

**Asia-Pacific Network of Early Career  
Professionals for Global Change Research  
(APN-ECAP) Platform for Visibility in Global  
Change and Sustainability**

*(AOA2023-01SY-Saurav)*

**Project Kick-off Meeting  
Exploring Visions: Initiating  
the APN-ECAP Journey**

**November 30, 2023**



# SHEINZOO

01.  
Background

02.  
Introduction

03.  
Demographics

04.  
Activities

05.  
Conclusions

06.  
Annex

# BACKGROUND

The Asia-Pacific Network of Early Career Professionals for Global Change Research (APN-ECAP) is an exciting initiative dedicated to empowering early career professionals across the Asia-Pacific region. Established in response to the pressing need for youth visibility and engagement in global change and sustainability efforts, APN-ECAP offers a dynamic platform for Early Career Professionals (ECAPs) to network, share ideas, plan initiatives, and take collective action.

The objectives of APN-ECAP are simple yet profound: to equip early career professionals with the resources, knowledge, and collaborative opportunities they need to advocate for youth engagement in decision-making processes.

APN-ECAP kick-off meeting, "Exploring Visions: Initiating the APN-ECAP Journey," stems from the necessity to create a dedicated platform where ECAPs can connect, share ideas, and collaboratively work towards tangible solutions for sustainability challenges in the Asia-Pacific region.



*"For sustainability, the idea is to institutionalize APN-ECAP as part of APN. This is our long-term goal, but please give us time to develop those targets."*

**-Dr. Linda Anne Stevenson, APN**

Moreover, the meeting sought to align with APN's broader goals of promoting regional research collaborations, enhancing capacity development, strengthening science-policy linkages, and engaging stakeholders in a meaningful way. By focusing on ECAPs, APN-ECAP aspires to cultivate a new generation of leaders and innovators who are well-equipped to drive change and contribute significantly to the field of global change research.

# INTRODUCTION

The Asia Pacific Network of Early Career Professionals for Global Change Research (APN-ECAP) Platform for Visibility in Global Change and Sustainability held its inaugural kick-off meeting on November 30, 2023. This seminal event, aligning with the broader aims of the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN), marked a significant stride in engaging and empowering young scientists and professionals in addressing sustainability and global change issues. The primary goal was to introduce APN-ECAP's objectives to a network of young and early career professionals, fostering a collaborative environment for innovative solutions in the Asia-Pacific region.



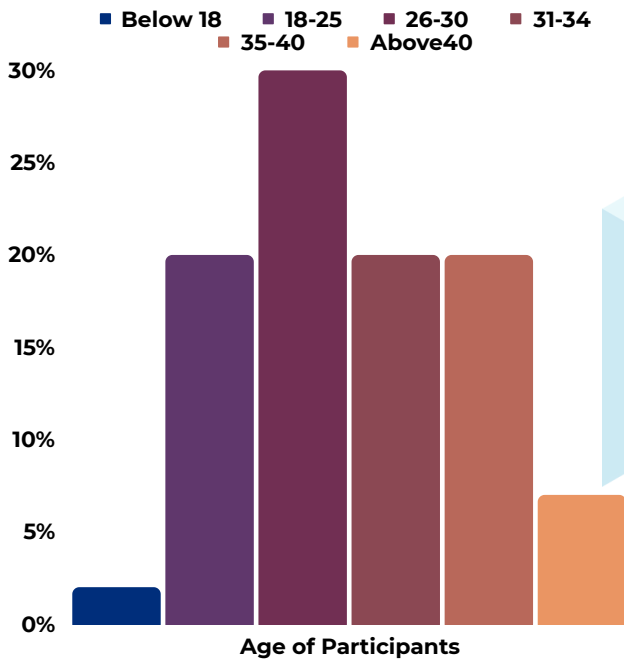
*"As APN is known for the encouragement and empowerment for the ECP, I hope it brings a positive effect in empowerment. On behalf of FRTC, I express full support for this initiative and will actively promote it within our network."*

**-Mr. Yam Prasad Pokharel,  
SC Member, APN**

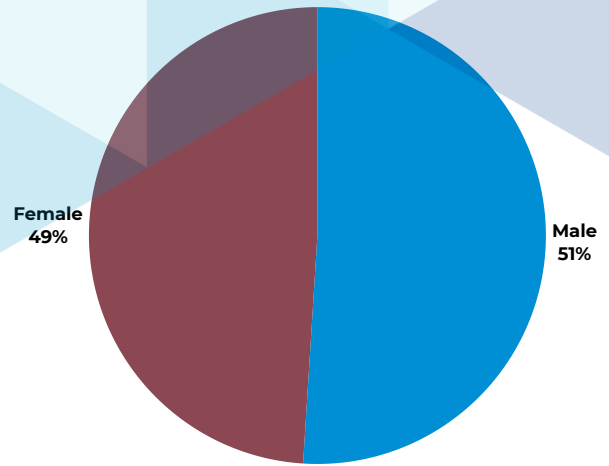
The meeting adopted a hybrid format, enabling widespread participation across diverse geographical locations, and underscoring APN-ECAP's commitment to inclusivity and connectivity. The agenda was set to establish project goals, and action plans, and to facilitate discussions on the roles, challenges, and opportunities for Early Career Professionals (ECAPs) in this dynamic field. This approach highlighted the initiative's focus on creating impactful collaborations, nurturing a community among participants, and laying the groundwork for future research and policy advocacy.

The APN-ECAP kick-off meeting was a foundational step towards building a robust network of engaged and skilled professionals poised to tackle pressing global change challenges. It signified the start of an empowering journey for ECAPs, driving them to play an active role in shaping sustainable solutions for the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

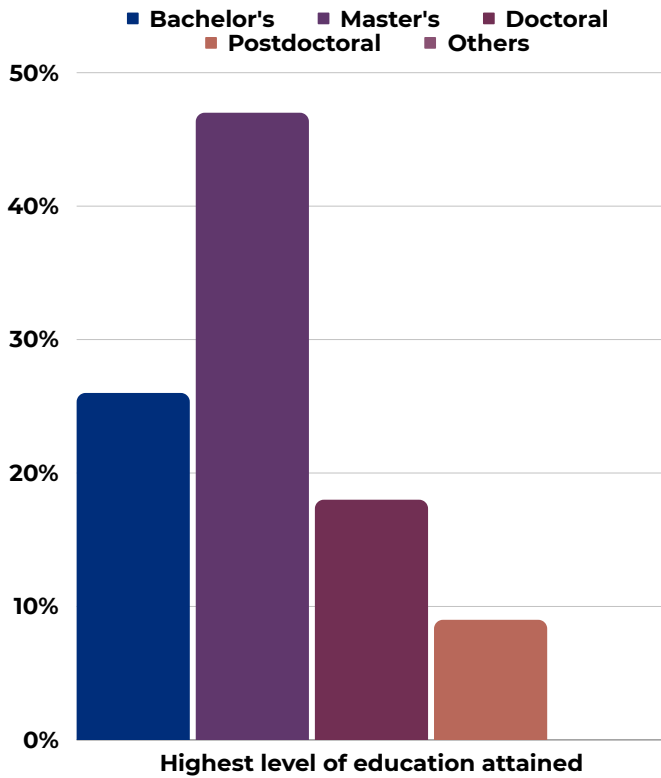
# DEMOGRAPHICS



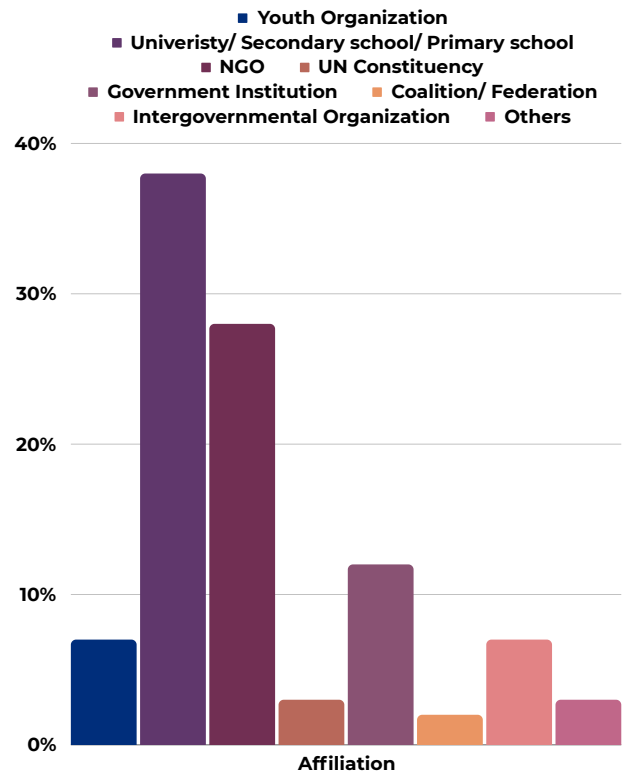
Picture 1: Participant's age range



Picture 2: Participant's gender



Picture 3: Participant's academic background



Picture 4: Participant's affiliation

Country of Nationality  
57 responses



Country of Work Scope  
79 responses



What is your understanding of APN-ECAP? (in one word)  
66 responses



*“The shared commitment to empowering early career scientists and professionals forms a common ground for both CREEW and APN. The inception of APN-ECAP represents the next step in establishing a dynamic, responsive community of young and early career scientists dedicated to addressing global change and promoting sustainability. We look forward to the transformative impact of this initiative.”*  
**-Dr. Dhundi Raj Pathak, CREEW**

# ACTIVITIES

## Project Introduction

---

The meeting featured a series of presentations and discussions, spearheaded by key figures like Dr. Madan Lall Shrestha, Scientific Planning Group (SPG) Member (Nepal) of APN, who provided an overview of APN and the vision behind APN-ECAP. Discussing the formation of APN-ECAP, he emphasized the importance of understanding APN's history, citing the landmark synthesis in 2015 under the CGBP project, which notably involved young scientists.

He also mentioned that APN routinely includes Early Career Professionals (ECPs) in their projects. Additionally, he reflected on APN's achievements, where he shared that from 2015-2020, APN completed 119 projects, with 70 percent involving ECPs. In the 2022 call for proposals, Nepal received funding for two projects, one of which is led by an Early Career Scientist.

Ms. Manju Ghimire (on behalf of Mr. Yam Prasad Pokharel, National Focal Point (nFP) and Steering Committee Member of APN) acknowledged APN's reputation for encouraging and empowering Early Career Professionals (ECAPs) and expressed optimism that this initiative would have a positive impact on empowerment. She hoped that APN would bring young and experienced professionals together to promote an inclusive environment, noting a current lack of linkage between these groups.



*"The AIT's mission is all about developing skills in professionals for sustainable development and we have been partnering with many prestigious institutes around the world. APN and CREEW are very important partners for us."*

**-Prof. Sangam Shrestha, AIT**

Dr. Dhundi Raj Pathak, President of CREEW, introduced CREEW and its ongoing projects, highlighting that APN-ECAP is a significant milestone in the partnership between CREEW and APN. The partnership is underpinned by a shared commitment to empowering early career scientists and professionals, aiming to build a community focused on addressing global change and sustainability. He further highlighted the need to focus on the critical role of governments and institutions in supporting ECPs.

Dr. Pathak also mentioned CREEW's flagship programs, such as the CREEW Research Grant Program for Master's students in Nepal and the CREEW Young Researcher Fellowship Program. He noted the ongoing National Groundwater Symposium, now in its 12th edition, and mentioned a current research project on GHG emissions from open waste burning in South and East Asian countries.

Prof. Sangam Shrestha, the Scientific Planning Group (SPG) Member, Thailand, and Dean of the School of Engineering and Technology at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand expressed great honor in being part of the APN-ECAP project from its inception, highlighting AIT's role in organizing several events this year, including the Proposal Development and Training Program (PDTW) to launch the project. He emphasized AIT's commitment to developing skills for sustainable development and mentioned its partnerships with various prestigious institutes worldwide, with special mention of APN and CREEW as important partners.



*“When forming APN-ECAP we have to look at the history of APN. We can learn from CGBP landmark synthesis that happened in 2015 where the project brought young scientists to the floor. Normally we bring ECP with us to projects for exposure..”*

**-Dr. Madan Lall Shrestha, SPG Member, APN**



He also noted the critical role of Early Career Professionals (ECAPs) in bridging generations and bringing innovative ideas to address global sustainability issues. Prof. Shrestha described ECAPs as passionate, dedicated, creative, and innovative individuals, with digital literacy, global connectivity, advocacy, influence, resilience, and inclusivity. Concluding his remarks, he expressed excitement and anticipation about being part of this initiative and the prospect of a successful collaboration with the APN-ECAP team.

Ms. Naomi Young, Programme Officer, Knowledge Management and Scientific Affairs at the Secretariat of APN, reported on key aspects of the Asia-Pacific Network for Early Career Professionals (APN-ECAP). She highlighted APN's four strategic goals, which include supporting regional research, encouraging capacity development, strengthening science-policy linkages, and emphasizing stakeholder engagement. She shared how APN supports projects through two programs: Collaborative Regional Research (CRRP) and Scientific Capacity Development (CAPaBLE), funded by donor contributions.

APN's early assessment of the projects in the fifth strategic phase revealed that 77.6% of their projects were led by researchers from developing countries, with over 60% led by early career professionals and over 75% engaging them. She further highlighted APN's focus on strengthening linkages between science, policy, and public knowledge sharing. Notably, over 100 publications from APN projects were cited in the last IPCC Assessment report, and over 60 APN projects contributed to it, representing 15 countries.



*"We are looking forward to engaging ECPs in shaping our missions and directions and we hope that APN-ECAP will do just that with immense coordination from the CREEW team and support from us at the APN secretariat."*

**-Ms. Naomi Young, APN**

Dr. Saurav KC, Project Lead of APN-ECAP and Deputy Executive Director at CREEW, briefly gave an overview of the APN-ECAP project initiative from conceptualization, and visualization to implementation. He also shared an overview of its activities for 2023-2024. He emphasized that ECAPs bring innovative ideas, enthusiasm, and great value to sustainability and transformation efforts. ECAPs are central to APN's operational mandate, with their encouragement and empowerment being key aspects of APN's science and capacity development strategies. Dr. KC mentioned that APN funds APN-ECAP, and is collaboratively implemented with CREEW.

He outlined the objectives of APN-ECAP as youth networking, youth involvement in planning, monitoring, and evaluation, and enhancing ECAPs' capacity in decision-making and advocacy in sustainability. Future plans include promoting APN and APN-ECAP activities, continuing activities based on an established action plan, onboarding new members, collaborating with new partners, and forming an elected APN-ECAP committee following an approved structure. Dr. KC also introduced the Advisory Group of APN-ECAP, who have been onboarded to support and provide guidance in the project and consultation.



*“We conceptualized this project during my internship at APN. The preliminary idea revolved around how project monitoring and dissemination can be done at APN. We started the discussion of involving young professionals by creating APN-YN. With further involvement, we came to APN-ECAP.”*

**-Dr. Saurav KC, CREEW**

# ECAPs Panel Discussion

---

The panel discussion, moderated by Ms. Susmita Mishra, Research Associate for the APN-ECAP Project at CREEW, was centered on the opportunities and challenges of youths and ECPs titled: Learning by Sharing: Expectations, Goals, and Network Functionality.

The panel discussion was composed of ECAPs: Mr. Raunak Shrestha, Programme Officer at Global Water Partnership South Asia (GWP SAS); Ms. Khaing Su Lwin, Fellow at Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI Asia Center) & Co-Lead SUMERNET Young Professionals Network (SYP); Dr. Biswajit De, Founder President of WildRoots-INDIA; Country Focal Point, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); and Ms. Rajani Regmi, Deputy Director at Provincial Center for Good Governance, Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Minister (OCMCM) of Bagmati Province, Nepal.



Mr. Raunak Shrestha highlighted the unique qualities of youth in promoting equitable and sustainable practices, noting their curiosity, passion, and transparency. He emphasized that youth, coming from diverse backgrounds, add significant value in uni-generational spaces by taking ownership and pushing boundaries.

Ms. Rajani Regmi, representing a government perspective, discussed how governments can contribute to the capacity building of ECAPs. She points up the importance of collaboration at all government levels and the inclusion of research institutions and think tanks in policymaking, stressing evidence-based policies and community engagement.



Ms. Khaing Su, discussing the challenges faced by young professionals, pointed out cultural barriers related to age and gender, the need for inclusivity, and concerns about 'youth washing' in high-level panels. She advocated for initiatives like APN-ECAP that provide institutionalized support and gender-responsive inclusiveness.



Dr. Biswajit De identified unrealistic and flashy programs as a primary obstacle for ECAPs, emphasizing the need for realistic programs that show pathways and involve ECAPs in activities with a focus on impact. He suggested that APN-ECAP should design impact-driven workshops and facilitate regular brainstorming and regional focus groups.

Finally, all panelists delved into strategies to promote APN-ECAP. Mr. Shrestha proposed fostering knowledge exchange through the utilization of business model canvases, supported by institutional endorsement. Dr. Biswajit proposed recognizing small success stories, while Ms. Rajani emphasized the importance of engaging young policymakers and sharing local practices and stories. The discussion underscored the critical role of intergenerational communication, youth, and ECAPs engagement in sustainable development and the importance of inclusive, evidence-based approaches in policy and practice.

# CONCLUSIONS

The inaugural APN-ECAP kick-off meeting, "Exploring Visions: Initiating the APN-ECAP Journey," held on November 30, 2023, was a landmark event in the collective journey to empower Early Career Professionals (ECAPs) in the Asia-Pacific region. This meeting transcended being a mere formal gathering; it was a vibrant confluence of ideas, aspirations, and a shared vision for a sustainable future.

The event successfully established a solid foundation for future collaboration, providing a unique platform for young professionals and scientists to voice their perspectives, share innovative ideas, and engage in meaningful dialogue with experienced professionals and policymakers. The diverse participation and comprehensive discussions underscored the significance of inclusive, interdisciplinary approaches in addressing the multifaceted challenges of global change and sustainability.

*"Empowering Early Career Professionals, we're creating a network rich in knowledge and action. The fresh perspectives and dynamic energy of these emerging leaders are key to developing and implementing sustainable solutions for our complex global challenges. Together, we're on a path towards a resilient and sustainable future, leveraging the unique strengths and diversity of the Asia-Pacific region."*

**-Susmita Mishra, CREEW**



A notable achievement of the meeting was the establishment of a roadmap for APN-ECAP, setting clear objectives and action plans. This roadmap not only aligns with the broader goals of the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) but also carves out a specific niche for ECPs in the realm of global sustainability efforts. The emphasis on capacity building, knowledge exchange, and enhancing ECPs' involvement in decision-making processes is a testament to APN's commitment to nurturing a new generation of leaders in global change research.

In conclusion, the APN-ECAP kick-off meeting has not only initiated a promising journey towards a more integrated, collaborative, and impactful network but has also laid the groundwork for strengthening the network's role in addressing critical global change challenges and promoting sustainability in the Asia-Pacific region. As we look to the future, the insights, strategies, and collaborations fostered through this platform hold immense potential to influence the course of sustainable development and policy-making in the region, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and sustainable world.



*"Knowledge and opportunities are very important for fostering meaningful engagement and I look forward to the impactful strides this initiative will undoubtedly bring and it is already evident in the diverse representation of ECPs in today's meeting."*

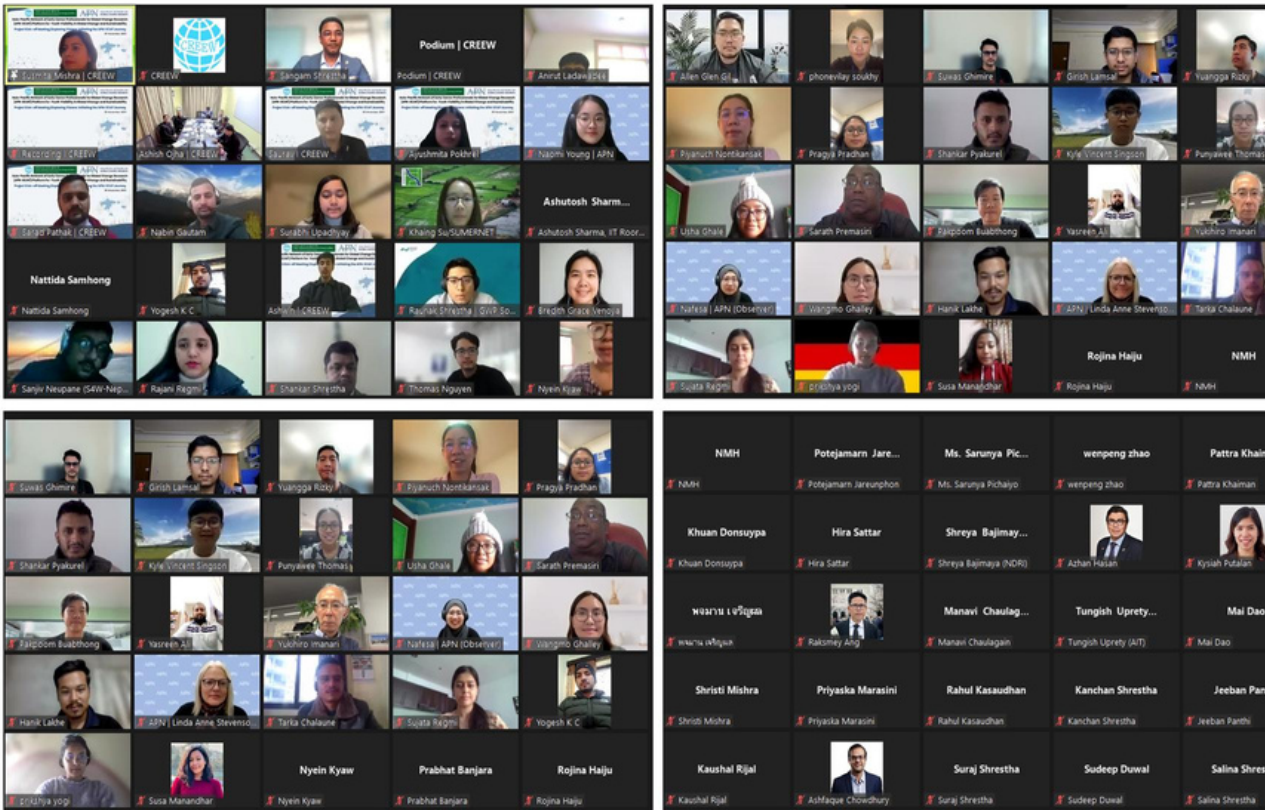
**-Ayushmita Pokharel, CREEW**

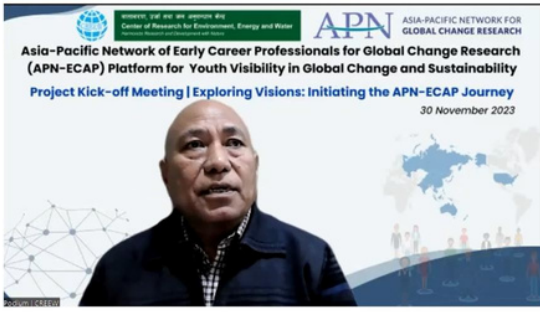


*"To sustain this network, we should understand and map the expertise of long-term members and also consistently engage by providing capacity development workshops and revisiting the expectations of the group."*

**-Ms. Surabhi Upadhyay,  
Advisory Group, APN-ECAP**

# ANNEX







CONTACTUS



*[apn-ecap@apn-gcr.org](mailto:apn-ecap@apn-gcr.org)*