



## CHAPTER ONE

# Transboundary Issues in the Mount Everest Ecosystem

## An Open Boundary

### *The greater Mount Everest ecoregion*

The border region between Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China is defined by the Himalayas, and especially by the highest mountain on earth: Mount Everest – Sagarmatha (in Nepal) – Qomolangma (in TAR). Though this natural barrier may seem formidable, its passes, rivers, and skies are corridors through which people have traded, cultures have mingled, and plants and animals have migrated for millennia. These



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*Shepherds and sheep in a high mountain valley*



*Prayer flags mark significant landscape features on the way to Everest*



*Sherpa woman in a pasture in Gokyo Valley, Khumbu*

mountains, with their 8,000 metre peaks, deep gorges, thick forests, glaciers, and alpine passes and valleys – the greater Mount Everest ecosystem – link rather than separate the two countries.

Several rivers in this region existed before the Himalayas were lifted by tectonic movements of the continents. As the mountains rose over millennia, the rivers eroded deep gorges to stay on their original courses. One of these rivers, the Arun, starts as glacial melt on the north side of the massif, and turns south, cutting a deep gorge through the Himalayas as it flows. Gorges and passes such as this one link the Tibetan Plateau and the high mountain valleys of Nepal, which have more in common naturally and culturally than either area does with its adjacent lowland regions.

Mountain forests and rangelands help capture and store rainfall, maintain water quality, and reduce erosion and downstream sedimentation. They provide fuelwood, timber, fibre, forage, organic manure, medicine, and wild food for local people. Forests also protect settlements, roads, and trails from natural hazards such as landslides, avalanches, rock falls, and floods. Hence, many local communities respect mountains and forests as the homes of protector deities and the sources of spiritual and cultural ideals. Nestled in Himalayan valleys are the last remaining old growth forests in the region, which are important for maintaining the ecological health of the Asian Sub-continent.

The glaciated mountains of the Himalayas are not only important to those living in the region, they have a tremendous significance for some 500 million people downstream. The Himalayas are the location of the headwaters of all the major river systems flowing north and south through Asia. These rivers provide drinking water, hydropower, irrigation water, fisheries, inland navigation paths, and water for the maintenance of wetlands and biodiversity. Degradation at the headwaters of these rivers can have a major impact on and potentially cause natural disasters in heavily populated areas downstream.

The enormous variation in altitude within a short distance and at low latitude, from 350 to over 8,800m along a line of only 80 km, means that the region extends from sub-tropical forests to glaciated peaks and high-altitude plateau, making the landscape incredibly rich in plant and animal species. Ecosystems in the forests and rangelands around Mount Everest include species from two bio-geographical realms, of which the Himalayas is the junction – the Northern Palearctic and the Southern Oriental. Wildlife in this region – such as snow leopards, wolves, and tahr – cross the border in search of prey or pasture. Migratory birds pass through the open sky and migrate in elevation according to the seasons. Seeds are carried on the wind, in the guts of livestock, and in bird droppings.





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Everything is related, but things closest to each other are not related.

- Ancient Chinese proverb -

## **The historical relationship between Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China**

Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China share a boundary about 885 km long that mostly follows the great Himalayan divide. It forms not only a strong political frontier, but also a seemingly formidable natural barrier. However, the deep gorges, high passes, and open skies are corridors through which rivers have flowed, plants and animals have migrated, people have traded, and cultures have mingled for millennia.

Socioeconomic interactions across the Himalayas have been vital for the survival and growth of a unique human culture. For long periods of history, the borders were effectively non-existent for local farmers and shepherds, although at times these linkages were severed by cross-border disputes of which the remains of old fortresses along the border are reminders.

At present, the opportunity exists to learn from the past and to shape the future through cordial and friendly relations between Nepal and TAR, China. This has enabled the growth of meaningful cross-border exchanges in areas of bilateral trade and tourism. Trade and tourism increased after air and road links were established between Kathmandu and Lhasa. Goods worth over US\$ 40 million are reported to pass annually through the main border crossing between Kodari and Zhangmu. Equally important is the small-scale traditional barter and commercial trade across the 24 high passes along the border.



### *A common culture and resources*

As a result of the remote, mountainous landscape and high-altitude environment, the people living in this region are some of the most isolated and poorest in the world. Traditionally the border was the highest point on the migratory and trading routes rather than a barrier, and the local people continue to travel back and forth – trading, visiting sacred sites, going to marriages, and visiting relatives. Herders have also traditionally moved their yak and sheep across the border – rotating pastures, trading meat, or selling livestock at the annual festivals. ‘Amchis’, traditional healers and herb collectors, search the mountainsides in both countries for valuable medicinal plants.

Other people also move across this border – poachers of rare or valued species, smugglers of illicit goods, and traders of endangered species. These travellers are careless of both international laws and the environment, and leave garbage, debris, and smouldering fires that can quickly become forest fires when caught by the wind. They use, and sometimes abuse, the mountain resources.

In this area of limited resources, those that are available provide the essential basis for traditional life; but their availability is determined by geography and climate, not political boundaries. For example, over 40% of the area of the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau is covered by rangelands that are important to the diverse cultural groups that rely on range-fed livestock for the majority of their income. These groups often move their herds to rotate the grazing of specific pastures; and this frequently means moving herds across what are now international borders. Accessibility of resources is not only affected by the border, restrictions imposed in protected areas, for example on harvesting of non-timber forest products like medicinal plants for people and livestock or allo (giant nettle) for making cloth, mean that local communities may lack these resources not only in terms of commercial activities, but even on a subsistence level.

### *The Himalayan protected areas*

The mountain landscape around Mount Everest is one of Earth’s most sensitive ecosystems, and the environmental degradation of these highlands can have major impacts downstream. Both governments have independently established protected areas around Mt. Everest and nearby – the Qomolangma Nature Preserve (QNP) in Tibet; and Sagarmatha National Park (SNP), Makalu-Barun National Park (MBNP), and Langtang National Park in Nepal (LNP) – to conserve and protect the ecological and cultural integrity of the pristine forest in the lower valleys and the harsh landscape of the Tibetan plateau. Table 1 summarises some details of these areas; their location is shown on the map overleaf.

The largest of the protected areas, the QNP, is the highest conservation area with a transboundary element in the world, and presents special challenges and opportunities for conservation (Lama and Sherpa 1996). It is one of 15 nature conservation areas set up





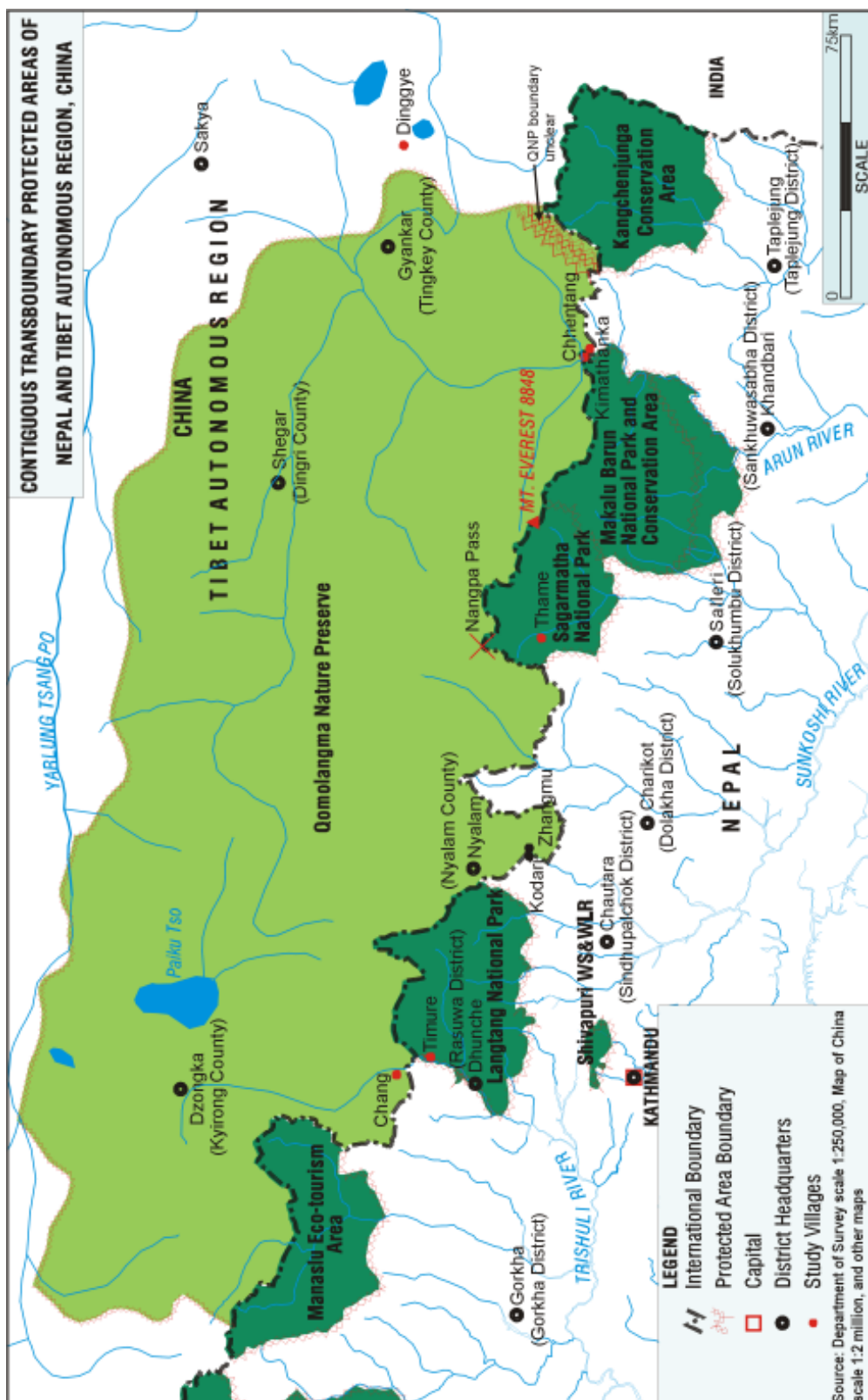
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Yaks at Gokyo carrying firewood for an expedition in 1983



Lakpa Norbu Sherpa

Local people collecting yarcha gunbu, a medicinal plant, in Nyalam, TAR





**Table 1: Protected areas of the Mt. Everest ecosystem**

| Protected Area             | Country    | Established | Area (sq. km.) | Altitude range (m) |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Langtang National Park     | Nepal      | 1976        | 1,710          | 792 - 7,245        |
| Sagarmatha National Park   | Nepal      | 1976        | 420 (BZ)       | 2,800 - 8,850      |
| Makalu-Barun National Park | Nepal      | 1991        | 1,148          | 435 - 8,463        |
| and Buffer Zone (BZ)       |            |             | 1,500          |                    |
| Qomolangma Nature Preserve | TAR, China | 1989        | 830 (BZ)       | 2,300 - 8,850      |
|                            |            |             | 34,480         |                    |

by the TAR government in recognition of the value of the varied alpine and forest ecosystems in the region; together they cover 61% of the land area. Authorities in China have upgraded QNP to National Nature Preserve status.

The three National Parks in Nepal are among the sixteen protected areas in the country, which together cover a total of 18.2% of Nepal's land area. Seven of these protected areas share a border with the TAR.

Together the QNP, SNP, MBNP, and LNP form a contiguous system of protected areas that conserve a large, continuous ecosystem and rich cultural and natural heritages on both sides of the Himalayas. The Makalu-Barun National Park is contiguous with both the Qomolangma Nature Preserve and the Sagarmatha National Park. The Langtang National Park is also contiguous with the QNP, but is separated from the other protected areas in Nepal. These four protected areas jointly cover 40,000 square kilometres, an area large enough for maintaining species, communities, and ecological processes (Lama and Sherpa 1996). However, several adjacent areas in Nepal, for example those along the Friendship Highway, are not included in any protected area. The differences in regulations between unprotected areas in Nepal and nearby protected areas in TAR pose challenges to transboundary management and conservation.

The many isolated communities in these four transboundary parks and preserves are home to nearly 120,000 people with a common cultural heritage. Over 80,000 people live on the TAR side of the border, about 5,000 in the three protected areas on the Nepal side of the Himalayas, and 32,000 in the Makalu-Barun Buffer Zone.

One of the major challenges facing the managers of these areas is to reconcile the needs of the local communities with the requirement of conserving ecosystems and biotic diversity. Support and participation of the local communities is crucial for successful conservation of natural and cultural values. Thus conservation activities must be linked with sustainable livelihood activities for the local people so that they too will benefit from the activities, and will have an interest in their success. This will require collaboration on the part of the Nepal and TAR/Chinese governments.

### *Development in the transboundary region*

In this remote and rugged landscape, border crossings with police and customs check points are few and far between, and communications are poor. However, cordial relations between Nepal and TAR, China have enabled trade and tourism to increase since the establishment of air and road linkages between Kathmandu and Lhasa. In addition, both traditional commodities – such as food grain, salt, wool, yak tails, medicinal herbs, and livestock – and modern products are exchanged in small-scale traditional barter and commercial trade across the 24 high passes along on the border (Upreti 1998). Both the Nepal and TAR governments recognise the importance of these exchanges to sustaining people's livelihoods in the remote border regions (Sherpa 1997).

The Government of China is building and strengthening road access to the Kyirong valley. This will help promote tourism and community-based conservation on both sides of the border. His Majesty's Government (HMG) of Nepal is also developing a road network that will eventually link to the Kyirong road in TAR. This new road will serve as an alternative route to the Kodari-Zhangmu (Lhasa) Friendship Highway route between Nepal and Tibet and will help expand trade between the countries.

## **Transboundary Cooperation in the Mt. Everest Ecosystem**

### *The advantages of transboundary cooperation*

Ecosystems existed long before national jurisdictions, and species and communities of plants and animals are not limited by political boundaries and landscapes. Hence, many countries share biological and natural resources across their borders. About 65 countries have developed strategies to conserve their transboundary resources. The mechanisms for transboundary cooperation range from formal government treaties to field-level cooperation and information sharing between park managers (Sherpa 1997). However, all approaches share the common objective of managing shared natural resources effectively to conserve landscapes, ecosystems, critical habitats, and a diverse range of plant and animal species.

Cooperation includes the conservation of protected areas located adjacent to each other but across international boundaries (Lama and Sherpa 1996). Contiguous protected areas have the advantage of enlarging the total area of protection to include larger uninterrupted areas of ecosystems and a greater variety of habitats. The reasons given for cooperation between adjacent protected areas include the following.

- The management objectives and challenges of neighbouring protected areas are similar (Lama and Sherpa 1996); managers can learn from each other through regular exchanges.



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*Sagarmatha, Mount Everest from the Nepal side*



Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa

*Chomolungma, Mount Everest from TAR*



- Transboundary protected areas allow biodiversity conservation at the ecosystem level.
- Natural disturbances – forest fires, floods, pests, and diseases – cross political boundaries; cooperation across boundaries facilitates control and management of such disturbances.
- Larger reserves have a greater potential for species diversity and less risk of biodiversity losses; transboundary protected areas increase the size of the reserve without increasing the cost of management to any individual government.
- Border regions are critical areas for poaching and cross-border trade in endangered species; transboundary protected area collaboration can reduce such harmful activities.
- Conservation is linked to the economic well-being of the local people.
- Cooperation between transboundary protected areas can alleviate poverty through sustainable tourism, trade, and technical exchanges.
- Transboundary conservation cooperation can benefit protected areas through improved staff morale, and joint training and research opportunities.

### *Development of transboundary cooperation for the Mt. Everest ecosystem*

The need to manage the Mt. Everest landscape as an interconnected and integrated whole was recognised a number of years ago. The Mountain Institute (TMI) and the Governments of Nepal and China have conducted discussions, activities, and exchanges since 1986 to promote transboundary collaboration, applied research, and participatory management in biodiversity and cultural conservation in the extended Mount Everest ecosystem area. An innovative programme of transboundary cooperation for conservation was started in 1994/95 by TMI, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and the Governments of Nepal and China, under TMI's 'Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation in the Eastern Himalayas Programme' (1994) and ICIMOD's 'Programme on Regional Collaboration for Biodiversity Management in the Eastern Himalayas' (1995), both funded by the MacArthur Foundation (see boxes). These programmes joined forces in 1998; together they have supported a series of discussions and exchange activities among protected area managers, scientists, and local people involving the protected areas of QNP, SNP, MBNP (with its Buffer Zone), LNP, and Kangchenjunga.

From the beginning, the exchanges between TAR and Nepal have emphasised informal, field-level mechanisms. These exchanges have strengthened relationships among professionals from both sides of the border, and the more recent meetings have started to address specific issues identified in prior meetings. The expertise of TMI in ecotourism has led to a focus on conservation and ecotourism in some of the exchanges. Essentially the pattern of the formal exchanges was a meeting between the wardens of the protected areas to identify common ground and major issues, a meeting between representatives of the line agencies/ministries involved to formalise the cooperation efforts, a meeting/study tour for local community leaders to formulate plans for local area actions, a meeting at

Foreign Ministry level to discuss the enforcement of legal requirements, and finally a second meeting of PA directors and managers to review progress and map the way forward (see next section). Other study tours, informal meetings, workshops and consultations were carried out in parallel with these activities, in particular the major village study described below. Table 2 outlines the exchanges between Nepal and TAR under these programmes from 1995 to 2001.

| <b>Table 2: Major steps in transboundary exchange in the Mt. Everest region</b> |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Year</b>   | <b>Those involved</b>   | <b>Type of exchange</b>  | <b>Outcomes</b>  |
| 1995  | The Netherlands and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)                  | Missions to Nepal to evaluate the Makalu-Barun Conservation Project  | Strongly recommended strengthening transboundary efforts and making provisions for funding for similar activities in QNP to protect species and ecosystems and promote transboundary trade, tourism, and scientific exchanges.   |
|   | Managers of protected areas (PAs) from Nepal and TAR, China, facilitated by TMI           | Formal information-sharing meeting in Sagarmatha National Park   | Four key issues identified on which cooperation is needed: control of poaching, smuggling, and trading of wildlife products; control of cross-border spread of livestock disease; control of cross-border spread of forest fires; and improvement of livelihoods of people near the border through ecotourism.   |
| 1996  | Line agency/ ministry level representatives from Nepal and TAR, China, facilitated by TMI | Follow-up meeting in Shigatse, TAR to formalise transboundary cooperation  | Recommended follow-up at the local level, and a joint study of border villages with a participatory study involving local people. Endorsed the key issues identified by PA managers in 1995. Also recommended <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased information sharing and improved communication;</li> <li>• opening of new border crossings for the betterment of local people's livelihoods;</li> <li>• amendment of management regulations to provide a better basis for conservation cooperation;</li> <li>• formation of joint committees to promote conservation and awareness;</li> <li>• cooperation with other government agencies – including internal security, police, immigration, and customs – to ensure international cooperation.</li> </ul> |
| 1997  | ICIMOD, working with WWF-Nepal and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)        | Regional consultation on conservation of the Kangchenjunga mountain ecosystem, involving delegates from Tibet, India, and Nepal. | Recommended formal establishment of a transboundary protected area in the Kangchenjunga area, development of a standardised information database of transboundary resources, and promotion of a participatory approach to involve local people in the planning process to ensure conservation awareness and economic benefits from developing tourism enterprises. Transboundary exchanges were identified as being crucial mechanisms to promote collaboration among countries (Rastogi et al 1997).  |

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| Table 2: Major steps in transboundary exchange in the Mt. Everest region (cont'd) |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Year  | Those involved   | Type of exchange   | Outcomes   |
| 1998  | TMI and ICIMOD, with the Governments of Nepal and TAR, China                               | Training workshop and study tour for county leaders and QNP workers                                | Training given on a range of techniques for conservation and participatory local development. These activities helped further discussions, knowledge, and skill development of protected area managers, government officials, and community members. Key issues for collaboration were transboundary biodiversity conservation and community-based tourism.  |
|   | TMI, ICIMOD, Nepal Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), and QNP | Transboundary study tour and training workshop on conservation and ecotourism, took place in Nepal | Objectives were to expose participants to tourism possibilities and explore joint ecotourism programmes. Community-based tourism management skills were developed, based on Nepal's successful ecotourism experience. Participants were local community leaders from Kyirong and Nyalam counties, TAR, and neighbouring villages of LNP, Nepal. Participants agreed to develop local-level committees, design local action plans, and conduct joint studies on issues of mutual concern. |
| 1999  | Foreign Ministry-level consultative meeting between Nepal and China                        | Discussion of transboundary conservation cooperation   | Agreed that transboundary cooperation should be used to tackle the problem of illegal poaching and trade in endangered wildlife species across the Nepal-TAR border.   |
| 2001  | Protected Area directors and managers at various levels from Nepal and TAR                 | Assessment of progress in transboundary cooperation since 1996                                     | Agreed that much progress had been made on the five points of cooperation determined during the 1996 exchange and that this had led to improvements in nature conservation. A detailed list of activities for strengthening transboundary cooperation was agreed.  |

### Village participatory study

The joint participatory study recommended in the 1996 Shigatse exchange, and further discussed in the 1997 and 1998 exchanges (Table 2), was carried out in 1999. The aim was to develop a participatory approach and strengthen the involvement of local people, whilst collecting the information needed as a base for determining the most effective way for the programme to proceed. A joint study team from Nepal and TAR travelled to five villages located along the border and conducted participatory meetings with local villagers on transboundary issues. The results were presented to government agency representatives. In general, the concept of transboundary cooperation received strong local interest and support. The villages and methodology are described in more detail in Chapter 2; the results of the study form the bulk of the findings presented in Chapter 3.

The study team recommended developing a Memorandum of Understanding and a framework for future cooperation. Local-level follow-up programmes were designed to address the cross-border issues identified in earlier exchanges; these programmes included the following.



- Strengthen ties between both countries – form local committees through joint research and increased communication.
- Reduce poaching – strengthen institutional capacity and laws.
- Manage forest fires – integrate fire management into protected area planning, and increase local awareness and support.
- Improve local livelihoods – develop tourism, stimulate cross-border traditional trade, encourage resource-based livelihoods, support sustainable agro-pastoral livelihoods, and develop village infrastructure.
- Reduce transfer of livestock disease – improve services, including basic training for herders and the exchange of research and information.

#### The most recent transboundary exchange meeting

The most recent transboundary exchange meeting took place in Lhasa and Shigatse in September/October 2001. The participants included directors and managers at various levels of the contiguous protected areas in Nepal and TAR. They assessed the progress on transboundary cooperation since 1995, using the formal agreement from the 1996 Shigatse exchange as a baseline, together with the information gathered during the 1999 survey (see next section). The Shigatse exchange had endorsed the four key issues on which cooperation was needed, first identified in the meeting of directors and managers in 1995, and listed five points of cooperation. Participants in the meeting considered that both Nepal and TAR had made progress on all the points of cooperation and it was felt that the status of nature conservation was improving as a result. Most progress had taken place at the local level, especially in those adjacent protected areas where the terrain was less extreme and access was easier, like Langtang National Park and Kyirong County, TAR.

Steady progress had been made in information sharing and communication, especially regarding the issues of poaching and illegal trading. This was especially effective when achieved through existing mechanisms, such as the annual herder meetings that take place independently of transboundary programmes. Use of these existing forums to share information had been very successful, and they could be used for future training activities. Information-sharing had resulted in several poachers being arrested in Makalu-Barun and Langtang National Parks. However, overall enforcement of regulations on poaching and illegal trade was limited, because cross-border prosecution was still difficult.

The meeting looked at five major areas of concern and potential solutions.

**Transboundary livestock movement** from Nepal to TAR was decreasing, mostly due to changes in local fees for pasture use. Transmission of livestock disease remained a concern, although there had been no major outbreaks in the previous five years. As a result of the better road access, veterinary services in TAR are more comprehensive than in Nepal. It was suggested that Nepali livestock could be vaccinated at the annual herders' meetings



## The Mountain Institute

The Mountain Institute (TMI), an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Washington DC, USA, is particularly sensitive to the economic well-being of local inhabitants for whom the mountains are home. TMI and the Governments of Nepal and China have conducted discussions, activities, and exchanges since 1986 to promote transboundary collaboration, applied research, and participatory management in biodiversity and cultural conservation over a combined extended protected area of 40,000 sq km shared by Qomolangma Nature Preserve (QNP) of the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and the three adjoining mountain national parks of Nepal: Sagarmatha (Mount Everest), Langtang, and Makalu-Barun. TMI was instrumental in helping the governments of both countries to establish new protected areas on both sides of the Mount Everest ecosystem, particularly the QNP and Makalu-Barun.

The Mountain Institute's 'Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation in the Eastern Himalayas' programme, supported by a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation since 1994, seeks to reduce threats to biodiversity through collaborative planning and management and by promoting economic incentives for maintaining a close cooperative relationship between the countries.

The issues that must be addressed during future transboundary activities include:

- developing a mechanism for sharing information and maintaining communication about common concerns such as fire, poaching, and illegal timber and trade;
- exploring new border routes for ecotourism and promotion of handicrafts, training, business contacts, and other activities to promote ecotourism; and
- convening a transboundary protected area conservation committee or a working group to coordinate management regulations and activities at the local level.





## **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development**

The primary role of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) - located in Kathmandu, Nepal - is to facilitate countries of the HKH region to come together, share, and participate in common concerns and responsibilities, given the importance of recognising the ecological and socioeconomic links that they share as part of the same ecosystem. A multi-pronged approach for mountain development encompasses issues related to agriculture, livestock, forestry, infrastructure, water resources, gender balance and others.

ICIMOD is involved in transboundary activities under its programme on 'Regional Collaboration for Biodiversity Management in the Eastern Himalayas', with the main objectives:

- to improve biodiversity management in the eastern Himalayas through institutional collaboration and field-level activities, with a focus on protected areas and their buffer zones and surrounding agro-ecosystems;
- to review and share experiences in buffer zone and agro-ecosystem management and create long-term programmes for improving the prospects of biodiversity conservation with community participation; and
- to promote transboundary cooperation for biodiversity conservation.

Since 1995, ICIMOD has organised four regional and sub-regional workshops and training/exchange visits between India, China, and Myanmar and between Nepal and Tibet Autonomous Region, China. Various successful exchanges and discussions have provided greater options for further collaboration among countries in the region.







in TAR. Herders also stated their willingness to stop transhumance if pasture conditions improved in Nepal.

**Fire management** remained a concern, especially for the representatives from the TAR. Careless herders and poachers were blamed for most of the uncontrolled fires. The Sagarmatha National Park Chief Warden shared his recent experience in fire control using local committees and people, which was seen as viable and cost effective.

Control of **poaching and control of trade in endangered species and animal products** was still an issue. The meeting highlighted a weakness: customs personnel were in many cases unable to identify which species were protected or the likely source of animal products. A recommendation was made that a joint training exercise be held for customs personnel from both countries to strengthen enforcement of regulations.

**Progress towards establishment of central committees** had been **slow** on both sides, because it had been difficult to coordinate among the different ministries at the higher levels, although coordination at the field level had worked well. Formal, high-level cooperation would require ratification by a government-to-government treaty, which would take many years to complete. Nepali officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised that the existing exchange of letters and memorandums of understanding at lower levels would be sufficient for future field-level cooperation.

From a **World Heritage perspective**, the exchange again acknowledged the importance of the Mt. Everest landscape, and the participants recommended that the Government of TAR apply to have QNP upgraded to formal World Heritage Site status.

The participants proposed that **specific follow-up plans** be formulated, because the general recommendations emerging from the previous exchanges were difficult to prioritise and implement. Several specific training workshops were proposed, including training of customs officials in the identification of illegal species and training of herders in conservation and fire awareness. The participants proposed providing for veterinary services in Nepal. Further, participants recognised the value of the transboundary exposure tours and requested that future exchanges include protected area staff from other TAR sites as well.

The exchange concluded with a strong commitment to transboundary conservation of the Mt. Everest landscape and an endorsement of local and field-level cooperation as the most effective tool for conservation. Both governments strongly endorsed continued follow-up by TMI and ICIMOD to facilitate future programmes.

The **specific activities suggested to strengthen linkages** were as follow.

- ❖ Raise the profile of the Transboundary Programme
  - Recommend that the Government of China apply to have Qomolangma Nature Preserve considered for joint World Heritage Site status with Nepal's Sagarmatha National Park
  - Arrange exchanges between government officials, and encourage them to advocate central support for transboundary programmes
  - Develop legal mechanisms to implement international and other bilateral agreements, such as the Convention on Illegal Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
- ❖ Strengthen protected area linkages
  - Conduct regular transboundary protected area exchanges between TAR and Nepal to promote a common understanding and a collaborative working relationship
  - Attend joint training programmes on transboundary and other technical issues
  - Organise staff exchanges for park/forest/livestock personnel
  - Designate a representative from each county in QNP, and each national park in Nepal, to participate in all exchanges for consistency and follow-through
- ❖ Form local transboundary committees
  - Set up local transboundary committees and sub-committees on both sides of the border that meet regularly to deal with local issues; these committees could include village development committee, park, police, customs, community based organisation (CBO), and veterinary office personnel, and local people
  - Provide the remuneration and funding support needed for local officials and CBOs
  - Make the authority and responsibilities of these committees clear to members
  - Explore possibilities for integration of transboundary committees into buffer zone programmes
- ❖ Conduct joint research and gather information through local committees and protected area staff
  - Organise joint research on key issues
  - Publish joint papers on transboundary topics of interest
- ❖ Develop funding mechanisms
  - Develop methods of generating and allocating protected area revenues to fund transboundary initiatives
  - Develop joint proposals for international donor funding
  - Advocate commitment from other government departments from different sectors