the need for changes to the consortium.

An extraordinary general meeting may be called upon the written request of the majority of the steering committee.