Networking for Mountain Sustainability

A Report & Proposal

Prepared for the United Nations Mountain Partnership

By the Telluride Institute and the Aspen International Mountain Foundation

Mountain InfoZone

https://mountaininfozone.world

This Report advocating for a next years phase of **"Networking for Mountain Sustainability"** has been prepared by the Telluride Institute and the Aspen International Mountain Foundation, as members of the United Nations FAO Mountain Partnership, and for public release via the Mountain InfoZone website: https://mountaininfozone.world

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Networking for Mountain Sustainability

Introduction

Mountains, the top of the world's watersheds, home to evermore populated high altitude cities and innumerable small rural communities, are being critically impacted by the cumulative effects of development, economic disparities and climate change. Mountains are the fragile locales for exploitive resources extraction, tourism and crippling boom-bust economies. Mountain areas are also among the poorest connected places on the planet. This is all well known, and much good and generous work is in process to mitigate these impacts and to foster a renewable, sustaining mountain and global future. This is the work and mission of the **UN Mountain Partnership**.

Next phase networking connectivity, applications and eco-social processes are increasingly understood to be a key to achieving the **United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals**.

This Report, **Networking for Mountain Sustainability**, provides an Executive Summary, with Recommendations for a next phase of networking for mountain areas sustainability, and a preliminary rapid-assessment Resources Guide, including links to organizations, programs, partnerships, publishing, policies, tools, applications, support sources, local-global cooperative actions and on the ground mountain regions sustainability efforts.

Networking for Mountain Sustainability, as basis for a proposed ongoing initiative, is intended as an aid to research, decision-making, planning, partnerships, investments and grounded actions. It advocates for comprehensive, in-depth, networked, cooperative strategies that can be a key in leading to more empowered and resilient mountain communities and regions of the world.

This Report is a project of **Telluride Institute** and **Aspen International Mountain Foundation.**

Networking for Mountain Sustainability

Executive Summary

The world's mountains, the source of over half the planet's potable water, are under increasing stress from both climate change and the complex forces of globalization. High altitude cities are growing rapidly. Many rural mountain communities are declining in population, and often struggle to support lands rich in biodiversity, while lacking adequate funds or shared resource capabilities. What can be done to address these and a cascade of related problems?

Internetworked communication is one well understood answer. In today's world, mountain communities need to be able to talk with each other, to seek assistance and advice, and to share stories, technologies, successes, indigenous knowledge, eco-data, lifelong learning and much more. These understandings are in fact, at the core of the UN Mountain Partnership's mission.

Unfortunately, Internet access in the world's mountains is mostly poor and of low bandwidth. Greater collaboration is needed to gather and share much more data from and with mountain regions; social, environmental, economic and cultural data. This data is critical to development of urgently needed decisions and solutions to major challenges.

This Report proposes building upon current networking realities, to address determined needs and to initiate next-phase, decentralized, tele-networking strategies, collaborations, partnerships and tools, linking mountain community workers the world over, focusing on shared sustainability efforts and intended outcomes.

Networking for Mountain Sustainability: This Report, based on research, rapid assessments, relevant resource items and links collected to date, offers Recommendations for the Mountain Partnership and its membership, for those active in and concerned about the local-global eco-social health of mountain areas generally, and for the many emergent on-the-ground initiatives addressing rapid changes and critical urgencies at high altitude.

Mountain InfoZone is a new initiative intended to support the objectives of the Mountain Partnership's Communication Strategy 2022–2025, by addressing communications interactions with research, learning, support and collaborative sustainability works over this period. It proposes to meet and advance the 2030 Agenda for Mountains, and the UN Secretary-General's 2020 Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. This Report and its follow-on recommendations and initiatives is being designed to address and set examples for UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed's April 2021 call before the General Assembly, for widespread action to bridge growing digital divides, as critical to achieving 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The **Networking for Mountain Sustainability** Report is a global rapid assessment with recommendations focused on how improved networking (connectivity, applications, partnerships, eco-social processes) can augment mountain areas sustainability strategies.

The Report includes a preliminary Resources Guide with many resource listing and links, making clearly obvious the needs and opportunities for mountains networking initiatives. The Resources Guide is to be more appropriately be developed and offered online, as a web platform that makes possible continued additions and updates, shared postings, cross linking of resource listings, key word searching, interactive media capabilities, networked exchanges, archiving, project collaborations, partnerships and support.

The Guide, divided into Resource Sections, provides an initial substantiation of potential opportunities and means for more effectively working towards mountain sustainability goals and objectives, aided by advanced networking connectivity, applications and processes.

The last two Resource Sections touch on two critical, but poorly understood issues: **Networked Economic Sustainability** and **Information Ecology**. They are intended to provide a context for new works emerging at the intersection of networked societies and ecological sustainability. These are issues that are, like climate change, in need of urgent understanding and actions.

The cited resources and links in the Resources Guide clearly show that there is much good work going on. Most Mountain Partnership members and followers are connected. And yet, digital divides are real and eco-socially undermining. We must all have the right and the ability to be network connected practitioners, equitably, affordably and adequately, regardless of dividing circumstances. How do we get from here to there?

Dedicated interactive networking of the many international initiatives and existing program networks can help to bring the fragile state of mountain ecosystems to greater public attention. It can even help to serve as a platform for a needed global **Mountains Sustainability Campaign**.

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Telluride Institute has been a member of the Mountain Partnership since 2011, and in partnership with Aspen International Mountain Foundation, authored the <u>Sustainable Mountain Development: North American Report</u>, submitted to RIO+20, in January 2012.

The Telluride Institute and the Aspen International Mountain Foundation, with this initiative are committed to ongoing membership support of the Mountain Partnership and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Feedback and advice on the Report and its Recommendations is requested and needed from the many organizations, initiatives and people who have been and continue to do this work every day, in order next phase networking initiatives to be of relevant and shared value.

Recommendations + Next Steps

The UN: As a global leader in networking and network applications, the UN may offer additional inter-agency resources, relationships and opportunities to further the work of mountain sustainability.

- Foster greater resourceful networked cooperation and coordination among UN agencies and programs, as well as with many more potential partners and support organizations.

- Help to most effectively realize the UN Mountain Partnership's 2021-2025 Communications Strategy.

- "Networking for Mountains Sustainability" should be a panel topic at appropriate conferences and working meetings, and as a topic for Mountain Partnership networked exchanges.

Government agencies, NGOs, nonprofit initiatives and responsible corporate organizations: Many are already doing good work in and for mountain areas of this planet. They are all networked, have participatory presences online, and to be ever more effective, many are now considering their next-phase networking strategies.

- Coordinate, collaborate and fund efforts for an enhanced network of networks approach to meet mutual goals.

- Foster and develop new networked partnerships and financial support strategies, while setting example for similar networking initiatives to address sustainability for other climate and development impacted places.

- Advocate for and partner to realize the physical tele-connecting of in-need mountain communities via new satellite capabilities, fiber and wireless infrastructure and community learning networks.

Networked Research: The remarkable realizations and benefits of networking over recent years, now require updated assessment, pragmatic next phase recommendations and actions, and creative forward-looking visions that meets the understood urgency of our tasks.

- Conduct research surveys on the current evolving state of mountain areas' networking.

- Conduct networking exchanges to provide better understanding of current gaps, needs and opportunities, as key to realizing next phase networking efforts, collaborations, partnerships and support strategies.

- Conduct detailed analysis of communications systems and capabilities among mountain communities, mountain areas researchers and educators, and between mountain communities and their lower watershed neighbors.

Medical research, tele-health outreach and emergency care: The networking of these services is progressing rapidly, currently driven by the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, and the growing need of the world's people to have equitable and affordable access to many such critical services.

- To meet this challenge, we must help to implement a next phase of rapid response, integrated preparedness, resources, training and crisis networking for mountain areas.

The arts and cultural programs: Creativity can be a most effective means of shining a spot-light on mountain places and conditions. New media and digital storytelling are highly effective and inspiring ways to communicate and preserve indigenous languages, knowledge and ways. Arts/Sciences collaborations are increasingly focused on ecological understandings and creative example-setting.

- Support mountain arts and cultural initiatives, and help to foster locally developed, networked cultural economic strategies.

The Colorado Rocky Mountain region: There are many dedicated mountain research, education, publishing and eco-action organizations and initiatives in this region of the U.S. .

- Grow networked interactions among Colorado groups, to foster potential partnerships, educational programs, federal, state and local policies, on-the-ground actions, funding opportunities, outreach and intended eco-social outcomes.

- Extend and network the Mountain Resilience Coalition and the CSU Mountain Sentinel program for greater effectiveness.

The UN Mountain Partnership Summit: Aspen International Mountain Foundation (AIMF) has been selected to host the late September 2022 program, at the Aspen Institute in Aspen, CO. Improved mountain sustainability networking should be a topic of conversation and actions.

Telluride Institute has taken next steps to host and give home to the Mountain InfoZone Program and this Report. Follow-up program development is in process.

This Report recommends the follow-on creation of a dynamic, participatory and timely network platform, a network of networks, along with a complementary research and support program. A first iteration, proof-of-concept Mountain InfoZone website has been launched. https://mountaininfozone.world

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