

# Himalayan University Consortium in Bhutan

ICIMOD

FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE



## Introduction

The Himalayan University Consortium (HUC), an initiative under the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) regional programme on Mountain Knowledge and Action Networks (MKAN), is a member-based consortium of universities and research thinktanks with a special interest in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). The consortium supports sustainable, fair, and inclusive mountain development in the HKH and adjoining lowlands, and contributes to global knowledge through collaborative research, education, and training.

## Focus Area

HUC in Bhutan aims to promote mountain-focused, HKH-specific higher education and research in universities and research institutions. It also facilitates regional collaboration in research and training for sustainable mountain development. Through its capacity-strengthening activities, HUC supports scholar-leaders capable of undertaking high quality research and education for sustainable mountain development in Bhutan and the region.

## Partners

There are two full HUC members in Bhutan: The Ugyen Wangchuck Institute of Conservation and Environmental Research (UWICER) and the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). The RUB Vice Chancellor signed the HUC charter at the annual meeting in New Delhi in October 2016 and the UWICER Director signed the charter at the annual meeting in Chengdu in November 2017. Eight constituent colleges of UWICER and RUB and two affiliated colleges have been active in HUC activities since 2016.

## Activities

During two grant cycles (2016–2017 and 2017–2018), four higher education and research institutions in Bhutan were lead recipients of HUC Seed Grants (total USD 40,000); three other institutions were participating partners in institutional grants. A total of 57 individual researchers and faculty members (10 women) took part in HUC-led and HUC-supported conferences, workshops, and trainings within and outside the HKH region. The first ICIMOD Mountain Chair title (2017–2019) was conferred to Dr Phanchung of RUB through a competitive selection process.

## Way Forward

During the MTAP IV, HUC will try to enhance the quality of HUC membership and increase ownership and leadership by Bhutan's HUC members by intensifying interactions among HUC members in Bhutan and members inside and outside the region. Bhutan's HUC members will be encouraged to take the lead in HUC thematic working groups and capacity-building activities such as the HUC Academy and HUC Lecture series. The HUC steering group will be expanded to include representatives from all eight regional member countries, following which a representative of Bhutan's members will be nominated to join the steering group.



Dasho Nidup Dorji, the RUB Vice Chancellor, during the HUC Annual Meeting in New Delhi in October 2016



Dr Rekha Chettri, Assistant Professor, College of Natural Resources (CNR), at the HUC Conference on Mountain Waters in Chengdu, in October 2017



Dr Phanchung, RUB, with ICIMOD Director General Dr David Molden during the ICIMOD Mountain Chair Conferment Ceremony on 2 December 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal