



A high-altitude mountain landscape. In the background, several jagged, snow-capped mountain peaks rise against a clear blue sky. The middle ground features steep, rocky slopes with patches of snow and a small, turquoise-colored lake nestled in a valley. The foreground shows a brown, rocky, and sparsely vegetated slope with a small stream or path winding through it.

Global Programmes in Mountain Areas

How can global programmes help in the collection and sharing of data?

Landscapes and transects will be representative of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. Contributions from global programmes and within the region in the medium and long term can bridge the knowledge gap by providing specialised expertise. The box gives short summaries of 13 global programmes which can help with their particular expertise to supply the missing knowledge on the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. Concrete examples of how these global programmes can contribute were discussed during the IMBC conference. Full details of these discussions were recorded and are part of the IMBC Conference Report that is provided on the CD included in the back pocket of this publication.

What options are available for capacity building in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region?

ICIMOD is coordinating The Himalayan University Consortium: it aims to train conservationists, biodiversity scientists, and climate change specialists in expertise in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. In addition to this, individual training programmes, in particular specialties such as support for the younger generation of conservationists from UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme through its young scientist research grants. Also an initiative of the International Programme on Research and Training on Sustainable Management of Mountain Areas (IPROMO) of the Mountain Partnership offers course for young professionals interested in mountains.

Some global programmes working in mountain areas

EvK2CNR – Conducts multidisciplinary high altitude scientific and technological research, and facilitate the use of that knowledge at a management and decision-making level. www.evkc2cnr.org

FAO – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – is a specialised UN agency that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. FAO's focus on mountains is devoted to raising levels of nutrition, improving agriculture productivity, and alleviating poverty and hunger. www.fao.org

GLORIA – Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments is a worldwide long-term observation network in alpine environments – that collects vegetation and temperature data. www.gloria.ac.at

GMBA – Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment is a cross-cutting network of DIVERSITAS which actively explores and synthesizes mountain biodiversity research and acts as a link between science and policy. <http://gmba.unibas.ch/index/index.htm>

MAB – UNESCO's Programme on Man and the Biosphere develops the basis, within the natural and the social sciences, for the sustainable use and conservation of biological diversity, and for the improvement of the relationship between people and their environment globally. <http://portal.unesco.org/science/en>

MP – The Mountain Partnership – MP is a voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world. www.mountainpartnership.org

MRI – Mountain Research Initiative – promotes and coordinates research on global change in mountain regions around the world and catalyses the interdisciplinary research needed to fill current knowledge gaps. <http://mri.scnatweb.ch>

TMI – The Mountain Institute – has a mission to advance mountain cultures and preserve mountain environments. <http://www.mountain.org/>

UNEP – the United Nations Environment Programme – coordinates the UN environmental activities; assists developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies; and encourages sustainable development through sound environmental practices. www.unep.org

UNU – The United Nations University – is an independent research institution in the UN system that works towards contributing to the resolution of pressing problems facing the global community through network-based research, multi-stakeholder policy dialogues and capacity development. www.unu.edu

WCPA – World Commission on Protected Areas – is the world's premier network of protected area expertise. www.iucn.org/wcpa

WI – Wetlands International – works at all levels from global to local to achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands, as a contribution to sustainable development. www.wetlands.org

WWF is an international non-governmental organization for the conservation, research and restoration of the environment worldwide. www.panda.org

What are some of the scientific studies of climate change that are presently taking place in mountain areas?

Several global programmes are active in mountain areas. The Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments (GLORIA) is a notable initiative for research into the impact of climate change on mountain areas. It makes use of the sensitivity of mountain areas at high elevations, which are not exposed to direct land-use impacts, to study the ecological effects of climate change.

Since high mountain systems are distributed globally at all latitudes from tropical to polar zones, they provide a common low temperature regime for studying climate change. Other climate research programmes are not specifically geared to mountains but also collect data in mountain areas these include the likes of GCOSS, the Global Climate Observing System and others.

“This [International Mountain Biodiversity Conference] is a significant and tangible first step towards the long-term preservation of the Himalaya’s genetic heritage.”

Andreas Schild, ICIMOD, Director General

An age without a name – a personal view

Just forty years ago, when the American astronaut Neil Armstrong took the first steps on the moon, much was made of his first step: one giant step for mankind! Perhaps unknown to the space scientists and media who coined the phrase, the statement was an echo coming from over the millennia of human history. To leave one’s footprint for posterity, whether you were a great warrior or philosopher or builder, was the ancestral idea of eternity. You would be known by your deeds and the greater your deeds the longer your name would live.

We are about to leave behind an age without a name for our posterity. The only footprints our generation will be remembered by will be the ecological footprints of our greed and our destruction of the riches of our planet, the Earth. If the words and work of the scientists who met together in 2008 at the International Mountain Biodiversity Conference (IMBC) in Kathmandu mean anything at all, they will have sounded the last post on our insouciance. We have reached a point in the Earth’s history beyond which there is no return. Unless we take serious ‘steps’ to conserve our natural heritage today, all that we believe to be humanity’s greatest achievements could be swallowed by the black hole of history: swallowed without a trace. We have a long road to travel to achieve all that the IMBC showed us is possible. Remember what the poet said, there are “miles to go” before any of us can sleep if we are to conserve and, hopefully, enrich the natural heritage of this intrinsically good Earth for future generations. Don’t just talk, let’s act!

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