

## Naryn Centre for Entrepreneurship to Create Jobs for Youth



Jomart Hudaibergenov conducting a class for new entrepreneurs at the Naryn Centre for Entrepreneurship.

With the objective of creating job opportunities in mountain communities, the University of Central Asia (UCA), with generous support from The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), inaugurated a dedicated Centre for Entrepreneurship (NCE) on 13 November 2021 in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan.

Within the framework of the project "Local Impact: A Transformative Partnership

in Asia and Africa", UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education has established a holistic facility in Naryn to conduct intense entrepreneurship and business development training and launch business incubation and mentoring programmes, with a focus on serving local communities particularly the youth.

"NCE's objective is far more than just teaching students the concepts of critical thinking and problem solving. The Centre

will help instill an entrepreneurial culture among the youth of Kyrgyzstan, and hopes to extend our reach to the marginalized youth of rural communities. Instead of young people worrying about finding jobs, NCE will help them create jobs," said Jomart Hudaibergenov, Manager of NCE.

Observing the need to provide jobs in the mountainous region of Naryn, Azizullah Baig, Regional Monitoring, Evaluation,

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## UCA and Kyrgyz Government Conduct Research on Climate Change

Since its establishment in 2011, the Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) of the University of Central Asia (UCA) has been at the forefront of scientific research to study complex earth surface and environmental processes that affect mountain communities. To further enhance this mission, MSRI signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on 12 November 2021 with the Government of Kyrgyzstan to collaborate on crucial scientific questions in the fields of global warming and climate change, disaster risk reduction, air pollution/quality, glacier observation, water security, energy,

sustainable development, and providing society with sound information for decision making through data integration, synthesis, scenario analysis, modelling, and other tools of development.

"This collaboration will establish a long-term partnership which will support MSRI to further address its mandate of conducting research focusing on improving livelihoods, managing natural resources, mitigating the effects of natural hazards and climate change, and building community resilience in Kyrgyzstan," said Dr Roy Sidle, Director of MSRI.

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Dr Muslinovich presents a textbook on the Atlas of Natural and Technological Hazards in the Territory of the Kyrgyz Republic, to Dr Sidle.

## Naryn Centre for Entrepreneurship to Create Jobs for Youth

Research and Learning Manager at AKF Kyrgyzstan said, "During our interactions with the business communities, we observed that not many youngsters enter into businesses due to lack of entrepreneurial skills and self-confidence. Therefore, a vast majority of youth opt for salaried employment, which itself is a big challenge with limited job opportunities in the region. The Local Impact project and NCE seek to work with youth and encourage them towards creating self-employment opportunities."

Sharing a similar goal with UCA to help establish sustainable business models in the country, the Economic Development Office Director of USAID, Joshua Templeton, said, "USAID's key interest is to improve the livelihoods of the people of Kyrgyzstan

and the most important resource of this country is the creativity and ability of its people to start their businesses and create jobs. With this Centre, we are helping to improve the capacity of people to establish businesses and make lives better for everyone in the community."

The Centre for Entrepreneurship will deliver Expert Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation programmes to teach students advanced business concepts, including leadership and management, along with providing them with a workspace, mentorship support, and networking opportunities.

"I along with my son and grandson have attended many entrepreneurship courses at the School of Professional and

Continuing Education, and subsequently received loans from KICB to establish our business. Our greenhouse produce is now available in local markets and much of our success has been due to support provided by the Aga Khan institutions," said Kalyikul Ysyraliev, an SPCE Alumnus.

Highlighting the importance of NCE in Kyrgyzstan and UCA's active involvement in promoting entrepreneurship over the years, Prof Sohail Naqvi, Rector of UCA, said, "Every young person has something very precious – their ideas. However, these ideas need support and NCE is here to turn these dreams into reality. UCA being an educational institution supports ventures of entrepreneurship because knowledge needs pathways for practical results."

## UCA Organizes Seminar on Pamiri Languages



*Dr Sultonbek Aksakolov, Chair of the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at UCA, conducting a session of the seminar.*

Bringing a diverse range of participants together to the roof of the world, Khorog, Tajikistan, was the venue for a Seminar on Pamiri Languages organized by the University of Central Asia (UCA). It discussed these languages within the framework of the research cluster, 'Modernity, Identity, Society and Environment in Central Asia'.

Scholars, faculty and students from the University of Central Asia, the Higher School of Economic (Moscow), Institute of Linguistics (Russian Federation), Khorog State University (Tajikistan) and the Institute of Humanities (Tajikistan) came together on 12-13 November 2021 to discuss the history, trends and tradition, field

research, publications, and digital projects produced on Pamiri languages.

The Pamiri languages belong to the Eastern Iranian group of languages. These include Shughni, Rushani, Bartangi, Roshorvi, Wakhi, Yazgulyami, and Rini, Sanglichi, Munji, and Sariqoli, which are spoken by a relatively small numbers of the population in the territories of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, in the Badakhshan province of Afghanistan, and the Tashkurgan county of the People's Republic of China.

The Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at UCA, Dr Maxim Khomyakov, wel-

comed the participants at the Seminar by stressing the role of UCA in promoting research on the cultural heritages of mountain communities of Central Asia. Professor Vladimir Plungian from the Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences, Professor Nazri Ofaridaev, and Professor Ekaterina Rakhilina from the Higher School of Economics, highlighted the significance of studying the socio-cultural context of the development of Pamiri languages.

Stressing on the necessity of furthering research on grammar, lexicon, and syntax of the language, the participants concluded on the need to work towards recording oral data to produce a digital database of Pamiri languages. The seminar proved to be a catalyst in promoting a pluralistic approach towards the study, teaching, and development of resources on various languages and dialects in the Pamir.

Appreciating the importance of Pamiri languages in reflecting cultural pluralism within the mountainous regions of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, China and Northern Pakistan, participants of the Seminar also recommended developing a unified system of alphabets and dictionaries, and conducting regular events to study and gather folkloric materials of the respective languages.



## UCA and UNBC Collaborate to Expand Education and Research in Central Asia



*Prof Sohail Naqvi, Rector of UCA, and Dr Geoff Payne, President of UNBC (on screen) signing the MoU.*

Sharing a common interest in societal impact through nurturing compassion and inspiring a better quality of life for the communities, the University of Central Asia (UCA) and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will further encourage an exchange of scholarly publications, development of collaborative educational and research programmes, and discussion of academic and administrative developments through symposia, seminars and conferences.

The MoU signed by both parties on 5 November 2021 is aimed at enhancing educational, research, and development opportunities for faculty, staff, students, and alumni. As both universities are working towards graduating knowledgeable, skilled, and creative individuals, this joint partnership will further contribute to promoting leadership and innovation for the development of mountain communities.

"This agreement with the University of Central Asia will facilitate teaching and research collaborations and allow for more opportunities for student exchanges," said Dr. Geoff Payne, UNBC's Interim President. "We are fortunate to have graduate students from UCA join us already at UNBC and are benefiting from the knowledge they have shared as they continue their studies here. We are looking forward to advancing this partnership with both UCA and the Aga Khan Development Network."

Extending its support to UCA, UNBC has committed to charging domestic tuition rates to graduates from UCA and other agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network.

"The MoU with UNBC will open doors of opportunities for young and brilliant minds from the Central Asian region. There is no doubt that this region is a treasure trove of knowledge and research opportunities, and UCA is playing a key

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### UCA and Kyrgyz Government Conduct Research on Climate Change

The MoUs signed between the University of Central Asia, Tien Shan High Mountain Scientific Centre of the Institute of Water Problems and Hydro-power National Academy of Sciences (TSHMSC), Agency on Hydrometeorology of the State Committee on Ecology and Climate (Kyrgyzhydromet), and the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES KR), recognize and declare the need to work towards disaster risk reduction, climate change impacts, water management and glacier degradation.

The University of Central Asia and the institutions of the Kyrgyz Government also plan to conduct joint research activities, exchange of staff, and mutual involvement in outreach activities.

"We are looking forward to this partnership with the University of Central Asia as it will support the capacity development of staff in our ministries and departments, and provide a platform for knowledge and data sharing. We are also planning for deeper collaboration on developing science-based projects and interventions related to climate change, and disaster risk reduction in Kyrgyzstan," said Dr Shamirkanov Urmatbek Muslinovich, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

role in building bridges between Central Asia and the world," said Prof Sohail Naqvi, Rector of the University of Central Asia.

### Alumni Spotlight

#### Iskender Starts Masters in Hungary



University of Central Asia's alumnus, Iskender Berdiev, from the Class of 2021, has started his graduate studies at the Eötvös Loránd University in Hungary.

He is currently pursuing a Masters in Computer Sciences with a concentration in Data Science and believes that the undergraduate programme at UCA prepared him well for this new chapter in his life. "The School of Arts and Sciences provided me a platform and resources to accelerate my professional growth. It has made me a better Computer Scientist and given me confidence to pursue my further studies and establish my career in the field of Information Technology," he said.

## UCA and the Polish Academy of Sciences to Explore GBAO's Natural Resources



A bird's eye view of Khorog, Tajikistan. Photo: [Ian Cady](#).

To explore potential of research in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) in Tajikistan, the University of Central Asia (UCA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Polish Academy of Sciences Botanical Garden - Centre for Biological Diversity Conservation (CBDC)

in Powsin in October 2021. With its unique geography, Khorog town in GBAO is home to the world's second-highest (2200 meters above sea level) botanical garden holding thousands of high-mountain species and a variety of flora of great value to scientists.

In 2017, UCA inaugurated its second undergraduate campus in Khorog offering a BSc in Earth and Environmental Sciences, and a BA in Global Economics. With an abundance of natural resources available in the region and at the same time a lack of human capital and material resources, Prof Mohssen Moazzen, Chair of EES Department of UCA, and Prof Dr Hab, Arkadiusz Nowak, Director of CBDC, signed on a partnership for the benefit of the region.

The MoU encourages joint research collaborations in the areas of environment, vegetation, and natural resource management in GBAO. CBDC will also extend its support in facilitating the teaching of online and offline courses and developing EES curricula, course syllabi and training programmes.

UCA and CBDC also agree to organize professional development training and exchange programmes for its faculty, staff and students. Sharing best practices and resources, both parties hope to disseminate products to a wider public through publications and outreach activities.

## MSRI Fellow Speaks at UN Climate Change Conference

Senior Research Fellow at the University of Central Asia (UCA), Dr Asel Murzakulova, was invited to the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2021 to discuss barriers to digital innovations in relation to climate resilience in mountain communities.

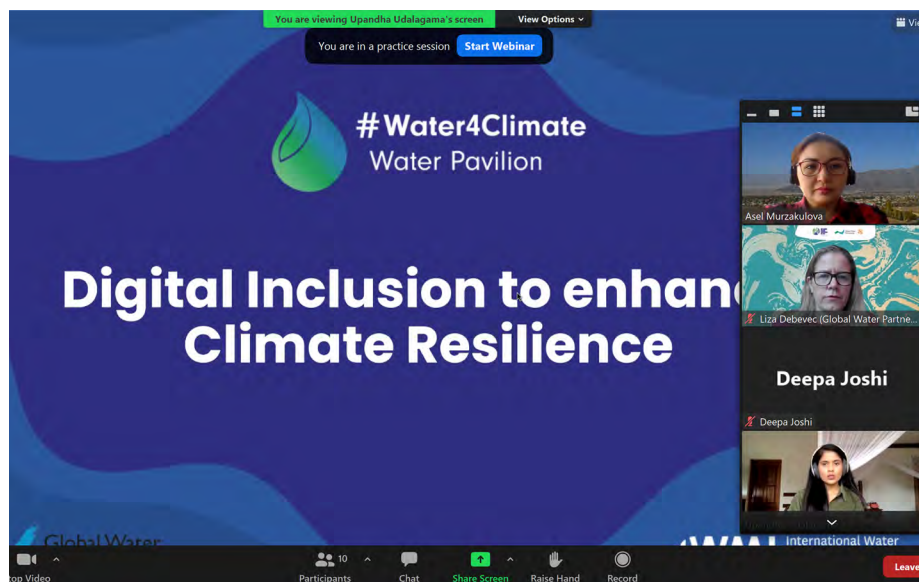
Dr Murzakulova from the Mountain Societies Research Institute of UCA participated virtually at a session to shed light on the availability of digital opportunities to youth for bringing climate change in the region.

She said, "The barriers to digital innovation can vary greatly from region to region. Mountainous countries are known to have vulnerable ecosystems to climate change, and due to the complex topography of these countries, building any infrastructure, including digital, is expensive and technically complex."

Dr Murzakulova was further asked to share her perspective on how technology can be used to reduce challenges posed to youth in terms of their engagement in agricultural activities. She responded,

"Though development of digital technology has eased the process of participating from a distance in various activities, the involvement of young people in natural resource management and agricultural development is still low due to high migration rate from rural to urban areas.

However, the issue is more complex than just migration as there is an unstable institutional structure due to constantly changing governments in terms of Kyrgyzstan. We need better infrastructure, a stable economy, and effective institutions to resolve this matter."



Asel Murzakulova presenting at the United Nations Climate Change Conference.



## SPCE Celebrates 15 Year Anniversary



*Kalyikul Ysryaliev, Alumnus from SPCE's Entrepreneurship Programme in Naryn, sharing how the course helped his business succeed.*

Marking a major milestone, the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) of the University of Central Asia (UCA) celebrated its 15th Anniversary in five locations during the past few months. Starting from May 2021, SPCE has held ceremonies in Tekeli, Khorog, Dushanbe, Bokhtar, Bishkek and Naryn inviting prominent dignitaries, along with the University's management, staff, faculty, students and alumni to share its tremendous achievements and contribution to the economic, social, and cultural development of the region.

Established in 2006, SPCE has 16 Learning Centres across four countries: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan. The School was established to support people who could not afford a formal education and needed to enter the job market to support their families. "From just three centres in 2006 established in the mountainous towns of Khorog, Tajikistan, Naryn, Kyrgyzstan and Tekeli, Kazakhstan, SPCE today enjoys a presence in 12 locations with over 180,000 learners and 300 qualified staff," said Dilovar Butabekov, Director of SPCE.

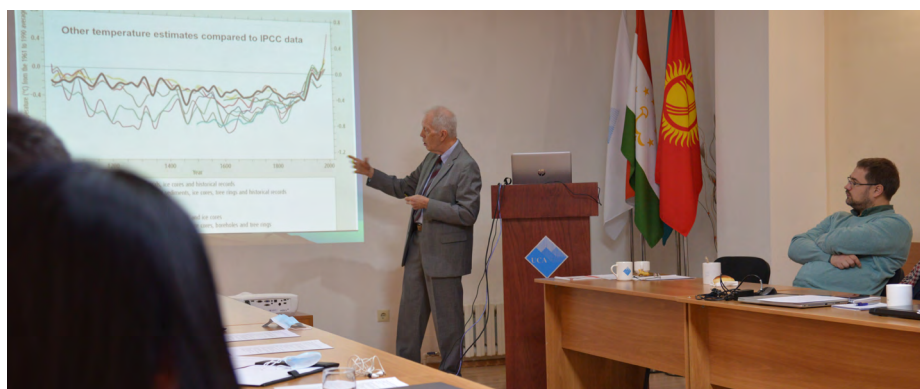
Offering a unique model of learning to meet specific needs of the region, SPCE has served as a catalyst in under-developing parts of the countries to help young people attain needed skills to survive. In 2021, along with the celebrations, SPCE also inaugurated two Centres for Entrepreneurships with generous support from the United States Agency for International Development and the Aga Khan Foundation.

During the ceremonies across all locations, a number of graduates were awarded certificates for completing courses at SPCE. Cultural performances were also organized to celebrate local talent, and exhibitions held to showcase entrepreneurial products and student projects. "We started this journey at SPCE a few years ago, and at that time, this day seemed so far away. Today, I am standing here with SPCE's certificate reaping the harvest of my hard work. Education at SPCE will surely open many doors of opportunities for us. Over here, I have met inspiring figures, passionate teachers, and no one ever hesitated to guide us to the right path. The classes at SPCE were never ordinary, it has played a pivotal role in forming my personality and constantly encouraging me," said Idimo Latipova, SPCE graduate from Bokhtar.

## MSRI Organizes Course on Climate Change for MSDSP

UCA's Mountain Societies and Research Institute (MSRI) conducted a three-day course for approximately 10 participants from the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on Climate Change and Climate Change Adaptation: Issues in Rural Kyrgyzstan.

Prof Roy Sidle, Director of MSRI, along with Dr Maksim Kulikov and Dr Erkin K. Isaev, Research Fellows at UCA, conducted sessions on a range of topics, such as causes of climate change, earth system responses, uncertainties related to climate change predictions, risks and vulnerabilities, geohazards in Kyrgyzstan, and other related topics. The course also included exercises to understand the application of academic research in MSDSP projects.



*Prof Roy Sidle conducting a session for MSDSP staff.*

"This course was specifically designed to meet our goal of using the most updated data in the implementation of our projects. It will help our team to better understand the effects of climate change specifically in Kyrgyzstan and in the overall region, and we will be able to make informed decisions and apply the required interventions within our target communities," said Davlatsulton Dorgabekova, Chief Executive Officer, the Aga Khan Foundation in the Kyrgyz Republic.

## AKHP Presents Interactive Ethnographic Scientific Map



Dr Nurzhauar Issayeva (left), Coordinator of the Faculty Development Programme at AKHP, presenting the Interactive Ethnographic Scientific Map.

The Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) of the University of Central Asia (UCA) presented its Interactive Ethnographic Scientific Map at the International Centre for the Rapprochement of Cultures under the

auspices of UNESCO in November 2021.

AKHP's Interactive Map is a digital database of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan from the year of 1990 till 2019.

Besides providing general statistical and demographical data along with history and culture of three Central Asian countries, the map also provides detailed information about migration, economic and ecological indicators.

"This project has long-term prospects. The use of this map is not limited to any one field as it can be used by students from high school, academicians, and also government organisations," said Dr Pulat Shozimov, Acting Director of AKHP.

The map shows statistics of migration, graphical and quantitative ratio of the volume of products, annual data of production, demographical statistics of the labour market, labour productivity index, GDP dynamics, economic model of development, air pollution, reforestation by territory, water resources, pastures, and several other indicators.

Link to the map: <https://ca.witharts.kz/>.

## UCA Faculty Conduct Training for Naryn Teachers

People choose to volunteer for various reasons, either for their self-growth or to support worthwhile causes and people in need. As part of its mission to help enhance the economic and social status of mountain communities, the University of Central Asia's faculty designed and delivered a unique Professional Development Programme for secondary school teachers in Naryn.

The Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences together with faculty members from Naryn campus volunteered to conduct training for teachers in several subjects including Mathematics, Physics, English, Science, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and History on 4-5 December 2021. More than 60 teachers were invited from various schools around the Oblast to participate in the programme dedicated to enhancing their pedagogical knowledge and skills for improving student learning outcomes in the region.

"The training helped to improve my English editing skills and grammar. My mentor, Dr Roza Kazakbaeva (Associate



Dr Nurlan Shaidullaev, Senior Lecturer of Computer Science at UCA, conducting an ICT session in the Computer Lab.

Professor at UCA), shared strategies on how to effectively teach students so they retain information," said Tattybyby Kubatbek, a participant of the programme from the secondary school named after Jolon Salamatov.

Participants were also introduced to the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) methodology as a cohesive strategy based on real-world applications.

"With rapid advancements in technology and artificial intelligence, there is a significant possibility that machines may one day replace teachers. As education practitioners, it is our responsibility to focus on updating curricula, approaches, and teaching methodologies. Training and retraining are just starting points of preparing us for more challenging times to come," said Dr Ramzan Ali, Chair of the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at UCA.



## UCA Participates at Consultation Meeting for UNDP Report



Dr Roman Mogilevskii, Associate Director and Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Central Asia (UCA), was invited at the Regional Consultation: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives and Transformation in Europe, Turkey, and Central Asia, organised by the United Nations Development Programme.

Experts from the region were invited in November 2021 to a hybrid consultation meeting for the Human Development Report 2021-22. The speakers engaged in broad discussions on emerging challenges posed by the Anthropocene and technological innovation in the region, and how climate-conflict risks are embedded within these transformations.

Dr Mogilevskii was the only Central Asian expert speaking at the meeting, and contributed to the reaction of post-Soviet states to the pandemic of COVID-19. He noted that, in general, the governments and societies of the region were not prepared for this major shock. This has been revealed through inconsistent and very limited social distancing measures, insufficient support to the population and businesses during lockdowns, widespread vaccine hesitancy resulting in high mortality rates, and one of the lowest vaccination rates in these countries in the world. The near universal literacy and school enrolment in all countries of the region have not transformed into an educated response of the societies to this major threat to human development. He suggested a re-orientation of the education system in the region towards providing functional literacy and development skills that allow a swift and prudent response to future uncertainties and unexpected shocks.

## UCA Students Win IT Hackathon in Kyrgyzstan



The UCA winning team (L to R) – Akyl Tashtanaliev, Ulukbek Tursunov, Dr Nurlan Shaidullaev (CS faculty), Alina Erkulova and Arlen Abdyrashitov.

Students from UCA's School of Arts and Sciences participated in an IT hackathon organised by the Kyrgyz-German Institute of Applied Informatics in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Two teams from the Computer Science programme submitted their projects, and the team from the Sophomore year won first prize in the hackathon.

The Interuniversity Fall Hackathon invited students from across Kyrgyzstan in November to present solutions to various problems by using their knowledge of programming. Talented and creative students with a proficient knowledge of programming languages, such as, *Python*, *Java*, *C++*, etc., gathered for two days to present their projects.

The winning team from UCA developed a digital platform named Student Space, where students from different universities can collaborate on projects and share their everyday concerns. Winners were presented their prize during an international IT conference held in Bishkek which was attended by government official and the Kyrgyz media.

"During our studies at UCA, we don't only learn theory of programming languages but practice it through rigorous assignments. In fact our teachers are always encouraging us to participate in such competitions to implement our ideas," said Alina Erkulova, Computer Sciences student at UCA.

### Announcement

## The Nomadic Image 2022

The University of Central Asia invites practitioners and theorists to submit their abstracts for the Seventh Transdisciplinary International Conference to be held in September 2022 in Kyrgyzstan. In a hybrid online and in-person event hosted by UCA on its Naryn campus, the conference offers an exciting opportunity for international participants to connect with Kyrgyz and other Central Asian creatives and scholars, and to explore experimental imaging cultures at the crossroads between East and West, and hypermodernity and tradition. The conference is a collaboration between the University of Central Asia and the University of New South Wales, Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture, and supported by Ololo House, Bishkek and the Ala-Too International University. For submission and more information, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3vlpSus>.



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## EES Club Organizes Global Climate Change Week

Contributing to the Global Climate Change Week, UCA students at the Khorog Campus, with support from the faculty, organised a series of events to raise awareness about the impact of climate change.

The Earth and Environmental Sciences student club initiated the awareness week with a presentation about global climate trends and its impact. The week continued with the active participation of students, faculty and staff in an art competition, trivia and movie nights, and a debate tournament.



*Students participating in an art competition as part of the climate week activities.*

The week concluded with two days of cleaning and recycling activities around town.

## International Mountain Day UCA Promotes Sustainable Mountain Tourism in Naryn

Some 245 million people living in mountain regions around the world are threatened with food insecurity issues making the mountain communities among the poorest and most affected by hunger around the world. Sustainable tourism in the region can be one of the significant contributors in creating livelihood options for the residents to alleviate poverty.

Considering climate change and the need for economic development in the region, the University of Central Asia (UCA)'s School of Arts and Sciences had signed a Memorandum of Cooperation earlier in 2021 with the Office of the Governor of Naryn to develop a sustainable tourism plan.

Though the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected the global economy, particularly the tourism industry, it has offered time to rethink strategies for promoting resilient and inclusive tourism. With 85% of the world's species living in mountain regions and 60-80% of all freshwater resources located in mountain headwaters, it is important to consider devising a plan that provides both economic and environmental benefits to local communities.

Considering various factors of sustainable tourism, and as a University devoted to the issues of mountain communities, the University of Central Asia has offered its services to the Naryn government

to conduct research and providing a conceptual framework for cultural and digital tourism in the Oblast. UCA is also providing technical support and human resources for the implementation of the Tourism Development Plan.

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education has designed a special programme on Executive Entrepreneurship Training in Tourism to be delivered to the owners and managers of related enterprises. It is funded as part of the Accelerate Prosperity Programme in Central and South Asia sponsored by the European Union.

In early 2020, the University of Central Asia's undergraduate students had presented a Branding Naryn project as part of their Strategic Communications course, offering short and long-term plans to promote sustainable tourism. These plans were interrupted due to the pandemic, but the Naryn government has agreed to include it in their 25-year master development plan for the Oblast.





UCA's faculty, staff, and students have also produced a short film for the Naryn Oblast Government for the purpose of tourism promotion in the region. Watch full film: <https://youtu.be/aVCGRWdj5Sc>.







*UCA students go horseback riding on the Naryn side of the Tian Shan Mountains.*

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