

Second Regional Upper Indus Basin Network Annual Meeting

26-27 January 2021 | Platform: Microsoft Teams

SECTION 1

Introduction

The second Regional Upper Indus Basin Network (UIBN) Annual Meeting (RUAM) convened from 26-27 January 2021 to assess the network's overall progress, and devise future strategies with focus on regional cooperation. The meeting was attended by the chair of the UIBN network, country chapter coordinators and co-coordinators from the four riparian countries, advisors, leads or co-leads of the Technical Working Groups (TWGs), experts from international organizations, and members from the secretariat (ICIMOD).

The UIBN – started as a monitoring working group in 2014 – is a knowledge and research hub for national and international institutions and researchers working in the basin. It aims to strengthen upstream–downstream linkages, and foster higher coordination, and research related to climate, cryosphere, water, hazards

and vulnerability, and adaptation. The network is rooted in four country chapters in each of the basin countries – Afghanistan, India, China, and Pakistan – and governed by the Regional Strategic Committee (RSC). Every year, the country chapters convene for the RUAM.

SECTION 2

Key discussions

TRANSFER OF CHAIRPERSONSHIP

The chairpersonship was successfully transferred from the Pakistan Chapter to the Afghanistan Chapter. Khalid Mohtadullah was heartily felicitated for his outstanding guidance to the UIBN, and Mohammad Naim Eqrar was warmly welcomed as the new chair. As per the governance framework, the chairpersonship rotates among the basin countries every two years.

FOLLOWING THE THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC) FOR A RESILIENT AND EMPOWERED UIB REGION

The UIBN had endorsed Theory of Change as a strategic roadmap to achieve its vision of strengthened knowledge-base and regional cooperation in the Upper Indus Basin. Members discussed the key pathways and outcomes outlined in the ToC. Members also reiterated the need for all the country chapters to develop a ToC for identifying long term pathways. The ToC could also guide the country chapters on aligning their work as per the national and regional context and priorities. The UIBN Pakistan chapter has already developed a ToC.

COLLABORATION ON SCIENCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The ToC outlines regional collaborative projects on science and capacity building as one of the intermediate results. Members discussed elaborately on past and ongoing collaborations as well as the potential for future collaborative work. Members also shared inputs on the ongoing transboundary study of climate change impact on livelihoods of UIB Communities in Ladakh, India and Baltistan, Pakistan. Members appraised the developments on the joint research proposal on assessing the impact of climate change on water resources in the Indus Basin. There were also discussions on exploring potential funding from the World Bank and the Swiss Development Cooperation. The country chapters also worked together to prepare the manuscript on the Upper Indus Basin Network (UIBN) for the special issue of the Science of the Total Environment (STOTEN), submitted in February 2021. The special issue includes basin-wide perspective of climatic and other meteorological factors, and their influence on the current and future state of the upper Indus basin.

There were also discussions between the Afghanistan and India chapter on capacity building interventions. The two countries discussed the short- and long-term courses that could potentially be offered through different institutions and shared the funding opportunities identified in the earlier meeting between the two country chapters.

Members also discussed ways to bridge the gender gaps in science and policy, which is emphasized in the ToC as one of the key outcomes under gender sensitive solutions. The establishment of the Gender Resource Group (GRG) in Pakistan has been a step towards expanding gender perspectives in the UIBN, and in integrating gender-inclusive

knowledge, experiences, and policy inputs. Members shared that the learnings gathered from the scoping and implementation of GRG in Pakistan would be crucial for helping in formation of similar groups in the other country chapters. Committing to initiate and support the establishment of GRG in their respective country chapters, the chapters acknowledged GRG's crucial role in influencing gender-focused policies and processes. The gender team at ICIMOD informed that the conceptualization of the Gender Resource Group (GRG) in Afghanistan has begun, and conversations with various relevant organizations are taking place.

IDENTIFYING RESEARCH GAPS, AND COORDINATING DATA AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The six Technical Working Groups (TWGs) from the country chapters discussed, in groups, a variety of topics – identifying gaps in knowledge in relevant TWGs, possibility of bilateral interventions, capacity gaps and offering, and area of focus for the respective TWG for each of the country chapters. The gaps identified by the TWGs ranged from data inadequacy (such as meteorological data, groundwater level data, snow cover data, black carbon in cryosphere) and lack of data sharing to poor infrastructural and human capacity for research. The TWGs agreed that a standard methodology for data generation, enhanced capacity of institutions and researchers, and sharing of best practices among the country chapters would help fulfill these gaps. On the key areas of focus, the TWGs listed various priority areas – studies on natural resource management, mountain hazards and risks, impacts of air pollution, water supply-demand under climate change scenarios, mass balance research, and studies of social capital & indigenous knowledge to address climate change adaptation. The TWGs also noted the importance of the implementation of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) on planning and implementation of research.

Further discussions among the TWGs focused on the pathways in the ToC framework on applying co-developed methodologies and approaches, ensuring high quality scientific products, and fostering data and knowledge sharing. The learnings from these discussions will help the TWGs to initiate relevant interventions in the identified potential areas of collaborations on joint studies, strengthened institutional linkages and partnerships, and capacity building.

ENHANCEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE INDUS

Scientists and researchers were also invited to share ongoing and new research on the Upper Indus Basin. Research shared include the understanding snow melt, groundwater availability, hydrological regimes in the face of climate change, and assessing hydropower potential in the Upper Indus Basin. One of the overarching results/conclusions from the study areas, including sub basins of the Indus, was that rising temperatures could alter hydrological regimes, which could significantly influence the agriculture irrigation demand, domestic water supply, hydropower generation and ecosystems, particularly in the downstream areas of the basin. The results from these studies prompt better strategies for adaptation against climate change impacts, particularly on managing water resources in the Upper Indus Basin. Such sharing of research also contributes to enhanced understanding of climate change issues in the basin and also encourages potential joint work, and idea and knowledge sharing among scientists and researchers within and across country chapters on areas of similar interest.

RELEVANT RESOURCES

[Governance framework](#)

[Theory of Change](#)

[Scientific presentations](#)

PROPOSED NEXT MEETING

2nd Half of March 2022 .

CITATION

ICIMOD (2021). *Proceedings of the Second Regional Upper Indus Basin Network Annual Meeting*. ICIMOD.

Additional event information and materials are available at:

<https://www.icimod.org/event/second-regional-upper-indus-basin-network-annual-meeting/>

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