

Advancing *Sustainable Mountain Development* in Central Asia through social-ecological monitoring, research, and outreach



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT
MOUNTAIN SOCIETIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The **Mountain Societies Research Institute** is a core research unit within the University of Central Asia's Graduate School of Development and a key stakeholder and partner working for regional sustainable development in Central Asia. The University of Central Asia is a secular and private university and part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which operates in more than 30 countries worldwide

AKDN in Central Asia

The **Aga Khan Development Network** seeks to promote good quality of life in every location and community where it works.

Established in 2000, **University of Central Asia** (UCA) is one of AKDN's most ambitious regional development projects in Central Asia.

The **Mountain Societies Research Institute** (MSRI) aims to enhance the wellbeing and resilience of mountain societies in the face of many facets of global change, including climate change in mountain regions. A part of UCA's Graduate School of Development, the Institute also contributes to teaching programmes within the Earth & Environmental Sciences major.



MSRI undertakes **Research-for-Development**, or R4D. Its major research themes include:

- Ecosystem services and biodiversity
 - Natural resource management
 - Climate change adaptation
 - Farming and herding livelihoods
 - Migration and remittances
 - Environmental economics
 - Protected area management
 - Community based tourism
 - Transboundary conflicts
- ...and more

MSRI's **GIS & Knowledge Management Hub** provides essential support for spatial analyses, the production of maps, and increasing the availability of all forms of information and datasets. MSRI attempts to coordinate its work with numerous development stakeholders including communities, government bureaus, NGOs, projects, and donors.

Research findings are translated and made accessible to different audiences, for example as Policy Briefs. Considering its research in the light of UN Sustainable Development Goals, MSRI also engages with global development policy dialogues.



Geographic Scope of MSRI's Research

MSRI's geographic scope encompasses mountain areas of Central Asia, from the Caucasus to Western China.

Key features of mountain social-ecological systems include:

- Limited access routes, but extensive social networks
- Provision of a suite of ecosystem services
- Endangered biodiversity and cultural diversity
- High risk of natural disasters, compounded by regional and global climatic changes
- Resources for mountain livelihoods and wildlife habitat

To learn more about **Mountain Societies Research Institute** please visit <http://ucentralasia.org/msri/>

#LearningLandscapes @UCA

Embedded in AKDN and UCA's long-term presence and commitment to the region, the **Learning Landscapes Initiative** aims to support regional socioeconomic development in UCA's focal regions. UCA's Naryn Campus in Kyrgyzstan will be an anchor for development oriented research and social and ecological monitoring in the Tianshan Mountains, while the Khorog campus in Tajikistan will facilitate comprehensive monitoring and research-for-development in the Pamir Knot – a geographic region, spanning several countries, where the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, Himalayas, Pamir and Tianshan mountains converge with snow-covered peaks and deep valleys, often with steep, unstable slopes.

UCA and MSRI will work closely with other AKDN agencies already familiar with these regions as well as other partners and farming and agropastoral communities. Furthermore, unique learning opportunities will be created for UCA faculty and students, along with local communities, local and national governments, and a wide range of development partners.

UCA's Learning Landscapes in the Mountains of Central Asia

Special features of the geophysical, ecological and human landscapes that surround UCA's campuses in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan include:

- Unique social-ecological systems
- Multiple uses, competing interests
- Complex and multi-scale dynamics
- Many development stakeholders
- Development challenges and opportunities

Coordination & Cooperation with Global Monitoring Networks

UCA's **Learning Landscapes Initiative** is embedded within or partners with a wide range of global mountain networks and partnerships:

- Global Network of Mountain Observatories (GNOMO)
- Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments (GLORIA)
- Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA)
- Mountain Research Initiative: Global Change in Mountain Regions
- Mountain Sentinels: Science in Action with Mountain Communities

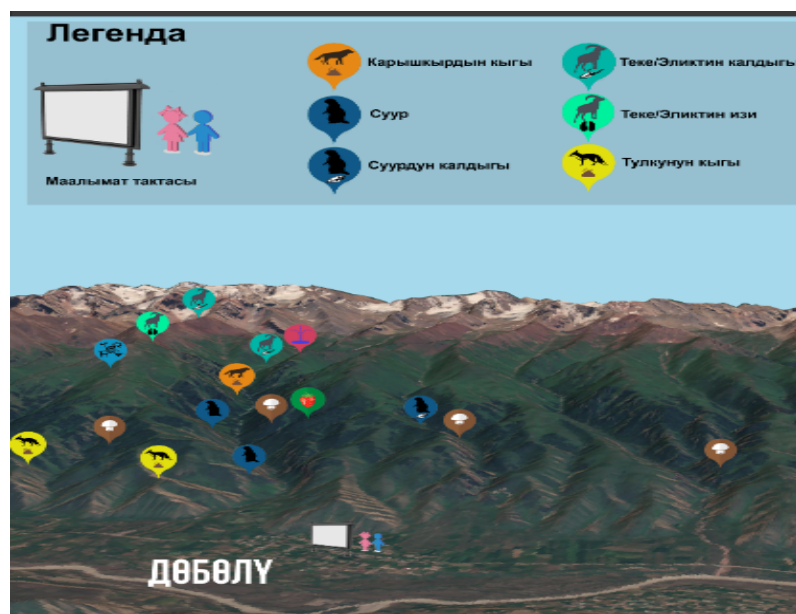


The **Learning Landscapes Initiative** is a long-term social-ecological research and monitoring framework focused on mountain areas in Central Asia. This unique development-oriented Initiative is undertaken by the Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) at University of Central Asia.

Working in close collaboration with many development stakeholders including 'Mountain Partnership' and local communities, MSRI seeks to promote *Sustainable Mountain Development* through participatory research in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and beyond. The Learning Landscapes Initiative guides research and communications.

Leveraging partnerships for development

- Other UCA units and AKDN development agencies
- Mountain Partnership and World Agroforestry Centre
- International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
- Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP)
- Himalayan University Consortium (HUC)
- National & international universities
- Communities and civil society



Community-based Resource Mapping in Mountain Landscapes