



INCO can bring the scientists from the region together by inviting scientists working in the relevant field

You have been part of an INCO project in the scope of the last European Framework Program, FP6. What was the project about? Which countries or regions were part of the project?

Participating countries in the project were Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Czech Republic, Germany, India, Nepal, and Pakistan.

The project was about developing a bio-assessment tool to evaluate the ecological status of rivers in the Hindu Kush- Himalayan Region. Bio-assessment is considered to be an effective tool in assessing the ecological status of rivers in Europe, and this method has been in effective use for a long period of time. During this project the whole idea was to use this European experience and transfer this skill to Asia. As Himalayan rivers are considered pristine, an effective monitoring of such rivers would help the Himalayan countries in particular to understand the ecological status of their rivers and humanity at large.

How did you connect with the EU consortium? What was your role in the project? How easy was your integration in the project?

I was contacted by my professor who supervised me for my Ph. D. work. My activities in the consortium were predefined for being the only fresh and active aquatic biologist in the region at that time of forming consortium. My interests were clearly known to my professor, who was the project coordinator in the consortium.

Initially, in the process of developing proposal, my role was focused on finding the deserving partners from the region, contacting them over email, phone, fax or personal visit and describing them the importance of bio-assessment. I encouraged them to identify aquatic biologist from their countries to actively participate in the project. My role in proposal writing was more in terms of description of the study area, problem identification and how this project is leading towards sustainability.

What were the main benefits/drawbacks of such cooperation for your project?



Interlink

Feedback from African or NIS partners

There were several major benefits from the project:

1. First of all, very little was known about aquatic macro-invertebrate biodiversity from the region; now we have a macro-invertebrate taxa catalogue with more than 8000 species reported and database maintained.
2. Second, there were very few trained taxonomists in the region; now we have at least two highly dynamic and enthusiastic trained taxonomists with ecological and chemical academic background, who will ever remain active in this field.
3. Some of the trained taxonomists from the region have started offering consultancies in the countries abroad, and have been successful in convincing their governments of the importance of bio-assessment.
4. Finally, bio-assessment tools are now developed and tested as effective.

Although no major drawbacks were visible in this project, selection of right partners with prior knowledge of macro-invertebrates would have helped in sharing the load European partners have taken in report writing, compilation and publication.

Would you consider working on a European INCO project again? On which topic?

Yes, I would definitely consider working on such a European INCO project again. Topics of interests would be now high altitude freshwater bodies as they are important sources of water, and effect of climate change to this ecosystem. In terms of international cooperation, INCO can bring the scientists from the region together by inviting scientists working in the relevant field.