



Research Grant Announcement

Darwin Initiative Project: "Upscaling Pollination to Enhance Biodiversity and Human Welfare in Nepal" (Nepal Pollination Project)

Project Overview

Pollination is a critical link between biodiversity and human welfare, supporting approximately 75% of global crop species, including many economically and nutritionally important fruits, vegetables, and seeds. Smallholder farmers in developing countries are particularly reliant on insect-pollinated crops for their livelihoods and for essential dietary micronutrients such as vitamin A and folate. However, pollinator declines driven by agricultural intensification, habitat loss, and climate change are increasingly threatening food security, nutrition, and rural incomes worldwide. Pollinator declines in the Himalayan region, including Nepal, are already leading to negative impacts on people's livelihoods and health, as the yields of nutritious, high-value crops decline. Nepal hosts exceptionally rich pollinator diversity, including one of the world's most diverse bumblebee assemblages and five of the nine global honeybee species. Despite this richness, continued pollinator loss is predicted to cause substantial declines in farm income and severe nutrition-related health impacts, particularly among vulnerable rural populations.

This Darwin Initiative-funded project, "Upscaling Pollination to Enhance Biodiversity and Human Welfare in Nepal," hereafter referred to as the Nepal Pollination Project, builds on strong evidence that pollinator declines can be reversed at a local scale when farmers, researchers, and policymakers work together. Scaling up in both extent and ambition, the project aims to deliver a national-level regime shift in pollinator awareness, farming and beekeeping practices, research capacity, and conservation policy in Nepal. In addition, the project aims to develop a national pollination digital library and a digital museum under the Pollination Innovation Center, serving as a long-term platform for pollinator data, knowledge sharing, education, and policy support. Through this integrated approach, the project seeks to improve human health, strengthen rural economies, and conserve biodiversity across Nepal and the wider Himalayan region. Research gaps have been identified among various aspects of pollinator-plant interactions including pollination dynamics in the current cropping systems. Therefore, we invite Master's students to conduct thesis research integral to this national project. The successful applicants will focus their study on pollination dynamics within high-value crop systems at designated National Agriculture Modernization Programme (NAMP) sites or in collaboration with HERD International, one of the project's implementing partners. The research aims to generate scientific evidence on pollinators diversity, pollination services, reasons of pollination decline, impact of climate change and other agri-intensifications practices including sustainable agricultural practices to support evidence-based decision-making and policy development in Nepal.

Primary Research Focus:

- Pollinator diversity and visitation rates in plantation systems.
- Relationships between pollination services and crop yield/quality.
- Effects of land-use and climate variability on pollinator communities.
- Evaluation of pollinator-friendly farming and beekeeping practices.

Specific Crop and Site Allocations:

- Buckwheat: Chitwan
- Mustard: Chitwan
- Apple: Mustang
- Coffee: Gulmi



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- Cucumber/Pumpkin/Bittergourd: Kaski
- Tomato: Surkhet
- Soyabean: Dadeldhura
- Faba bean/Pigeon pea: Decide later

Research Methodology

The Nepal Pollination Project has already designed standardized pollination related field protocols, sampling designs, and treatment methodologies. Selected students will apply these established methods to ensure consistency and comparability across sites. Technical backstopping, training, and supervision will be provided by the project team to ensure high-quality data generation and policy relevance.

Eligibility

- Enrolled in a Master's degree program in Agronomy, Entomology, Horticulture, and Agroecology at the Faculty of Agriculture, Agriculture and Forestry University.
- Should have completed the first semester course work and be at the thesis research stage.
- Demonstrated strong interest in pollination ecology, agroecology, and/or biodiversity conservation.
- Willingness and ability to undertake sustained field research at the specified NAMP sites or project partner working sites.

Financial and Technical Support

- **Thesis Stipend:** NPR 1,00,000 (One lakh) per student
- **Academic Supervision:** Joint mentoring from project team and NAMP specialists
- **Technical Support:** In standardized pollination research methods and data collection.
- **Policy Impact:** Opportunity to contribute directly to national evidence-based and policy processes on pollination services.

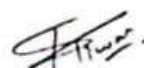
How to Apply

Interested candidates must submit the following documents as a single PDF file:

1. Curriculum Vitae (CV)
2. Research Proposal (no more than 5 pages)
3. Statement of Interest (max 300 words), outlining your motivation and relevant background.
4. Recommendation Letter from your current academic supervisor.

Submission Deadline & Contact: 15 October 2026

Please submit applications or direct inquiries to: kdevkota@afu.edu.np


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Prof. Sundar Tiwari, PhD
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14 Oct 2026