



Vacancy PhD position: ‘Hydropower development in the context of climate change: Exploring conflicts and fostering cooperation across scales and boundaries in the Eastern Himalayas’

Wageningen University (Wageningen, The Netherlands) invites applications for a PhD candidate to do scientific research in the framework of the interdisciplinary research programme ‘*Hydropower development in the context of climate change: Exploring conflicts and fostering cooperation across scales and boundaries in the Eastern Himalayas*’, funded by the British Department for International Development through the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). An ideal candidate would be someone who has past research or work experience and/or situated knowledge of the Darjeeling district of North Bengal and Sikkim in India or of Eastern Nepal. We especially encourage women, ethnic minorities and those disadvantaged by caste disparities to apply.

Background to the research project:

The culturally- and bio-diverse region of the Eastern Himalayas is vulnerable to climate change, and the target of ambitious hydropower development plans. This project sets out to explore how the impacts of hydropower development will intersect with the effects of climate change in the Tamor River basin in Taplejung and Panchthar districts in Nepal; and in Sikkim and Darjeeling district of North Bengal in India. To date, considerations of climate change are mainly expressed by Northern parties, in climate mitigation policies. In the plans and policies of Nepal and in India, hydropower development is not pursued to mitigate climate change, but to meet objectives of economic growth and energy demand. The distribution of the enormous benefits of hydropower development appear to be skewed across groups and scales, which is perhaps one reason why the issue is contentious. In the disagreements that these contentions provoke, the actors driving hydropower development are much more powerful than those whose livelihoods are affected by the production of hydro-electricity, while the benefits primarily accrue to those responsible for its consumption. This project’s underlying motivation, therefore, is to help improve the livelihood and water security of these communities, reducing their vulnerability to climate change and enhancing their political voice and leverage.

Rather than rejecting it altogether, the project’s objective is to propose and develop more climate-resilient, equitable and legitimate hydropower development, and create new solidarities around these. Through a comparative and transdisciplinary approach, we will investigate historical trajectories of hydropower development in terms of their financial, technological and institutional modalities, and of the conflicts and solidarities these provoke. This feeds into more specific field studies to (i) understand how these trajectories and modalities re-configure institutional landscapes around water and energy at multiple scales; (2) map how they differently distribute climate-related water risks and benefits at different scales; (3) assess their hydrological/technical viability against climate change projections, as well as their implications for livelihood opportunities and/or risks across groups; (4) identify how socio-political, territorial and ethnic fractures influence political space and voice, translating into either conflicts or solidarities at different scales.

Vacancy description:

We are looking for a candidate with:

- A Master's Degree in social sciences, human geography, political sciences, policy sciences, environmental studies, or related fields;
- A good academic record as proven by undergraduate and postgraduate grades and thesis; publications will make the application strong;
- Research interests in land and water resources, resource conflicts and / or climate change and hydropower, with commitment to and/or interest in issues of interdisciplinarity and equity;
- Affinity with social science research methods
- Excellent (English) writing, editing, oral communication, and interpersonal skills; fluently conversant in Nepali;
- Excellent organizational skills and ability to work both independently and in team/s
- Computer skills (Windows; Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access);
- Research motivation; capacity and commitment to a four-year PhD.

The candidate will need to be studying/working in a local organisation which commits to supporting the candidate during the course of the four-year research. The candidate will be registered for the PhD program, and will defend and be awarded her/his PhD thesis at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. S/he will spend up to a maximum of 18 months in the Netherlands - initially for research preparation and later to write up and defend the thesis. The rest of four-year period will be spent doing fieldwork in India and/or Nepal. This construction is known as a sandwich PhD.

The studentship is full-time (with an initial probation period of 10 - 14 months) and starts from 1 August 2014. Project research allowances cover international travel (2 trips to the Netherlands), tuition fees, living allowance and health insurance coverage while in the Netherlands; and local travel and research costs during the four years (no extension possible).

Candidates can apply **by 30-6-2014** by sending an e-mail with i) a full CV (including any publications), ii) cover letter, and iii) a short writing assignment [see below] to Dr. Deepa Joshi, Wageningen UR (deepa.joshi@wur.nl). For further queries and any other clarification please contact Dr. Vimal Khawas, Sikkim University (vimalkhawas@gmail.com), Dr Govinda Choudhary, North Bengal University (govinda.choudhury@gmail.com) and Dr Hari Shrestha, Nepal Engineering College (hari@nec.edu.np).

The assignment is as follows:

Having read the general description of the project above, write a short [maximum 2A4, Times New Roman; single spacing] research note in which you make clear:

- what your preliminary ideas would be on how to include issues of climate policy, hydropower development/projects, water (in-)security, and conflict / cooperation in the context of the Eastern Himalayas;
- what would be your ideal research focus within the general theme of the project;
- what methods could be used in such research, and why are these relevant to the project.