

ALIGN Event Brings Together Academic Institutions to Share Knowledge on Developing Natural Resources

WWF-Nepal, with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Asia's Linear Infrastructure safeGuarding Nature (ALIGN) Project, collaborated with Green Governance Nepal to organize a knowledge-sharing event titled "Knowledge Sharing for Academic Institutions on Mainstreaming Natural Resources Safeguarding Into Academic Curriculum."

The meeting allowed participants to share knowledge and learnings gathered from integrating natural resources safeguarding in linear infrastructure development in the course curriculum of the Institute of Engineering (IoE) and Institute of Forestry (IoF). Both the institutes introduced the course curriculum with support from ALIGN and WWF-Nepal, with classes currently ongoing.

Representatives from universities and academic institutions across Nepal attended the event on December 9, 2024, in Kathmandu, Nepal. The participants included representatives from Pokhara University, Purbanchal University, Kathmandu University, Far Western University, Mid-West University, Tribhuvan University, Madan Bhandari University of Science and Technology, and Lumbini Buddhist University, among others.

The event began with introductory remarks from Mr. Ek Raj Sigdel, Head of Policy and Governance, WWF-Nepal, who shared ALIGN's objectives and its focus on curriculum development to train more professionals who can integrate biodiversity and ecosystem protections into infrastructure development. Then, Mr. Haribhadra Acharya, Senior Ecologist from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, shared insights on the importance of mainstreaming natural resources safeguarding into academic curriculum and thanked the ALIGN Project for creating an enabling environment to initiate this dialogue.



Dr. Baral presents at the workshop ©WWF-Nepal/Swarnima Shrestha

After this, Prof. Dr. Narendra Man Shakya from IoE shared the institute's specific objectives with its safeguarding curriculum, followed by Prof. Dr. Sushil Bahadur Bajracharya from IoE discussing the process behind course development. He explained that a manual was developed to guide faculty members in delivering the course. In the future, in addition to the Pulchowk Campus, 15 other IoE-affiliated campuses will soon offer this course. To further strengthen the faculty's expertise, a two-day training program will be held with support from the ALIGN Project.



Participants during the Q&A session ©WWF-Nepal / Elina Shahi

Dr. Sony Baral, Associate Professor and Assistant Dean at IoF, provided insights into the institute's course curriculum, outlining the steps IoF plans to take to ensure the course's sustainability, including a focus on developing skilled human resources and expertise, collaborating with conservation partners like WWF, and conducting reviews and revisions of the course after each cycle is completed.

After the presentations, attendees engaged in an open question- and- answer session. The participants expressed interest in incorporating natural resource safeguarding topics into their curricula, with many also sharing a desire to collaborate with WWF-Nepal. The

expert presenters addressed participant queries, which included how they can start the process of introducing similar courses in their universities.



The concluding session of the meeting ©WWF-Nepal / Elina Shahi

Mr. Sandesh Singh Hamal, Chief of Party of the ALIGN Project, concluded the event by summarizing the feedback and thanking the attendees for their valuable participation. He emphasized the significance of the ALIGN Project and the integration of natural resource safeguarding in infrastructure courses across Nepal, India, and Mongolia. He noted that the current curriculum serves as a foundation for other institutions and can be adapted to different university requirements.

The event successfully brought together representatives from universities and academic institutions nationwide to share the knowledge gained by IoE and IoF in integrating natural resource safeguarding into their curricula. It also sparked interest and opened pathways for new partnerships within the academic community. As a result of the event, WWF-Nepal is exploring new collaboration with Pokhara University. ■ *To learn more about the ALIGN Project, visit alignproject.org.*

This content is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the [United States Agency for International Development](http://www.usaid.gov) (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Center for Large Landscape Conservation (CLLC) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

