

Nomad 2023: A Living Land - Celebration of Art and Culture in Naryn



UCA students performing at the opening ceremony of the Nomad festival in Naryn.

Naryn, a picturesque town nestled in the heart of the Kyrgyz Tien Shan mountains, recently witnessed a remarkable event "Nomad 2023: A Living Land" Festival, organised by the University of Central Asia's School of Arts and Sciences.

This unique event engaged communities through various events celebrating the multi-dimensional concept of land. The three-day event attracted a diverse audience of

artists, filmmakers, writers, and creatives from across the region and beyond.

The spotlight event was the International Film Festival, which screened a selection of films that explored the theme of land. The films were from more than 40 countries across six continents, and they covered genres from feature films to drama and documentary. The films were judged by a panel of experts, and awards were given in

various categories. Another highlight of the festival was the Creative Writing and Digital Experiments Competition, which invited international and regional participants to submit works that explored the theme of land while experimenting with digital prose and composition. The festival also featured practical workshops on filmmaking, creative writing, and digital art, which were led by experts in their fields.

Continued on page 2

World Wrestling Champion Aisuloo Tynybekova Visits UCA's Naryn Campus



Aisuloo Tynybekova addressing UCA students in Naryn.

The University of Central Asia (UCA) hosted Aisuloo Tynybekova, a Kyrgyz national and a three time freestyle wrestling World Champion, at its campus in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan on 2 November.

Altynbek Ergeshov, Governor of Naryn Oblast, Nurbek Satarov, Deputy Governor of Naryn Oblast, Nuridin Madimarov, Head of Naryn District and Ermek Baibagyshev, Rector of Naryn State University accompanied her during the visit.

Aisuloo Tynybekova, who grew up in the Naryn Oblast, interacted with the students and faculty of UCA and toured the University facilities. She expressed her admiration

for the facilities of the University and its work for the development of mountain communities. She said, "I am pleased at such an excellent University located in rural Naryn. This campus makes me want to study here at this University." Ms Tynybekova further expressed hope that the students of UCA will one day "...conquer the world and make a significant contribution to the future of Kyrgyzstan."

In her interactions with the students, she encouraged them to follow a healthy lifestyle and pursue their dreams. "I urge every student here to get high education to achieve your goals.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

Nomad 2023 – A Living Land Festival

“The land beneath our feet has always served as a source of livelihood, inspiration, and identity for the people of Central Asia. The Nomad Festival 2023 offers us a unique opportunity to come together and appreciate the profound connections between the land, culture, and creativity that have shaped this region,” said Dr Barkat Fazal, Diplomatic Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network in Kyrgyzstan, during the opening of the Nomad 2023 Film Festival.

One of the important exhibitions was by UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit at UCA’s Naryn Campus titled “Mountains of Sorrow” featuring Urkun (forced migration of Kyrgyz people to China) demonstrating the significance of land for nomads.

The fashion shows were the highlight of the festival exhibiting traditional and contemporary designs, inspired by land. The AGRO Musical Fashion Performance, featured the collection of a renowned fashion designer, Gulmira Akmatova, inspired by Chingiz Aitmatov’s novel “White Ship,” exploring the

delicate relationship between humanity and nature.

The awards night showcased the culmination of talent and creativity. As the evening unfolded, the spotlight shone brightly on the winning artists, who received awards and monetary prizes as recognition of their exceptional contributions to the world of art. The event organised at the awards night by UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit featured a captivating exhibition titled 'Boz' by Yntymak Abdyldaev and 'Eelyy' by Mirrahim Toktogulov, which delved deep into the essence of nomadic culture through the mediums of fashion design, folk art, and art installations.

Nomad 2023 – A Living Land festival was a resounding success, shining a spotlight on the invaluable contributions of mountain communities and their sustainable practices. It was a reminder that by embracing our ancestral wisdom and harmonising with nature, we can create a better and stronger future for all.

Continued from page 1

World Wrestling Champion visits UCA’s Naryn Campus

I come from a village, and conquering any World Championship is possible only through continuous, daily effort as well as hard work and dedication.”

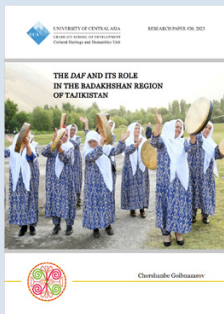
Dr Soheil Ashrafi, Associate Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at UCA’s Naryn campus, highlighted that sports is central in UCA’s educational approach which emphasises all-round development of students.

He also emphasised the University’s close links with the local community. “As a university receiving 70% of its students from rural areas in Central Asia, UCA has always been open to sharing its sports facilities with the Naryn community for events and tournaments” - Dr Ashrafi said.

Governor Ergeshov expressed his gratitude to the leadership of UCA for hosting such a well-organised event.

New Publications

The Daf and Its Role in the Badakhshan Region of Tajikistan



Musical instruments have played significant roles in the life of human beings. They are part of everyday activities, during their important life events, and are used symbolically to support various aspects of culture. They acquire meaning and value in the interaction between social and cultural situations in which they occur and have become symbols of tradition and identity for nations, regions, and ethnic groups. Frame drums are one of the essential musical instruments with their simple structure that have acquired specific cultural meanings related to many aspects of cultural relations and local musical traditions.

This paper discusses a percussion instrument known as the daf in the Badakhshan region of Tajikistan. The daf is a frame drum that has great significance in Badakhshan, is played in many events, and is connected to various social and cultural aspects of the lives of the people in the region. By providing an overview of the daf as a musical instrument, the author discusses the significant role this musical instrument plays in the Central Asian culture and specifically examines the daf in the social and cultural life of the people in Badakhshan of Tajikistan.

Read the publication [here](#).

Walnut-Fruit Forests. Environmental and Socio-Economic Research Report



Kyrgyzstan, a predominantly rural and economically challenged country, heavily relies on walnut-fruit forests for income and ecosystem services. However, unsustainable practices like overgrazing, selective cutting, and climate change pose severe threats to these vital ecosystems. Walnuts, the primary crop, face intensive harvesting, leading to a decline in genetic diversity.

Monocultural forests are susceptible to pests and diseases, with limited resources for disease control. Kyrgyzstan's vulnerability to climate change heightens the urgency for accurate monitoring and manage-

ment strategies. Forest units and scientific agencies lack the necessary resources and expertise, resulting in uninformed management.

This study carried out by UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute adopts a multidisciplinary approach, combining socio-economic surveys and environmental research to propose policy recommendations for protecting and promoting endangered fruit species and implementing. The research findings were disseminated through conferences, attracting attention to the communities and the problems they face in the forest areas. Read the publication [here](#).

UCA Joins Naryn in Celebrating 155 years



UCA students performing Kyrgyz cultural dance at the city square during Naryn's 155th Anniversary celebrations.

The University of Central Asia was an active participant in the joyous celebration of Naryn's 155th anniversary, organised by the government of Naryn. The celebration was attended by the senior management of the University, including Muzzaffar Jorubov, Chief Operating Officer and Dr Maxim Khomyakov, Dean of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences. UCA's staff, faculty and students also participated in large numbers.

Dr Barkat Fazal, Diplomatic Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) in Kyrgyzstan, addressed the official celebration ceremony held at the Naryn

Drama Theater. In his address, Dr Fazal highlighted the contributions of AKDN to the economic, cultural and social development of Kyrgyzstan, particularly Naryn.

"Following an extensive search, and having considered several possible locations, Naryn, with its beautiful landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and, most importantly, its hospitable townsfolk, was chosen as the site for the campus of the University of Central Asia...Today, AKDN is one of the largest development partners, one of the largest employers, and one of the largest taxpayers in the town."

UCA students added a vibrant touch to the festivities with mesmerizing dances representing the founding states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. The University also built a traditional yurt in the city square offering delicious treats to the residents of Naryn.

Contributing further to the celebratory week, 192 UCA students, faculty, and staff came together for "Subbotnik" (a cleaning-up activity), to celebrate Naryn's 155th anniversary. The UCA team cleaned a stretch of 7 km, collecting nearly 500 trash bags.

SPCE Launch Women's Technical Training Programme in Khorog

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) has successfully launched a Women's Technical Training Programme in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region in Tajikistan. Since its commencement earlier this year, the programme has enrolled 17 women who are cultivating their skills in home appliance repair.

The professional module of this course trains individuals as mid-level specialists, proficient in the repair, installation, and maintenance of home appliances, mobile phones, and IT equipment. The programme aligns with the state standards of the Repub-

lic of Tajikistan for the training of mid-level specialists. Upon successfully completing the course, students earn the title of "Master of Repairing Home Appliances, Mobile Phones, and IT Equipment."

This certified technical training was conceptualised, piloted, and administered by SPCE as part of the "Local Impact: A Transformative Partnership in Asia and Africa" initiative. Unemployed adult women were invited to participate in the three-month-long course, with a strong emphasis on ensuring inclusivity, especially for those with partial disabilities.



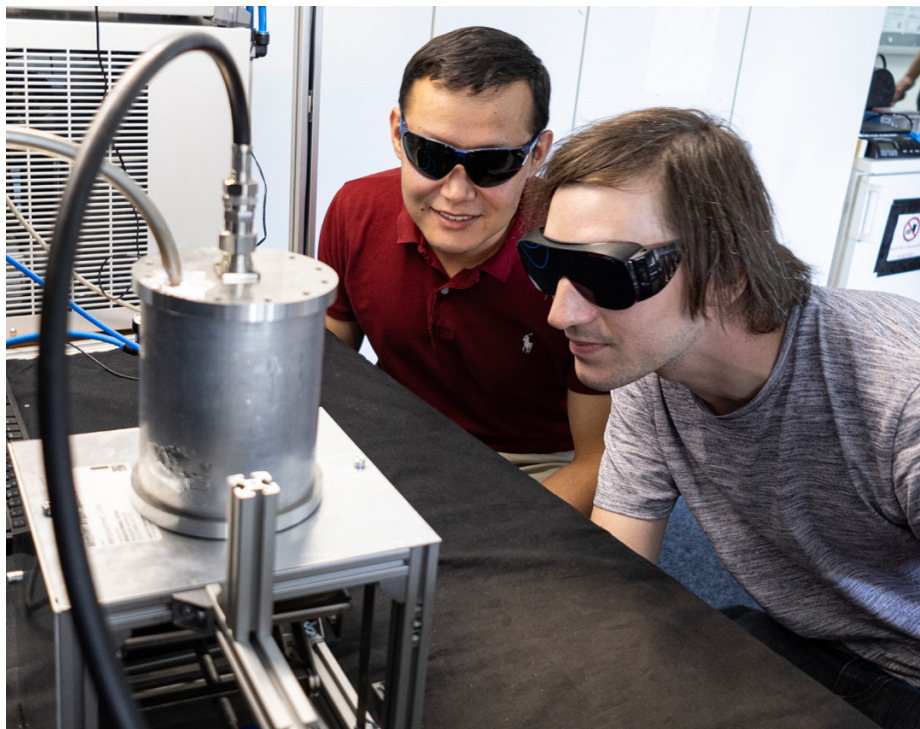
Female learners attending the home appliance repair course at SPCE, Khorog.

UCA Researcher Develops Cutting-Edge Plasma Generation Technology

UCA's Central Asian Faculty Development Programme (CAFDP) provides opportunities for scholars from Central Asia to pursue postgraduate studies at prestigious international universities. These scholars, upon completing their studies, return to UCA as faculty and researchers.

Samat Turdumamatov, a CAFDP fellow and senior lecturer of physics and mathematics at UCA, along with researchers from FH Aachen University of Applied Sciences in Germany, has developed a device that is capable of producing plasma with an extremely high energy density while consuming minimal power.

According to Samat's supervisor Professor Holger Heuermann, this innovation provides new possibilities for industrial applications as the device can customise plasma shapes to suit specific purposes, whether beam-shaped or planar. "We have successfully demonstrated the device to local research institutes and industry representatives" adds Samat. A German automotive group has already shown interest in using this



Samat Turdumamatov (left) along with a researcher from FH Aachen University of Applied Sciences in Germany testing the newly developed plasma generation device.

technology to create a more efficient system for coating brake discs with ceramics that increase the possibility of saving human lives during an accident.

UCA Faculty and Alum Research Paper Presented at Paris Conference

Dr Ayman Aljarbouh, Associate Professor at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, presented a paper entitled "A Dynamic API Approach for Improved Management of Winning Conditions in Online Auto Chess Multiplayer Games," at the 7th International Conference on Computer, Software, and Modeling in Paris, France. The paper

has been co-authored by a fellow faculty, Dr Dymtro Zubov, Associate Professor, and Aktan Tursunbaev, Alumnus, Class of 2022.

The paper proposes a novel technique based on the development of a dynamic Application Programming Interface that facilitates real-time communication with the

server's database with minimal user intervention. Unlike existing mechanisms that rely on HTTP and constant update requests, the team utilised web sockets for instant communication, allowing updates to be sent over the network as soon as they become available.

Dr Aljarbouh's research paper was recognised as the Best Presentation of the Session.

Emphasising the importance of collaborative work, Dr Aljarbouh, stated, "Engaging students in research is one of the top priorities at the Department of Computer Science. It was a great experience to involve an alumnus in research that has been accepted for publication by the Journal of Software. These experiences allow students to learn new techniques on how to solve real-world problems through research."

UCA continues to foster an environment that encourages faculty and students alike to collaborate and innovate.



UCA Hosts Youth Climate Action Conference in Naryn



The young environmental champions displaying their excitement at the Youth Climate Action conference in Naryn.

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education hosted a Youth Climate Action conference in Naryn attended by 20 school-going students from across the Oblast. The event was a collaborative effort by UCA, the World Bank, Anchor Schools (an education and community development advisory firm based in Philadelphia, USA), and Resiland CA+ (the World Bank's Resilient Landscape Restoration

Project in Kyrgyzstan).

The central objective of the conference was to equip youth with crucial insights into pressing environmental concerns, including global warming and climate change. Attendees left with a heightened awareness of ecological responsibility. Four teams of exceptionally talented students developed innovative projects, designed to be

environmentally sustainable and financially viable. These projects were showcased during intensive pitching sessions.

Distinguished guests at the event included representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Association of Forest and Land Users of Kyrgyzstan, who also served as esteemed judges during the competition.

UCA Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Chemonics



MoU signing ceremony. L to R: Phillip Butterfield and Dr Maxim Khomyakov.

The University of Central Asia's School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Chemonics, a prime contractor for USAID's Learn Together initiative in Tajikistan.

Dr Maxim Khomyakov, Dean of UCA's SAS and Phillip Butterfield, Chief of Party, Chemonics, discussed prospective collaborations in implementing USAID activities across schools in Khorog and the surrounding districts of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBO) in Tajikistan.

"The MOU enables SAS to expand its offers of socially relevant internships for SAS students. Through participation in the project 'Learn Together' UCA students will contribute to the well-being of mountain communities, and, to the fulfilment of UCA's mission," said Dr Khomyakov.

UCA Celebrates Success of ICT Training for Government Employees



Graduates of UCA's ICT training programme proudly displaying their certificates of completion.

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) and Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) recently hosted a graduation ceremony to honour 80 government employees who successfully completed a comprehensive ICT training programme in Naryn. Distinguished guests representing the Ministry of Digital Development of the Kyrgyz Republic, Naryn Oblast Administration, Naryn Mayor's Office, and UCA senior leadership graced the occasion.

This initiative, aimed at upskilling civil servants, falls under the broader project "Digital CASA - Kyrgyz Republic", implemented by UCA in collaboration with

the Ministry of Digital Development.

The project's objectives include expanding internet access, attracting ICT investments, enhancing digital government services, and promoting digital technologies to boost employment and service quality while creating a favorable environment for investors.

The Digital CASA training participants received certification by UCA in MS Office, database analysis, cybersecurity and electronic document management systems.

Since the inception of the project, UCA has trained over 1800 civil servants in Kyrgyzstan, 64% of whom are women.

Furthermore, over 125 government employees have been nominated to undertake the ICDL test, a globally recognised computer skills certification.

"UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education has been providing education and skills in critically important areas such as information technology, financial literacy and business. I thank UCA for its contribution to the social and economic development of Naryn Oblast and Kyrgyzstan," – noted Shabdan Abdyraim uulu, HoD of Reforms, Digital Development and Creative Economy, Naryn Oblast Administration addressing the participants of the graduation ceremony.

UCA Explores Central Asian Cultural Heritage at Humboldt University Berlin



Dr Goibnazarov (left) listening to archived melodies at the Humboldt Forum, Germany.

Facilitated by the Erasmus+ staff mobility programme, Dr Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, a Research Fellow at UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit, visited the Humboldt University in Berlin where he delivered a lecture to students at the Central Asian Seminar of the Institute of Africa and Asian Studies, contributing to the international lecture series "Silk Road Talks", a project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

During his visit, Dr Goibnazarov reviewed and researched the Pamir music collections at the Humboldt Forum and the Central Asian collections at the Ethnological Museum of Berlin. This valuable collection,

recorded by the esteemed German scholar Lentz Wolfgang in 1928, provides a glimpse into the rich musical heritage of Central Asia. This effort will also contribute to developing a joint project proposal with the Humboldt University and the Humboldt-Forum on cultural heritage and connectivity.

A highlight of this visit included participation in a thought-provoking roundtable discussion centered on the pivotal role of Central Asian collections within European Museums, particularly in preserving endangered cultural heritage in Central Asia. Dr Goibnazarov also presented his research on a community-based Museum in Tajikistan's Wakhan Valley.

CSI Hosts Regional Forum on Gender Equality



Gender equality specialist from Kazakhstan (centre) sharing her experience with forum participants.

UCA's Graduate School of Development's Civil Society Initiative (CSI), hosted the School for the Advancement of Gender Equality (SAGE) Regional Forum in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The Forum served as a platform for knowledge-sharing, peer-support, innovation, and advocacy on the latest challenges and trends within a gender context in Central Asia. Its primary objective was to facilitate meaningful collaborations among gender equality advocates in the region. The event brought together 40 representatives of state, regional, and civil society organisations, academia, national and regional experts, activists, journalists from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

During the two-day Forum, SAGE participants were exposed to enriching sessions where key international experts delivered presentations on gender-related topics. The event leaders fostered open dialogues and knowledge creation on various subjects, including the ecosystem for promoting gender leadership, research for gender advocacy, women's participation in politics, and gender issues in the media space.

Aliya Khamidullina, a SAGE graduate and journalist from Tajikistan, highlighted the significance of topics at the forum: "The session on gender in media, particularly approaches to addressing gender-sensitive topics and terminology, was enlightening. It broadened my perspective beyond the experiences of my home country. It made

me realise that Central Asia as a region has common challenges."

Larisa Kuznetsova, a SAGE graduate, director of "Smile KG" civil society organisation, and representative of the Kyrgyz Association for Education (KAE), stated, "As a member of KAE, we plan to develop a gender policy for our organisation. Thanks to the knowledge gained at the forum, we now realise how important it is to have such a policy in place and adhere to it. It plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace, and ensuring compliance with legal and ethical standards,"

UCA's CSI, with the support of the Government of Canada-funded Programme, Foundations for Health and Empowerment (F4HE), and Advancing Gender Equality through Civil Society (AGECS), launched SAGE in 2021. The main aim of the AGECS programme is capacity-building in gender equality and gender advocacy, providing a platform for peer support, knowledge sharing, and piloting of innovative projects through small grants programme for civil society organisations, women's groups, community leaders, journalists, and bloggers in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

In 2021, CSI initiated an online SAGE programme aimed at supporting women's rights, gender equality, and enhancing the institutional competencies of women-led organisations in Central Asia. This year, CSI successfully concluded the Second Cycle of SAGE, which encompassed a 15-week Ad-

vanced Gender Advocacy Programme followed by small grants awarded to qualified applicants among SAGE graduates from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Second SIPA Webinar in Central Asia



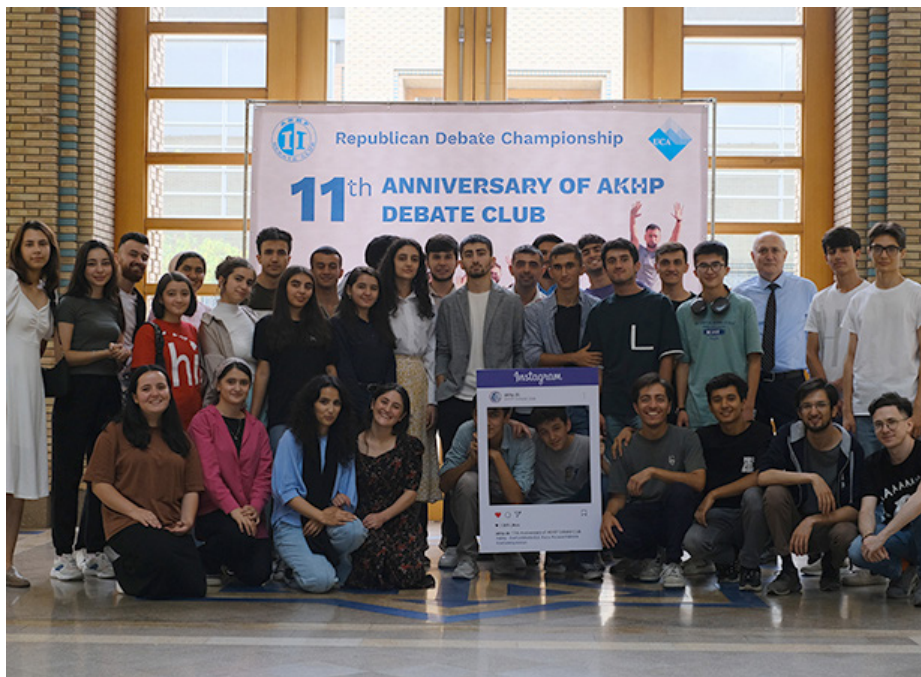
UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration will host the Second SIPA Webinar on Decarbonisation of Energy in Central Asia on 19 December 2023.

The webinar will bring together subject experts, policymakers, think tanks, industry leaders, academics, and representatives of government and civil society working on decarbonisation of the energy sector from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Mongolia.

The webinar will be held on 19 December at 3:00 pm (Bishkek time) via Zoom. The languages of the event are English and Russian.

Please [register for the webinar](#) before 12 December 2023.

AKHP Debate Club Marks 11th Anniversary with Republic Championship



Participants of AKHP Republican Debate Tournament in Dushanbe.

UCA's Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) recently celebrated the 11th anniversary of its Debate Club with a remarkable showcase of intellectual prowess and debating skills. AKHP commemorated this milestone by

holding the Republican Debate Championship in Dushanbe. The club was established in 2012 to nurture successful debaters and young leaders throughout Central Asia.

This year's championship saw 40 of the brightest young debaters from across Tajikistan, who explored a wide range of issues including the need for radical action to address climate change and resource allocation between space exploration and addressing income inequality.

The participating debaters were presented with honorary certificates, medals, and coveted trophies. "This competition is very important, particularly to those participants coming from regions with less exposure to debate movements. It has been a great joy competing with the best debaters in the country and receiving valuable feedback from top adjudicators," – noted Nasiba Khudonazarova, one of the participants of the tournament.

The AKHP tournament offers an invaluable learning experience for the young participants who engage in debates on challenging topics, receive feedback from eminent judges, and are able to network with like-minded individuals and build lasting friendships.

MSRI Explores Security Perceptions in Central Asia's Borderlands

Dr Asel Murzakulova, a Senior Research Fellow at UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI), recently concluded a visiting research programme at Uppsala University's Russian and Eurasian Studies (IRES) in Sweden. Since the programme's inception in 2010, Dr Murzakulova is the first researcher from Kyrgyzstan to receive support from the programme, and the second from the

broader Central Asian region.

As part of her research programme, Dr Murzakulova delivered an insightful lecture titled "How to Remain Good Neighbours When a Border Guard Demands a Passport? The Security Dilemma in the Ferghana Valley Borderlands." The lecture delved into the transformation of local

perceptions of security within the border regions of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Dr Murzakulova's research contributes to a critical approach in security studies by uncovering the contradictions between local and national security discourses. It explores a broad spectrum of reflections on national identity, state borders, citizenship, patriotism, and their intricate connection to human security challenges in the post-Soviet borderlands of the Ferghana Valley.

Dr Murzakulova also presented two research projects at the Development Studies Association 2023 conference hosted by the University of Reading, United Kingdom. Her works titled "The role of labour out-migration in rural change: a qualitative comparative analysis of 19 regions in Morocco, Ethiopia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Thailand, and PR China" and "Migration and post-socialist agrarian transformations: Kyrgyzstan comparative analyses" showcased her body of work in the realm of migration and rural transformations in post-socialist contexts.



Dr Murzakulova delivering a lecture on security in Ferghana Valley at Uppsala University, Sweden.

UCA's Exhibition Showcases Ancient Kyrgyz Warrior Armour

As part of the University of Central Asia's (UCA) mission to preserve and celebrate the rich cultural heritages of Central Asia, the University supported an exhibition in Bishkek at the National History Museum of the Kyrgyz Republic, highlighting the historical reconstruction of military armour worn by ancient and medieval Kyrgyz warriors.

The month long exhibition marked the first-ever professional historical reconstruction of ancient and medieval military armour belonging to Central Asian and Siberian nomads. This remarkable success was made possible through the collaboration of a creative group "KEN," comprising young researchers, technology engineers, and designers. Their efforts were closely aligned with leading archaeologists, historians, and ethnographers from Kyrgyzstan and beyond.

The formal opening of the exhibition was attended by dignitaries, including Cholponbek Abykeyev, Advisor to the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kairat Imanaliev, First Deputy Minister of Culture, Information, Sports, and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic, and Dr Barkat Fazal, the Diplomatic Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The exhibition showcased two complete reconstructions of Kyrgyz warrior armour sets, meticulously crafted to match the performance characteristics of their historical counterparts. In addition, the event featured digital artwork and animated videos, offering a visual exploration of these ancient armours.

Orozbek Soltobaev, archaeologist and Associate Professor of the Department of Archaeology, Ethnology, Source Studies and Historiography of Kyrgyz National University, whose knowledge and findings became a key component of this exhibition, noted: "Creating such an exhibition was a real challenge. We are deeply grateful to UCA for their invaluable support and contribution to the study and preservation of Central Asia's cultural and historical heritage."

Dr Kubatbek Tabaldiev, a prominent historian and archaeologist, emphasised the significance of the exhibition, stating, "Previously, only pictorial reconstructions of Kyrgyz warriors from the Middle Ages were created. This exhibition allows us to see and touch the almost original armours in 3D. The results of the reconstruction provide excellent information about the professional work of

blacksmiths and tinsmiths and the highly developed level of metallurgy among the Kyrgyz."

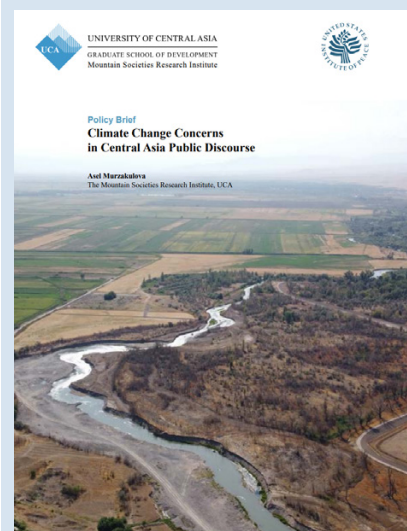
The exhibition was made possible through the generous support and cooperation of UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit, Graduate School of Development, "Chapansar" Studio, the Public Fund "Kiyiz Duyno," and the National History Museum of the Kyrgyz Republic.



An artist presenting the reconstructed military armour worn by ancient and medieval Kyrgyz warriors.

New MSRI Publication

Climate Change Concerns in Central Asia Public Discourse



The study has uncovered a significant disparity between expert and public discourse when it comes to comprehending and addressing water stress concerns within the region. This absence of evidence-based dialogue exacerbates the securitisation of the region's water problems and perpetuates the discourse of a "water wars" scenario as the most probable outcome for water policy, especially in the context of climate change. The findings underscore the critical importance of bridging the gap between opinion leaders within the region and sectoral specialists. This collaboration is essential to construct a well-informed public narrative on environmental justice, climate change, and water stress issues. Such initiatives serve as vital mechanisms for conflict prevention and fostering public awareness of environmental challenges.

Read a working paper [here](#).

MSRI Advocates for Food Security from Pamir to Lanzhou



Aziz Ali Khan (left) learning true potato seed technology at Dingxi County, China.

Food security has emerged as a critical global concern, with its challenges magnified in high-altitude regions. Aziz Ali Khan, a Research Fellow at UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute, recently participated in the Lanzhou University Workshop on food security and mountain agriculture in Highlands of Pan China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Aziz Ali Khan's contribution focused on the intricate challenges and potential remedies pertaining to food security within Tajikistan's Pamir Region.

Aziz Ali Khan's presentation unraveled the multi-dimensional aspects that make food security in high mountains distinct from other regions. The complexities arise due to a variety of factors, including intricate climate patterns, environmental constraints, and socio-economic considerations.

"High mountain Asia faces several socio-economic issues that directly affect food security, including small agricultural land holdings, inadequate production to meet

demand, high poverty rates, supply chain disruptions during severe winters, poor diets for infants and children, and limited job opportunities and income. Addressing these socio-economic challenges requires investment in rural areas, improved infrastructure, and increased financial support, despite the high transaction costs and risks associated with mountain regions," says Aziz Ali Khan.

As part of the workshop, Aziz Ali Khan visited the Hualing Yak Dairy Enterprises in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China to explore basic seed potato production through "true potato seed" (TPS) technology. His discussions with Chinese colleagues included food security issues in the mountain region and producing better compatible seed potatoes for the high mountainous region of Pamir. The Chinese academic institution expressed interest in extending collaboration with MSRI around research on basic seed potato production using various potato clones and technologies.

This visit was made possible as part of UCA's collaboration with Lanzhou University and Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, China through cooperation agreements signed under the Hindukush Karakoram Pamir Landscape.

UCA Scholar Showcases Research at European Aerosol Conference

Mushtari Saidikova, a fellow of UCA's Central Asian Faculty Development Programme at the University of Cambridge recently attended and presented her research at the European Aerosol Conference in Malaga, Spain.

The European Aerosol Conference attracted over 1,100 attendees, representing more than 45 nations, forming a diverse and dynamic congregation of scientists, engineers, researchers, and industry stakeholders. The primary objective of this multidisciplinary event was to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange among experts engaged in the study of aerosols. The conference addressed an array of critical topics including the health implications of indoor and outdoor aerosols, advancements in measurement devices, and aerosol technology.

Mushtari Saidikova stated that, "This event provided an excellent platform to establish



Mushtari Saidikova addressing the European Aerosol Conference in Spain.

meaningful connections with prominent scientists in the field of aerosol sciences from across the globe, fostering potential collaborations for the future. I had the valuable opportunity to learn from these distinguished experts and intend to apply the knowledge gained in my future endeavors."

UCA Promotes Economic Literacy through International Olympiad

Five winners of the Economics Olympiad in Kyrgyzstan, organized by UCA's Graduate School of Development's Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA), participated at the International Economics Olympiad held in Bratislava, Slovakia. The five Kyrgyz participants were amongst the 70 outstanding students from 14 countries, who had been selected from 80,000 participants who competed and won at the national qualifiers in 18 countries.

The qualifying round of the Economics Olympiad in Kyrgyzstan brought together 1,700 students from across the country. This groundbreaking International Olympiad in Economics marked a historic milestone for Kyrgyzstan and was organised through a collaborative effort by IPPA, the Economic Fundamentals Initiative (EFI), and the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic. The Olympiad not only promotes economic education but also facilitates the analysis of international data, making significant contributions to the development of the education system by organising international competitions for students.

Olympiad finalist Aktan Orozbekov shared his experience, stating, "I gained a wealth of experience and motivation. I learned the



Winners of the Economics Olympiad in Kyrgyzstan on their way to attend the International Olympiad in Slovakia.

strengths and weaknesses of my knowledge about economics, and now I have a clear direction for my future. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the organisers for their invaluable help and support."

Looking ahead, IPPA has ambitious plans to increase the number of participating schools in the Economics Olympiad planned for 2024.

SPCE Participates in Asia Digital Literacy Day in Singapore

The Asia Digital Literacy Day is an annual regional event that serves as a significant platform for championing digital literacy. This gathering unites government officials, industry experts, educators, and thought leaders, all driven by the common goal of

accelerating digital literacy across the Asian continent.

The University of Central Asia (UCA), a Central Asian partner of the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) since 2010, was

represented, at the 2023 event held in Singapore, by Nurbek Nisharapov, the Head of UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) Kyrgyzstan and ICDL Asia Administrator at UCA. He took the stage to showcase UCA's digital transformation programme and the successful implementation of ICDL in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan. During this trip, he delivered an enlightening presentation to Singaporean students, shedding light on SPCE's initiatives to empower marginalised youth in the mountainous regions of Central Asia, through digital literacy training, among others.

Since 2010, SPCE has made significant impact through ICDL by providing training and education to over 1,500 municipal officials in the Local Economic and Community Development (LECD) programme. So far, SPCE has trained over 45,000 individuals in the three founding states of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.



Nurbek Nisharapov (second from right, standing) at the ICDL Asia digital literacy day event in Singapore.

SPCE Instructor Honoured as Innovative Teacher of the Year 2023

Sarvinoz Komilova, an English Language instructor at the University of Central Asia's (UCA) School of Professional and Continuous Education (SPCE) Learning Center in Bokhtar, Tajikistan, has been honoured with the "Innovative Teacher of the Year 2023" award by the English Without Borders (EWB) Network in recognition of her innovative use of technology in the classroom.

In her demonstration lesson for the competition, Sarvinoz masterfully demonstrated how social media, often perceived as a distraction, can be transformed into powerful tools for teaching English grammar and vocabulary.

Evaluators praised Sarvinoz's demo class for its variety of activities, introduction to unfamiliar social media platforms, and tips for more interactive language teaching.

Reflecting on her demo class, Sarvinoz states that the choice of topic was greatly influenced by her personal path towards mastering English language. "My journey with English language started as a self-learner and social media was a useful tool for learning new vocabulary, improving my listening, and honing my overall language



Sarvinoz Komilova accepting the Innovative Teacher of the Year 2023 Award. Photo: English Without Borders.

skills. Even today, being an experienced English teacher, I continue using social media to improve my knowledge and learn new trends that can be implemented in my classes." - said Sarvinoz Komilova.

As a part of her well-deserved recognition, Sarvinoz received a statuette and a prize and also the opportunity to share her expertise with a wider audience by presenting her lesson as a masterclass during the EWB National Conference 2023

in Dushanbe which brought together over 100 English language teachers and scholars from around the world.

Expressing gratitude for the support and growth opportunities at SPCE, Sarvinoz stated, "I am particularly grateful for the Teaching Knowledge Test certification training at SPCE, which has given me a deep understanding of English language teaching principles and practices, helping me to deliver effective lessons."

Empowering Afghan Women Through Education

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) recently hosted a graduation ceremony to celebrate the remarkable achievements of 14 Afghan students who successfully completed a one-year educational programme offered by SPCE. This com-

prehensive course included English language training as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training in IT programmes. This initiative was made possible through the generous support from the European Commission and the United Nations Devel-

opment Programme (UNDP) as part of the "Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women Through Education and Training" project.

The graduation ceremony of SPCE Bishkek saw the presence of Rasul Abazbek uulu, Deputy Minister of Science and Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, H.E. Marilyn Josefson, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the Kyrgyz Republic, Ms Monica Rijal, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Altaaf Hasham, Management and Programme Liaison Officer, Diplomatic Representation of the Aga Khan Development Network in the Kyrgyz Republic, and Davlatsulton Dorgabekova, CEO of Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan.

The guests lauded the tireless efforts and remarkable academic progress demonstrated by the Afghan women throughout their educational journey. They extended their heartfelt congratulations and offered their sincere wishes for the students' success and prosperity in their future endeavours.



Afghan females taking part in an interactive learning exercise organised by SPCE. Photo: UNDP.