

MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP MEETING ON
Improving Coordination in Mountain Research Events and Activities
Rome, 4 December 2008

Summary Report

Participants:

Greg Greenwood (MRI),
Astrid Bjoernsen Gurung (MRI Europe/IGF),
Thomas Kohler (CDE),
Carmen de Jong (Institut de la Montagne/Université de Savoie),
Axel Borsdorf (IGF- Austrian Academy of Sciences),
Thomas Schaaf (UNESCO),
Ermanno Zanini, Michele Freppaz, Angelo Caimi (University of Torino),
Martin Price (Centre for Mountain Studies),
Andrea Lami, Francesca Steffanoni (Ev-K2-CNR),
Giuseppe Scarascia (Agricultural Research Council of Italy),
Doug McGuire, Rosalaura Romeo, Sara Manuelli, Stella Narciso (Mountain Partnership Secretariat-Central Hub).

Opening and introduction:

The Mountain Partnership Secretariat Coordinator, Doug McGuire, made a few welcoming remarks and explained that the meeting had been organized following a request from several MP members to define and agree on a mechanism to achieve better coordination concerning scientific events related to mountains and to improve collaboration on mountain focused research activities. He underlined that the discussion on how to achieve better cohesion in organizing research events would initially be limited to some leading members of the Research Initiative and then involve also others. He mentioned that the Mountain Forum could be called upon to help develop a technical platform, if required. The participants then briefly introduced themselves.

Better coordination of mountain research events could help (i) to make use of synergies of anticipated events (e.g. back-to-back, make use of information elaborated in a former event for a consecutive event) and (ii) to use fixed meetings to promote mountain issues (infiltrating).

The Mountain Partnership structure, mandate and the Research Initiative

Rosalaura Romeo briefly introduced the Mountain Partnership's structure and mandate. She illustrated the Mountain Partnership's Research Initiative and its several activities and events, such as the Cuzco Research Workshop in 2004, the breakaway session during the Cuzco Global Meeting meeting, the survey on key players in mountain research, the survey on core problems and opportunities worthy of research and the study on the status and future of mountain research. She also presented the International Programme on Research and Training on Sustainable Management of Mountain Areas, IPROMO, whose first course was held in Italy, during July 2008, and has secured funding for the next two years. This Programme has been developed by the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, the Faculty of Agriculture of the Turin University and UNESCO.

Martin Price suggested the need for a new survey that would update the members of Research Initiative, focus on specific areas of research and also clarify who was a leading member.

Which elements determine the organization of events

In order to define the constraints and the rationale behind the organization of events, Astrid Bjørnsen asked the participants to prepare mind maps to analyse key factors that influence the organization of events. In particular she asked the participants to individually analyze one or several past events they had organized as an example and to sketch out the determining elements. The participants then compiled the factors in a joint mind map to achieve a larger picture and to highlight the two most important ones. The main factors mentioned were: 1) the motivation behind the event; 2) the funding available; 3) the outcome(s) desired; 4) the timing and the existence of other events. It is interesting to note that point 3, outcome(s) desired, was a factor that was added to the mind map at the very last moment. Hence although it was considered as very important, it was not up in our minds. Secondary elements included the availability and cost of a venue, the availability of important people, participants, speakers, staff, project timing and organizing committee. It was agreed that clustering smaller events around a main one is an economical and strategic approach that also allows for increased participation.

Existing event calendars have not been consulted in earlier event planning. Organizers of events tend to rely strongly on personal contacts and information.

Ways in which to improve coordination on research related mountain activities and events

In order to achieve better coordination when organizing events, the Mountain Partnership Secretariat team prepared a work-in-progress calendar of mountain research related events and activities, covering the next two years. The participants discussed the calendar and focused on the events which could be useful for raising awareness on mountain research issues. Greg Greenwood underlined the importance of creating a communication system that would allow for inside knowledge to be shared, i.e. knowledge of anticipated events and ideas that have not yet been structured in a fixed event. Regarding events, he stressed the need to focus on the COPs of the three UN Conventions as an opportunity for mountain research.

Several members requested the Mountain Partnership Secretariat to be involved in identifying meetings where mountain issues could be discussed, to provide reminders and to be proactive in suggesting mountain sessions when there is an open call. It was also requested to create some essential rules according to which an event could be branded a Mountain Partnership event (e.g. having more than two partners), in order to have an increased quality control, guidance and added value. It was discussed whether such labelling was feasible.

Greg Greenwood suggested a revised calendar structure, based on the existing on-line Mountain Calendar that would take into account:

- 1) a general list of events;
- 2) a list of events in which the Mountain Partnership members are involved;
- 3) a list of “target” events which members could approach as a group;
- 4) a category of events that could allow for possible collaboration;
- 5) a selection of themes at a global, regional and national level that could be addressed.

Participants then presented details of forthcoming events, such as Bishkek Global Mountain Summit in October 2009, the Perth Conference in September 2010, The International Water

Conference in September 2010, The Forum Carpaticum in September 2010, The World Water Congress in Montpellier (<http://wwc2008.msem.univ-montp2.fr/index.php?menusection=&page=home>), etc., as opportunities to liaise and cooperate. It was agreed that proposals for research projects as well as news of received funding should be shared, since they determine the forthcoming calendar of events and are opportunities for synergy and collaboration among members.

Next steps and conclusions:

In conclusion, the Mountain Partnership Secretariat proposed to send out to members a calendar template, collect feedback and devise an agreed upon format. Axel Borsdorf mentioned a pre-existing software platform that should be able to cater for members' needs and offered to provide more information on it. In addition to the calendar, it was suggested that each member will provide a narrative on the forthcoming events they are organizing, as well as future projects they are looking for funding on. Thomas Kohler also underlined the usefulness of face to face meetings on a regular basis and it was agreed to convene at the forthcoming European Geosciences Union (EGU) Vienna meeting in April 2009 (<http://meetings.copernicus.org/egu2009/>). As an online communication mechanism it was suggested creating a D-group through which information could be shared, initially consisting of the workshop participants.