

High Mountains Adaptation Partnership (HiMAP)  
2013 workshop “**Glacial Lakes and Disaster Risk Management: Knowledge Exchange and Field Training**”  
Huaraz, Peru

**COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS**

by John Harlin

On 15 July 2013, the HiMAP workshop in Huaraz featured a session on developing the HiMAP Community of Practice. We broke into small groups to discuss current strengths and weaknesses of our CoP and how we could improve it. Each breakout group then reported to the entire gathering. The comments below are gleaned from each group’s reporting, with some editing to avoid duplications.

If you’re a HiMAP member or are interested in joining, please review these discussions and add your own comments—including whatever we didn’t think of. To read a 12-point summation of the 100 points below, **please continue reading to the next section.**

**Purpose of the partnership:**

- Cross-pollination between groups: people from various groups share knowledge and collaborate.
- We provide a unique opportunity to connect diverse groups of scientists, NGOs, decision makers, and policymakers.
- Maybe this is our niche: sustainable adaptation.
- We provide science-based climate adaptation and resilience (development).
- We should emphasize the community component as being at our core. It should be very visible in everything we do.
- We translate science so it can be used by others.
- We provide a balance between various sciences and disciplines.
- We provide “boots on the high ground” for real fieldwork.
- We offer continuity by being on the ground for the long term.

**Vision statement:**

- We need a very clear vision statement of the program that will engage other agencies and stakeholders to join us, both as members and as funders.
- We need a mission statement that clearly connects us to the needs of mountain communities whose interests are often poorly represented.
- These things won't happen on their own. Management is necessary.

**Current strengths:**

- Meeting people from different regions working on similar problems.
- Interacting on a personal level with colleagues.

- Providing opportunities for young researchers to network.
- Fostering comparative research and collaboration between regions, currently Nepal and the Andes.
- Connecting science with community. This keeps development and science in the same conversation and combines both to address adaptation.
- Knowledge exchange continues from the formal conference environment into informal conversations and relationships in the field.
- Face-to-face meetings are ideal for networking.

#### **Education:**

- Promote mountain education—emphasize education more; make it a higher priority.
- Continue outreach and education initiatives for the communities in which we work.
- Develop educational tools that involve school children and the community (using social networks, etc).
- Make education a priority (for young generations).
- Include education and outreach at all levels of our work.
- Use our website to help train future professionals. Work at the bachelor, Masters, PhD, and postdoc levels.
- We provide a unique opportunity for graduate students.
- Educating grad students and field researchers should be a core part of our gathering together as a group.
- Develop and emphasize educational tools. Not just for the graduate students who are working on these programs, but for younger people, too.

#### **Research:**

- Facilitate research collaboration and reduce duplication between research programs.
- Offer more workshops in which people can learn about technologies (such as GPR) and how they can be applied to one's own field sites.

#### **Networking:**

- Keep students and professionals networked on our website.
- Collaborate with NGOs in the communities they work in.
- We need to expand our reach—the value of a network is its reach.

#### **Science:**

- Maintain credibility through scientific accuracy and rigor.
- Need a better balance between the social sciences and the physical sciences. Social scientists are not well represented in our group.
- Rather than superficially engaging the social sciences, there could be a social scientist or anthropologist with you from the start.

- Base our work in science. You cannot adapt unless you know what you are adapting to.
- Huascarán National Park and many other parks and reserves have a mandate for research.

#### **Communities:**

- Share results even more with local communities. Need to give back the information. There's a huge gap in this area outside our group.
- Build empowerment that supports local activities, including capacity building, broad knowledge sharing of the research, and a special focus on education at all levels.
- Emphasize continuity. If we go into the field for a few months and then it takes a while to get back to those places, we don't really disseminate our results to the communities that we're working in. It's really important to establish this give-and-take relationship.
- It requires time for synergies to develop with local communities.
- Money needs to go back to the community.

#### **Policy:**

- The knowledge we gain should affect policy.
- Need to communicate the results of our work to policymakers. We need to share our information so they can plan better.

#### **Geographic reach for HiMAP:**

- There are a lot of mountains around the world, but only two major mountain systems are well represented in our group (Andes and Himalaya).
- The programs within this group should be extended to other mountain regions around the globe.
- Include more professionals working in other mountain systems and communities besides Andes and Himalayas.

#### **Region-specific nodes for HiMAP (should we have them?):**

- No: Region-specific conferences and workshops are common. The point of our program and workshops is to learn about similar problems in other places in the world. This allows problem-solving across regions.
- Yes: A regional node for the Andes would include many partners who are missing from our current group. For example, there are excellent glaciologists and hazards folks who work in Argentina and Chile. It's hard to talk about an Andean group without these folks being represented. There is also fabulous science in Venezuela and Ecuador by people who tend not to focus on the glacial scene, but on the high elevation ecosystem (the páramo). This is true for other areas as well.

- Yes: Adopt a multi-nodal structure with different timetables. E.g., every two years there could be a node meeting in each high mountain region. Every three or four years there would be an international interchange.

#### **Focus of workshops and community of practice:**

- Maybe focus our workshops on specific problems that need fixing. People could share experiences from their own field sites across diverse regions.
- Use the “community of practice” mechanism to support virtual connections between local stakeholders and scientists. E.g., Huascarán National Park is eager to test if a “community of practice” regional node could convene a group that would discuss questions and present them to researchers.
- The goal should not be to just to send papers from a conference; the need is for an ongoing process of thinking and connecting, of carrying on a dialogue. Everyone here has said “yes, let’s think of a strategy.”

#### **Membership:**

- Some important disciplines are underrepresented in our group.
- We need to think more about the different disciplines that are necessary to properly address topics.
- We have a heterogeneous group from different parts of the world, but there are major areas of expertise in mountain sciences that are not systematically represented in this effort.
- Can we make this process inclusive so that everyone who is interested in high mountain areas feels that they’re invited and connected into this network?
- We should be a multidisciplinary network with open membership that does not require applying to or being admitted into a structured group.
- It would be helpful to include people who speak another “language.” We should reach across all useful fields. Economists are an example of a field that might be included and currently isn’t, but there could be others.

#### **Participation:**

- We need to tighten the group (deeper connections).
- Face-to-face meetings are ideal. Conferences, resources, and workshops for knowledge exchange are incredibly productive. These are conversations and connections that we continue to draw from long after the conference.
- We find face-to-face interactions far more productive than webinars or newsletters. Virtual forms of communication haven’t been very effective in this group.
- The mobile workshop in Nepal (2011) combined formal and informal learning during a trek. It was amazingly productive. Informal meetings have been incredibly helpful.
- We are very enthusiastic about combining formal knowledge exchange in the conference setting with practical workshops in the field. It would be wonderful

- to continue with this combination of formal and informal information interactions.
- Straddling lines is difficult. Overcome barriers between pure science and pure development with applied research.
  - Use the Mountain Forum—try to bring back the old style of forums in Mountain Forum.
  - Develop a federation of earth science information partners.
  - Use a wiki platform and open forum.
  - How do you design a collaborative system?

**Things we can/should do more of:**

- Impressed by advances that are being made in digitally mapping complex topography and systems. We could focus more on sharing these techniques.
- We should build cutting-edge collaborative science into our CoP.
- Language translation could be an important service.
- Translating science into usable information is part of our mission.
- Document the value of field experiences in these programs; document long-term impacts.
- Idea exchanges between scientists in different adaptation programs.

**Conferences:**

- Consider organizing conferences around problems, not regions. People across fields could interact with one another in small groups to come up with solutions to similar problems. More than simply dissemination of knowledge, it's collaboration.
- Engage and share information more with policy makers, rather than working so much within the academic world.

**Website:**

- Improve the website with better design and a global map with pinpoints where you can see where people are working and/or what topics they are researching. Links to helpful publications, etc.
- Ideally the website should be multi-lingual.
- See IWLEARN as an example of a helpful website.
- Include language and/or nodal sections. One can reduce linguistic concerns through a web environment. Language is less of an issue if you have pages/sections in Spanish, Nepalese, Russian, and so on.
- Improve the ability to share data on the website. Very important.
- Build on climber-scientist experiences. On the web we can present not just the achievements, but also the real-life challenges of conducting research in difficult mountain environments. Present how we overcome difficulties that have never been faced before. These are things that you would not include in a typical peer-reviewed research article.
- Keep track of all that is happening in high mountain landscapes.
- Make the website more interactive.

**Small Grants Program:**

- Small grants (climber-scientist grants) are very important, especially funding directly from the HiMAP program.
- Grants encourage communication within the group, offering incentives for collaboration.
- Some grants could be required to have people from multiple fields working on a problem. E.g., rather than superficially engaging with “social” through surveys, a sociologist or anthropologist could accompany a science expedition while in the field.
- Grants could encourage more collaborating with local NGOs and/or finding an effective mode of communication between groups.
- Small grants support graduate students across fields.
- Make funding available as a grant, rather than having to seek reimbursements. One grantee had to take out 3 credit cards to pay for expenses, including large-ticket items like airfare, and is still awaiting reimbursements months later.
- A lot of enthusiasm for the climber-scientists program. Want to keep it well funded and open to everyone. We need to support young professionals. This provides opportunity to get good science and to share experiences with colleagues worldwide. More focus on young professionals would be great.
- Ideal for grad students. These projects are on the scale of what a grad student does; it allows them to do integrated research.

**Sources of additional funding:**

- The Federation of Earth Science Information Partners (ESIP) meets twice a year and lists funding opportunities via its master mailing list. Examine this model for forming clusters and focus groups.
- Branch out and collaborate on new proposals.
- Identify people or groups who can help systemize funding opportunities.
- Share opportunities for funding mechanisms. For example, European funding agencies that are accessible to folks working in the Andes might also be accessible to folks working in Himalayas, and so on.

## SUMMARY OF HiMAP COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE DISCUSSION

by John Harlin

The HiMAP Community of Practice discussion generated approximately **100 observations and/or suggestions**. Here is my attempt to distill our thoughts down to a dozen of the major themes, emphasizing those that seemed to come up most frequently, whether it was in the conference room or while talking on the trail. Some of this synthesis is based on my interpretation, which might bias the list. Also, due to the nature of our small-groups discussions, each point does not necessarily represent a consensus of the CoP.

Please add your comments below or by sending me an email. Don't be shy if your takeaway was different from mine or if you'd like to expand on any of these points—or suggest new ones. This is the dialogue that will make HiMAP sustainable and productive. The points below are in not in any order of priority.

1) We're an interdisciplinary group that unites the social sciences with the physical sciences. If anything, we'd like to embrace the social component even more, with more development practitioners in our group. Physical scientists should consider including social scientists in their work from the outset, including initial field research.

2) We'd like to expand our educational outreach significantly. We need to develop programs that reach students of all ages, from village primary schools to international graduate schools. Beyond students, we need to communicate with and educate communities and the public at large.

3) We believe HiMAP is doing good work and should continue and grow. We need a clear vision statement that helps make this happen. Our mission might be defined as sustainable, science-based adaptation to changing mountain environments.

4) HiMAP membership should be open and inclusive. We should welcome diverse participation via an informal process, not create barriers to entry. We should also expand to include more mountain regions worldwide.

5) HiMAP should foster collaboration. We must build the tools and the process that helps us to work together on projects.

6) We provide unique opportunities for graduate students. Our grants and programs are at a scale that is suitable for graduate studies. Our intimate conferences and workshops are ideal for graduate students to share their work, to network, and to collaborate.

7) HiMAP workshops/conferences offer an ideal combination of formal and informal communication that takes place both in the conference room and in the field. The

practical field workshops add considerable value to traditional conference-style presentations. Our multi-disciplinary international conferences allow us to learn from broad perspectives and backgrounds.

8) We already excel at working with communities and we should expand on this strength. Communities need to share in all research and when possible they should participate in the process.

9) We should work with decision makers at all levels to influence policy. Governance should be based on scientific understanding, which can best be achieved by communication and dialogue.

10) We should consider developing regional nodes for our group in addition to the broad international membership. This would foster increased local collaboration. But regional nodes should not come at the expense of international conferences, which expose us to diverse perspectives and people we would not otherwise meet.

11) Future conferences might focus on specific problems to solve. Worldwide talent and insight could explore local concerns and suggest practical solutions based on international knowledge.

12) We need to develop new sources of funding and collaborative ways of seeking funding. This includes a strong program of small grants (climber-scientist-style grants), which have been vital to our work to date.

Now, what do you think? Does this reflect your vision of the HiMAP Community of Practice, or where it should go? Please continue the discussion in the comments box or by emailing.

Cheers,  
John Harlin  
*HiMAP CoP Moderator*