The International Geoscience and Geopark Programme Newsletter

An update of IGGP activities in the last trimester

UNESCO and the IGGP

UNESCO is the only United Nations organization with a mandate to support research and capacity in Earth Sciences, and the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme is our flagship.

Following the endorsement of the Member States, UNESCO’s International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP) has been implemented through two co-operative ventures with the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), and the Global Geoparks Network. IGCP and UGGp Councils coordinate their work through a shared UNESCO Secretariat and joint coordination meetings of their respective bureau which convene as necessary. The chairpersons of the two respective Councils co-chair the IGGP.

UNESCO evaluates its programmes every 4-5 years, and IGGP evaluation assessed its overall performance while looking at the appropriateness of programme implementation mechanisms and processes. The report indicated a positive review and assessment of the IGGP and is available here.

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IGCP Council 6th Session

The annual IGCP Council meeting decided to continue supporting 39 ongoing projects and approved 18 new projects, totaling 57 active IGCP projects in 2021, led by 316 project leaders from 92 countries. The presentations made during the IGCP Council by its members can be found here and the IGCP UNESCO’s Secretariat annual report and presentations are available here. The IGCP continues to grow in its outreach activities. One area of particular interest is the gender representation: in 2021, 43% of all IGCP project leaders are female geoscientists.

New UNESCO Global Geoparks

On 21st of April 2021, the UNESCO Executive Board endorsed 8 new UNESCO Global Geoparks proposed by the 5th UGGp Council. This brings the geoparks total to 169 in 44 countries. Meet the new UNESCO Global Geoparks here.

World map showing IGCP Project leader (PL) and Scientific Board (SB) countries in 2021
IGCP's contribution to the SDG's

The overall aim of the SDGs is to pave the way for a sustainable world and geoscience is at the core of this mission. To highlight and demonstrate the relevance of Geoscience for the accomplishment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO published a series of digital flyers where 17 UNESCO Earth Sciences impact case studies directly addressing each SDG are presented. Read and download them here.

UNESCO’s contribution to Earth Sciences and UNESCO Global Geoparks.

In collaboration with IUGS, the IGCP secretariat and Prof Iain Stewart - UNESCO Chair in Geoscience and Jordan-UK El Hassan bin Talal Research Chair in Sustainability - produced a series of 3 hand-drawn animations showcasing the work of UNESCO in the Earth Sciences and how the Unesco Global Geoparks contribute for our mission. Find them here. Based on that a brochure was also produced.
UNESCO Lecture Series: Earth Materials for a Thriving Society

Earlier in the year UNESCO’s Secretariat launched a new series of Earth Sciences lectures designed for a global audience. These provided diverse perspectives on Earth materials and their role in society. Developed in collaboration with the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and iCRAG - Irish Centre for Research in Applied Geosciences – the lectures were produced and broadcast live between 26 January and 9 March 2021 and counted with over 4,300 participants from 145 countries. Recordings of these lectures are available here.

International Geodiversity Day

Following a request from IUGS, over 100 organizations from the civil society and the academic world, including major international geoscience and nature conservation organizations, endorsed the proposal for the establishment of an International Geodiversity Day. This proposal was supported by Member States from all electoral groups and UNESCO’s Director General welcomed the proclamation of an international day for geodiversity on 6 October on the during the 211th session of UNESCO Executive Board where a promotional video was shown live.
The UNESCO IGGP secretariat launched a survey to consult experts from the international earth sciences community (IGCP and UGGp’s) on their views regarding the strategic directions for UNESCO’s action in the field of Earth sciences, in line with the organization’s mandate. Combining the results of this survey, along with the vision and goals from its councils and the Internal Oversight Services (IOS) evaluation report of the program, the secretariat drafted a report. The overall feedback and evaluation is that the program is delivering in its mandate well; yet, it would benefit from more staff and funding. Further, the results showed critical challenges, trends, and opportunities to be pursued, such as climate change adaption and mitigation from earth sciences perspective and geoscience education. The surveys emphasized the importance of visibility and partnerships at all different levels, with some suggested entities. The survey also stressed the importance of UNESCO’s being a focal, leading point to help geoscience around the globe.

UNESCO - IFPEN PhD Grants

In 2020, IFP Energies Nouvelles (IFPEN) and UNESCO have signed a framework partnership agreement concerning research and training in the field of geoscience. This collaboration mobilizes IFPEN’s expertise to support the priorities of UNESCO’s International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP), such as the promotion and understanding of the “Earth Systems” and sustainable use of natural resources. IFPEN and UNESCO will propose thesis topics in line with these themes. The aim is to train future research engineers to enable them to overcome the scientific and technological challenges associated with the energy transition. Find the list of topics on the IGCP Annual Report here and here.
IGCP Projects Outreach Work

Despite the delicate international situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, research and international cooperation did not stop, and neither did UNESCO. Making use of digital technology, IGCP projects held several online meetings.

IGCP 648. “Supercontinent Cycles and Global Geodynamics,” held sixteen seminars in 2020 all available online.

IGCP 683. “Pre-Atlantic geological connections among northwest Africa, Iberia, and eastern North America: Implications for continental configurations and economic resources,” held three webinars in October 2020, September 2020, and January 2021, with hundreds of participants. Their webinars, “Geology of Morocco: an Overview” and “Crustal Blocks of the Appalachian orogen” webinars, along with information on their other webinars, are available online.

IGCP 692. “Geoheritage for Geohazard Resilience,” introduced two webinars per month! – Dec 2020 to June 2021. Here you can watch previous seminars or register for the new ones.

IGCP 707. “Origin, Distribution, and Biogeochemistry of Arsenic in the Altiplano-Puna plateau of South America,” organized two webinars on 14 May, 11 June, and 16 July. They provide insights on topics related to the origin and geochemistry of arsenic as well as its effects on human health, remediation technologies, and case studies around the world. All previous seminars are available on YouTube. Visit the webinar page for more info.
IGCP 668. “Equatorial Gondwanan history and Early Palaeozoic Evolutionary Dynamics” presented the long history of the Indian subcontinent in “The Ocean on the top of our Mountains” animation.

IGCP 667. “World Map of the Orogens,” launched a mini-course on YouTube, and shared their work and activities through their newsletter.

IGCP 685 “Geology for Sustainable Development” developed several outreach videos to raise awareness on geosciences and the project also launched in collaboration with the GFGD the Higher Education Learning Resources containing eight modules which are available here.