

HighARC

Highland Aquatic Resources Conservation
and Sustainable Development



Funded by the
European Commission

*Billions of people depend on aquatic resources,
an estimated 50% of wetlands have been lost,
more than 20% of freshwater species are known to be threatened
- this project aims to address these issues in highland regions of Asia
where dependence for livelihoods is especially high*





Highland Aquatic Resources Conservation and Sustainable Development (HighARCS)

Project duration January 2009 - December 2013

Background

While the link between environmental degradation and increased vulnerability of poor communities is well known, only limited information is available concerning communities in highland areas, and even less regarding those dependent on aquatic resources and associated ecosystem services in such settings. Moreover, the role of aquatic resources is not well understood in relation to livelihoods among food-insecure households.

Given the dynamic nature and high vulnerability of aquatic resources particularly in the light of global climate change, there is an urgent need to improve existing knowledge on:

- the significance and conservation status of biodiversity in upland ecosystems in terms of the local ecology and regional socio-economic systems,
- changing conditions in the upland environment and conflicting demands of those dependent on its resources.

Concept and Objectives

The HighARCS project mobilizes the strengths and expertise of a multi-disciplinary research team from European and Asian institutions to better understand how to sustainably manage highland aquatic resources and to reconcile demands stemming from multiple-use.

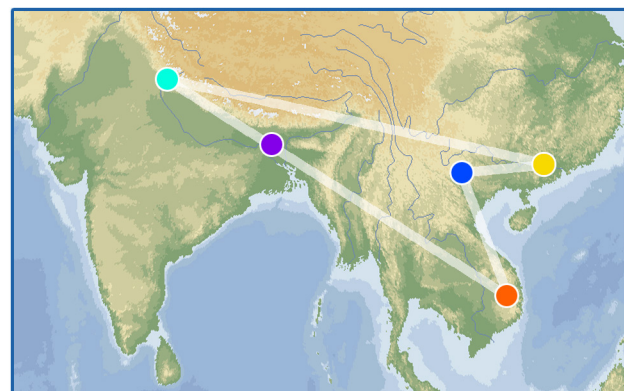
Priority research outputs include developing an understanding of the importance of aquatic resources in highland areas of Asia, and formulating integrated action plans on conservation, livelihood and policy with local communities. Best practices aimed at conserving biodiversity and sustaining ecosystem services will be communicated to potential users to promote uptake and enhanced policy formulation.

Research Approach

The HighARCS project cuts across disciplines and sectors, builds cooperation in the field and develops new forms of partnership with poor upland communities. The approach involves participatory and integrated policy development. It ensures that local needs are prioritized and incorporated with institutions responsible for different levels of planning and implementation.

Researchers at all field sites are working to encourage local ownership of the project and its outcomes through a process of information exchange, reflection, and shared accountability. This will encourage continuity of appropriate and accepted practices after the project has ended.

A series of capacity-building workshops will ensure that the project is inclusive of all marginal stakeholder groups, including women, young people and ethnic communities.



The research will be undertaken at five sites in Asia:

- Guangzhou, China
- Uttarakhand, India
- West Bengal, India
- Northern Vietnam
- Central Vietnam

Overall Strategy

The HighARCS project comprises of a set of nine Work Packages, all of which have one or more deliverable. Each Work Package (WP) engages the different partners in collaborative action.

Work Packages	Lead Partner	Deliverable
 1 Situation Appraisal	Essex Sustainability Institute, University of Essex (UEssex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Situation Appraisal Report, including gender framework and IUCN Red Listing outputs
 2 Dissemination, Monitoring and Evaluation	FishBase Information and Research Group (FIN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HighARCS website ● Communication strategy with communication plans for each field site ● Regional workshop proceedings ● Appropriate communication media for information generated by the project
 3 Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Values	International Union for Conservation of Nature, Species Programme (IUCN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report on highland aquatic ecosystem services and biodiversity values ● Integrated Action Plans for each field site
 4 Highland Aquatic Resources and Livelihoods	Essex Sustainability Institute, University of Essex (UEssex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report on livelihoods dependent on highland aquatic resources ● Integrated Action Plans for each field site
 5 Stakeholders, Institutions and Markets	Department of Environmental, Social and Spatial Change, Roskilde University (RU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report on institutions, policy and conflicts ● Report on stakeholder evaluation of highland aquatic resources ● Integrated Action Plans for each field site
 6 Conserving Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Values	International Union for Conservation of Nature, Species Programme (IUCN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report on approaches agreed with stakeholders to implement and monitor ● Report on change in ecosystem indicators ● Report on ecosystem-based outcomes and appropriate communication media for implementation and monitoring in the region
 7 Sustainable Highland Aquatic Resources Development and Livelihoods	Essex Sustainability Institute, University of Essex (UEssex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report on implementation, impact and effectiveness of Integrated Action Plans ● Appropriate communication media, including Better Practices Guides, for implementation of Integrated Action Plan strategies
 8 Policy Development to Support Conservation and Wise Use	Department of Environmental, Social and Spatial Change, Roskilde University (RU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report on institutional and policy impact of Integrated Action Plans formulated and implemented at field sites ● Report on effectiveness of Integrated Action Plans with respect to formulating policy in support of conservation and wise-use ● Appropriate communication media aimed at policy-makers
 9 Project Management	Essex Sustainability Institute, University of Essex (UEssex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Periodic activity and management reports ● Final reports

Strategic Impact

Values – Values ascribed to biodiversity and ecosystems are revealed and assessed so people can review their own perceptions regarding conservation and wise-use of resources. Knowledge and understanding of these values serve as bases for negotiation in situations where there are conflicting demands.

Information – A new body of information, originating from the Project, is organized and made accessible to a range of stakeholders from farmers to the general public, among the countries to which the partners belong and globally.

Policy – Policies are formulated based on a participatory framework, on local ecological knowledge, and gender-sensitive research activities.



Partners

The HighARCS project partners constitute a strong inter-disciplinary team well qualified to ensure significant impacts for conservation, sustainable resource use, and policy reform. Development of strong links amongst partners based in Europe and Asia, through joint execution and supervision of activities, is a crucial element in generating international cooperation, during and after the project.

Management

The University of Essex will take responsibility for overall coordination and management of the project steered by the Project Management Group (PMG).



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