ICIMOD G MBA PhD Fellowship
Call for Applications

BACKGROUND

ICIMOD is a regional intergovernmental learning and knowledge-sharing centre serving eight regional member countries in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. It aims to serve the region through information and knowledge generation and sharing to find innovative solutions to critical mountain problems. It facilitates knowledge exchange in its thematic areas of Livelihoods, Ecosystem Services, Water and Air, and Geospatial Solutions to address common issues in regional member countries as well as from transboundary perspectives.

Mountains are of immense ecological, cultural, and socioeconomic importance. They cover 24% of the world’s land surface, host 12% of the world’s population, harbour huge biological and cultural diversity, and provide vital ecosystem goods and services. However, the combination of increasing global demographic and economic pressure and high biodiversity and ecosystems service value also makes them particularly vulnerable. Accordingly, ecologically sustainable socioeconomic development in mountains has become a priority and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) have been adopted as a useful tool to guide this progress.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project, entitled Mountain Biodiversity and the Sustainable Development Goals: Knowledge for Synergistic Action (G MBA), will contribute to the development of tools and guide progress towards ecologically sustainable development in the mountains. It is the first mountain-specific comparative assessment of interactions among SDG targets based on an analysis of the status and trends in biodiversity, ecosystem services, human wellbeing, and their direct (or indirect) drivers. It will focus on developing a better understanding of the specific challenges associated with the sustainable management and conservation of mountain biodiversity (SDG 15.4) in the context of competing development goals, limited resources, and complex governance structures. This assessment will be undertaken across global, national, and sub-national scales from mountain systems to communities, and the research outcomes disseminated to relevant stakeholders for uptake into synergistic sustainable development strategies.
This collaborative research project will be executed by experienced partners in Bolivia, Nepal, Switzerland, and Tanzania using globally available data; a literature review; an online survey of more than 1,000 mountain ecosystems involving hundreds of experts in hundreds of mountain ranges worldwide; and local field surveys to collect data on the biodiversity–ecosystem services–human wellbeing nexus across scales. This information will be combined with spatial data and aggregated for analyses and comparisons within and across scales. Interactions between SDG targets will be assessed using expert-, statistics-, and network-based methods. Knowledge transfer from local to national scale will target key stakeholder groups and include participatory approaches. While scientifically rigorous, this project has great development potential in that it offers policy-relevant knowledge and tools to respond to actual sustainable development needs and requirements in mountain areas, from the global to local levels.

OBJECTIVES

This project aims to achieve two goals:

The first goal – Research – involves achieving a better understanding of the relation between dimensions of human wellbeing and biodiversity in mountains across scales, the interactions between biodiversity-explicit and other SDG targets, and the factors that influence them. The second goal – Development – ensures that local mountain communities; their leaders; and other regional, national, and global key stakeholders are aware of and knowledgeable about the co-benefits and potential of biodiversity-neutral pathways, the supporting instruments available to them, and training options to implement them.

Four objectives will be pursued to achieve these goals:

1. To assess the status and trends in human wellbeing, biodiversity, ecosystems, and ecosystem services in mountains at the global, national, and subnational levels using the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) assessment framework
2. To study the strength and directionality of interactions between biodiversity-explicit SDG targets and other SDG targets in mountains at the global, national, and subnational levels, and identify synergies
3. To identify the role of the context provided by governance, economic, technological, socioecological, cultural, and environmental factors in forming these interactions
4. To provide the acquired knowledge to key stakeholder groups and enable a knowledge-based evaluation of opportunities to implement coherent measures towards environmentally sustainable socioeconomic development
METHODOLOGY

The above hypotheses and objectives call for a study design that allows for context-specific data collection and for comparisons across and within scales. Accordingly, the project follows a spatially stratified design in which data are collected, analyzed, and compared at global, national, and subnational scales. The methods for the collection of data, from a literature review at a global scale to field questionnaires at a local scale, reflect this stratified design. Collected data will include a set of variables identical across scales and methods, which will specifically enable comparative analyses and the generation of scalable knowledge.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

• The position will be managed by ICIMOD in close collaboration with partners from Bolivia, Nepal, Switzerland, and Tanzania.
  o The PhD fellow will enter into an agreement with and be based at ICIMOD.
  o The fellow must be either enrolled in a PhD programme in a university or be willing to pursue a PhD during the project period.
• A scientist from ICIMOD will officially serve as a co-advisor for the research fellow.
• The PhD fellow will be primarily based at ICIMOD’s headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal, but will be encouraged to spend time at her/his university for the PhD and to attend conferences and research team meetings elsewhere outside of Nepal.
• The maximum PhD fellowship period is four years. The fellowship agreement will be on an annual basis, to be renewed every year subject to the fellow’s performance and available funds.
• Data and knowledge products generated under this fellowship programme are subject to ICIMOD’s data policy.

REQUIREMENTS

ICIMOD aims to recruit one PhD fellow who should meet the following mandatory requirements:

• Postgraduate degree in biological sciences, environmental sciences, botany, zoology, or another relevant science, to be completed before 1 May 2019
• Quantitative research skills, including statistical analysis, remote sensing, and GIS
• Experience working in remote rural areas
• Strong interest in the topics to be investigated under the project, preferably demonstrated by previous work on similar topics
• Strong command of both written and spoken English
• Excellent analytical, technical, and communication skills
• Motivated, communicative, and proactive
• Independent work attitude and positive team spirit
APPLICATION PROCEDURE

During the first round, applicants are invited to apply via the [HUC Online Portal](#) with the following documents:

- A motivation letter
- A curriculum vitae, including contact details of two referees
- Two letters of recommendation
- A short research proposal (1,000 words) in line with the project’s objectives

During the second round, shortlisted candidates will be invited for a Skype interview.

Women and members of socioeconomically disadvantaged communities are strongly encouraged to apply.

TIMELINE

- The application deadline is 17:00 Kathmandu Time, 16 May 2019.
- The awarded PhD fellow is expected to commence the fellowship no later than 15 June 2019.

REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

- An allowance of USD 1,000 per month will be provided.
- Expat PhD fellows will receive an additional USD 200 per month for accommodation; travel costs at the time of joining and repatriation will be reimbursed.
- The PhD fellow will be reimbursed for international travel costs incurred on trips required by the fellowship.

For more information, please send an email to [huc@icimod.org](mailto:huc@icimod.org)