



ICIMOD MOUNTAIN CHAIR 2020–2022

Christopher Scott

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Christopher Scott has deep roots in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). Born in Lucknow in the Gangetic Plains of India, Scott grew up speaking Hindi; trekking through villages across the Garhwal, Himachal, Jammu–Kashmir and Nepal Himalaya; and working with voluntary organizations in the region. He obtained his master's degree and PhD from Cornell University, researching the Sukhomajri watershed in the Shivalik Hills of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh and studying water management in the Catskill Mountains in the US, respectively. Subsequently, he has focused extensively on the Andes in South America, in addition to water–energy–food nexus challenges in India and Mexico, among other locations.

By training and vocation, Christopher Scott is an interdisciplinary scholar whose work centres on evidence-based policy for water and natural resource conservation. His applied research emphasizes science–policy dialogues between universities and research institutes on the one hand and public- and private-sector decision makers and the public on the other. Outside academia, he has made wide-ranging contributions to water policy formulation and implementation, with 15 years' experience with NGOs, government agencies, and applied-research institutes.

His sustained efforts to effect policy impact via dialogue and outreach with decision makers and scientists have

gained acclaim internationally and in the US. He is the founding Co-director of the AQUASEC Center of Excellence for Water Security, a virtual centre and network of researchers and decision makers. He currently leads research and training on adaptive water and ecosystem management around the world, innovating with tools such as structured engagement in water–energy–food nexus observatories; scenario planning; and “science inreach”, which involves inspiring research and deriving methods and data directly from policy processes.

Commissioned by ICIMOD, the Mountain Chair is an honorary title conferred upon a prominent scholar working on mountain issues in the Hindu Kush Himalaya. The Mountain Chair promotes the vision and mission of the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) for enhanced collaboration and dynamic knowledge partnerships among universities in the region for resilient mountain development. The Mountain Chair also serves as an HUC and ICIMOD Ambassador within and outside the region.

Work plan

Water and energy resources cooperation across the HKH

Christopher Scott maintains that sustainable mountain development must be rooted in local sovereignty and regional autonomy with a clear vision and purpose for mountain people's aspirations and capabilities. Water and energy resource cooperation poses a major HKH-wide development opportunity and a policy coordination challenge. Specifically, questions loom large on the way forward for emerging regional energy cooperation and how lessons learned can be applied to transboundary water management in the region.

As ICIMOD Mountain Chair, Scott will focus on water security linked with energy cooperation and transboundary waters in the eastern Ganges and western Brahmaputra confluence, including provisionally the Teesta–Jamuna and Koshi sub-basins. He plans to develop and extend applied science–policy research that builds on ICIMOD's Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme (HIMAP), in which he has played an active role. This will involve strengthening HUC partnerships, specifically among the following:

- Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Bangladesh
- Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environmental Research, Bhutan
- Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan
- Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, India
- Agriculture and Forestry University, Nepal
- University of Arizona, USA

Direct university-to-university partnership with professors and postgraduate students will be extended to science–policy dialogues that Scott has worked to develop since 2001 (at the International Water Management Institute, where he served as Asia Regional Director) and later since 2006 (at the University of Arizona, currently as Director of the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy). As Mountain Chair, Scott will help strengthen the following areas:

1. Training and capacity building

An adapted version of his post-graduate seminars (“Water–energy–food nexus” and “Adaptation and resilience in water resource systems”) will be offered as an interactive short course for faculty and postgraduate students during “mini-sabbatical” stays at the five HUC full members mentioned above (excluding University of Arizona, although he will subsequently incorporate HKH material in the university's seminars based on his work as Mountain Chair). He will coordinate with faculty and students across partner institutions to develop collaborative research proposals that include the students' capstone projects or theses.

2. Solutions linking science and policy

Working with partners at the HUC Academy and Thematic Working Groups and with ICIMOD, he will conduct interactive knowledge co-production sessions with decision makers in government agencies and NGOs to identify steps forward for regional solutions based on HIMAP.

3. HKH regional cooperation

The eastern Ganges and western Brahmaputra confluence zone will form the focus sub-region to strengthen collaboration and develop new avenues for cooperation, especially via joint participation in conferences as well as publications.

4. HKH–Andes cooperation

Scott recognizes great value in comparative and applied scholarship, including between the HKH and other mountain regions such as the Andes. He proposes to interlink lessons learned on water–energy cooperation and sustainable mountain development under climate change between the HKH and the Andes, where he is shortlisted as a Fulbright Scholar (2020–21) in Mendoza, Argentina.

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