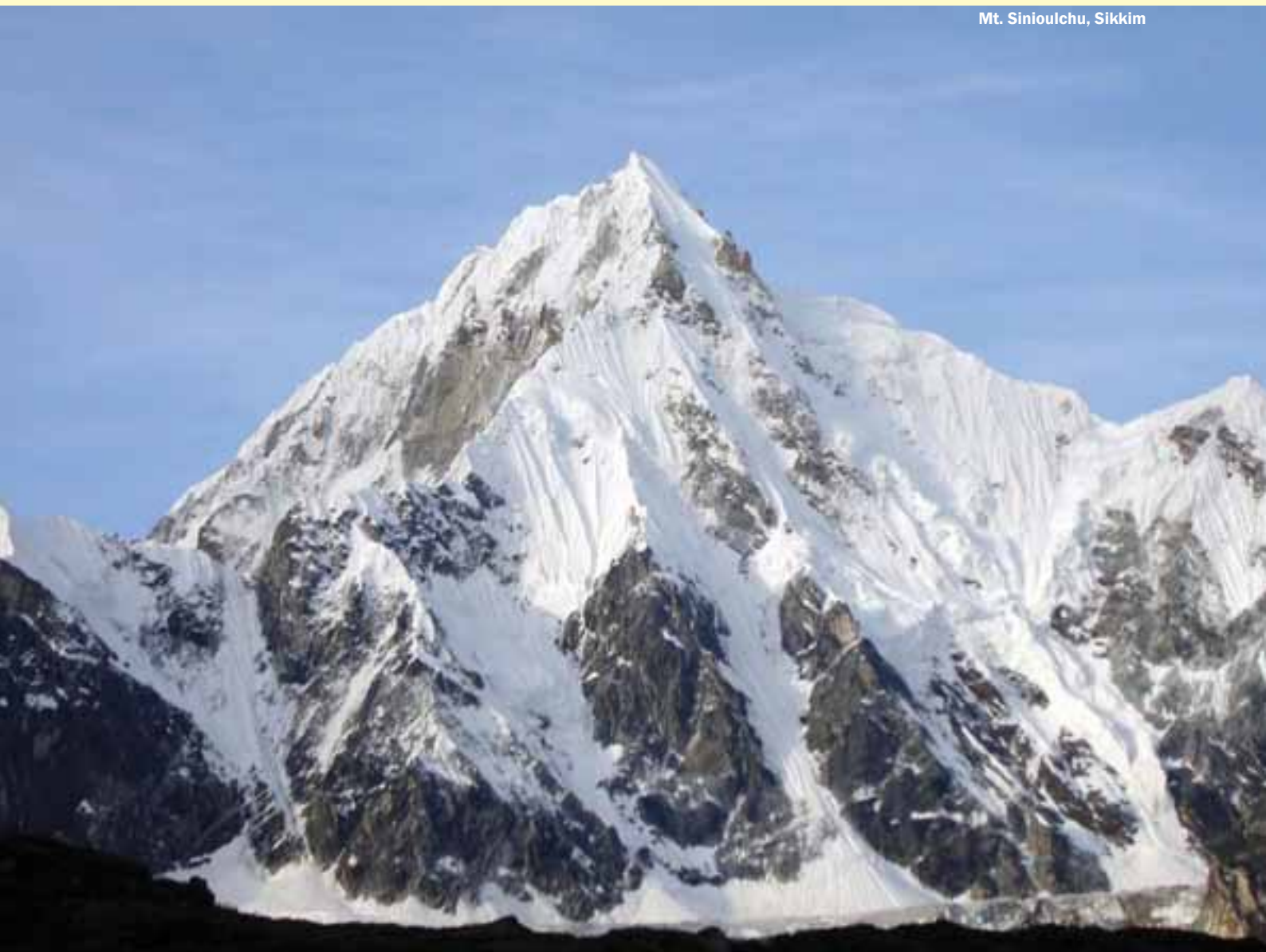


## SECTION 2

# Regional Cooperation Framework

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## Introduction

The Regional Cooperation Framework for Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the Kangchenjunga landscape is intended to serve as a guide that can be adapted and applied by individual countries within the Kangchenjunga landscape to achieve cooperation for implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The framework is conceived as a tool to: a) help address the root causes of biodiversity loss in the landscape; b) encourage fast-track planning and implementation of programmes; and c) enhance complementarities and coordination between and among diverse actors engaged in biodiversity conservation in the Kangchenjunga landscape. The Framework presents minimum standards and indicators that can be applied to evaluate a country's progress towards achieving CBD goals within the Kangchenjunga landscape. The Framework also reflects the national biodiversity strategies and action plans of each of the three countries in the Kangchenjunga landscape, i.e. Bhutan, India and Nepal.

The policy framework development process is aimed to:

- bring together policy-makers on a common platform for transboundary biodiversity cooperation,
- share national updates with respect to the CBD implementation among the three countries in the landscape,
- identify policy issues related to transboundary cooperation with references to the 'Mountain Biodiversity' of CBD at the regional level,

- develop a policy framework for cooperation and implementation of Goal 2.3 of Mountain Biodiversity (COP VII/27) along with other goals as agreed by CBD,
- foster partnerships at the regional level.

The Regional Cooperation Framework is based on the following principles:

**Participatory Management** – ensuring participation of indigenous and local communities, as well as disadvantaged and socially marginalised groups, for biodiversity conservation and management

**Equitability** – ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic and biodiversity resources

**Sustainability** – aiming for economic, social, and environmental sustainability

**Partnerships** – building partnerships among local communities, government/non-government institutions, the corporate sector, and financial institutions

**Ecosystem Approach** – taking an integrated approach into consideration for socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental security

**Lessons-learned Approach** – applying lessons learned from other transboundary mountain programmes including the Alpine Convention, the Carpathian Convention, and the Mount Everest transboundary programme

**Transboundary Cooperation** – promoting and strengthening transboundary cooperation



Patches of natural forest as important stepping-stones or corridors for wildlife in Sikkim



## Constitutive Elements of the Regional Cooperation Framework

The Regional Cooperation Framework for the Kangchenjunga Landscape has four constitutive elements: 1) transboundary biodiversity conservation; 2) scientific and technical cooperation; 3) information exchange and sharing; and 4) regional guidelines and soft legal instruments.

### Transboundary biodiversity conservation

The Kangchenjunga region has experienced conservation interventions ranging from species preservation to landscape-level conservation. Effective conservation of biodiversity in the Kangchenjunga Landscape shall involve an integrated conservation and sustainable development approach which encourages partnerships between communities and government agencies of countries within the landscape. Priority will be given to community development at the local level, followed by cooperation at the regional level to meet global commitments including the CBD.

**Strategies** to be adopted to achieve transboundary biodiversity conservation include:

- a. Strengthen protected area management systems – including development of a standard framework for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting effectiveness of protected areas management at national and transboundary levels – while also strengthening capacity for enforcement of laws, rules, and regulations; conservation zoning; and biodiversity registration;
- b. Facilitate development of conservation corridors to link protected areas as determined by national priorities for the conservation of biodiversity, and facilitate rehabilitation and restoration of habitats and degraded ecosystems within these conservation corridors;
- c. Promote sustainable livelihoods by adopting sustainable agriculture and grazing practices, promote improved livestock farming and sustainable pastoralism, promote ecotourism at national and regional levels, and strengthen marketing strategy for non-timber forest products;
- d. Encourage sustainable use of components of biological diversity including sustainable use and management of forests, non-timber forest products, and grazing lands and water resources, and protect and encourage cultural and traditional practices and values such as ecotourism that are compatible with conservation and sustainable use;



Exposure visits; networking and information sharing are key building blocks in regional cooperation

- e. Develop and facilitate standardisation of policies and dialogues for implementation of international conventions (e.g. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora [CITES], Convention on Migratory Species [CMS]) within the three countries to regulate cross-border resource extraction and illegal trade of species and their derivatives, spread of forest fires, and spread of disease;
  - f. Create conditions to facilitate access to genetic resources and ensure that the benefits arising from these genetic resources are shared equitably, and promote conservation-linked income opportunities particularly for marginalised communities;
  - g. Promote mechanisms that will facilitate equitable bio-prospecting and trade in accordance with existing policies of individual countries.
- e. Adoption of legislation that recognises indigenous practices and cultural traditions that promote sustainable use of resources;
  - f. Regular exchange of information among the respective countries and designated enforcement agencies to ensure reduction in illegal resource extraction and movement of wild species and their derivatives across the border;
  - g. Standard policies in place at national and transboundary levels to address transboundary conservation issues;
  - h. Increased access to resources and sharing of resulting benefits by marginalised communities.

**Indicators** for measuring performance in the area of transboundary biodiversity conservation are:

- a. Effective protected area management systems in place that address biodiversity conservation issues at national and transboundary levels;
- b. Establishment and endorsement of conservation corridors at regional, national, and site levels within the Kangchenjunga Landscape;
- c. Movement of flagship species through transboundary conservation corridors;
- d. Increased sustained economic growth among communities in the landscape;

## Scientific and technical cooperation

Research, and technical and scientific data form the basis on which biodiversity conservation programmes can be developed. There is abundant research, and scientific and technical data available on various aspects related to the Kangchenjunga region, but cooperation for collaboration, data-sharing, and capacity-building among the countries constituting the landscape needs to be improved.

**Strategies** to improve scientific and technical cooperation are:

- a. Based on gap analysis of existing information, prioritise and conduct standardised long-term research on issues relating to the Kangchenjunga landscape;



Communities are an integral part of the landscape. They live in harmony with nature.



- b. Initiate mechanisms and develop collaborative research and scientific programmes of mutual interest among the three countries in the landscape;
- c. Facilitate creation of a working group with representatives from each of the three countries in the landscape to identify research priorities and to optimise efficient utilisation of research results by protected area managers, policy-makers, and local stakeholders;
- d. Foster documentation and exchange of research results, and scientific and technical data, as well as good practices and indigenous/traditional technologies relating to sustainable development and sustainable use of natural resources;
- e. Develop capacity and enhance opportunities for community-based biodiversity research and monitoring.

**Indicators** for measuring performance in the area of scientific and technical cooperation are:

- a. Conservation priorities identified by the working group will be reflected and/or addressed by regional, national and local policies/legislation, management strategies, and action plans;
- b. Good practices and lessons learned will be adopted and/or adapted where relevant in the landscape;
- c. Regular exchange and sharing of research outcomes and recommendations through annual regional seminars and workshops;
- d. Increased benefits from, and conservation of, biodiversity as a result of enhanced capacity of communities to conduct biodiversity research and monitoring.

## Information exchange and sharing

Appropriate exchange and sharing of information can lead to development of common approaches that address common issues. Moreover, information exchange and sharing also fosters regional teamwork. As a result, standardised approaches for transboundary conservation of biodiversity can be developed and informed policy decisions can be made at the landscape level.

**Strategies** for information exchange and sharing are:

- a. Increase promotion and exchange of traditional and indigenous knowledge and best practices, as well as the actual and potential contribution of such knowledge and practices for conservation and sustainable use of biological resources;
- b. Facilitate information exchange and sharing of information and experiences on issues relating to access and benefit sharing and markets access;
- c. Promote educational and capacity-building systems in line with target groups and conditions within the landscape;
- d. Emphasise capacity-building of women for conservation and dissemination of traditional knowledge through information exchange and sharing;
- e. Explore efficacy of diverse media/platforms for information exchange and sharing including but not limited to inventories and databases, web resources, audio-visual materials, a regional newsletter, national reports and printed materials, information hubs and nature interpretation centres, institutional channels, and meetings and conferences;
- f. Explore suitability of the Clearing House Mechanism for dissemination of documents, best practices, and appropriate technologies, and innovative approaches for biodiversity conservation.

**Indicators** for measuring performance in the area of information exchange and sharing are:

- a. Increased public education, participation and awareness regarding biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use in the Kangchenjunga landscape;
- b. Regular consultations achieved and mechanisms for use of information sources established;
- c. Increased rates of adoption of best practices and appropriate technologies in conservation and sustainable resource use in the region.



National consultation of experts and government representatives that led to a consensus for developing conservation corridors in Bhutan

## Regional guidelines and soft legal instruments

Regional voluntary guidelines and soft legal instruments are essential in order to address transboundary issues within the framework of existing laws of the countries constituting the Kangchenjunga landscape.

**Strategies** relevant to regional guidelines and soft legal instruments are:

- a. Assist in the development of voluntary guidelines (and regulations) for transboundary issues within the framework of existing laws of the respective countries in the landscape;
- b. Promote creation of regional voluntary guidelines that identify and acknowledge ecological regions and corridors of biological significance as a Heritage Site, Peace Park, or similar irrespective of national boundaries;
- c. Develop mechanisms – check posts, training of personnel, intelligence gathering, and information exchange – for regular joint monitoring of biodiversity and related issues within the landscape;
- d. Facilitate development of uniform strategies and approaches for conservation of endemic species in the landscape;
- e. Develop guidelines for joint research and develop mechanisms for effective and mutual utilisation of capacities and resources available in the region;
- f. Harmonise existing guidelines for environmental impact assessment (including socioeconomic impacts) of development projects that are likely to have significant impacts on the fragile ecosystem of the Kangchenjunga landscape;
- g. Develop guidelines for capacity-building of communities on transboundary issues that include knowledge exchange and information sharing, cooperation, technology transfer, and awareness generation among stakeholders;
- h. Develop guidelines for creating a common multi-stakeholder platform that will review these guidelines and their implementation at various levels including national, research institutional, state governmental, organisational and community levels;
- i. Develop guidelines for providing incentives for tree tenure, cultivation of non-timber forest products, ex-situ conservation, diversification of

livelihood options, and for providing awards for intelligence reporting and conservation actions.

**Indicators** for measuring performance in the area of regional guidelines and soft legal instruments are:

- a. Conducting of stakeholder consultations in each of the three countries to identify components of the guidelines;
- b. Formation of working groups and development of guidelines;
- c. Agreement on the regional guidelines by national governments of the three countries constituting the Kangchenjunga landscape;
- d. Implementation of regional guidelines by appropriate authorities.

## Implementation and Governance Mechanisms and Processes

Achieving the objective of this Regional Cooperation Framework is dependent on its effective implementation by stakeholders at local and national, and regional and international levels. Implementation and governance mechanisms and processes for coordinating the activities of multiple stakeholders are elaborated below.

### Local and national levels

- a. **Key stakeholders** at the local and national levels are community organisations and self-help groups, religious institutions, local government, state government, non-government organisations, ministries/departments (Nature Conservation Division – Bhutan, Department of Forest – West Bengal, Department of Forests – Sikkim, Department of National Parks and



Village level participatory planning in the corridors: a 'bottom up' approach

Wildlife Conservation and Department of Forest – Nepal), agencies/donors/federations/associations, media, and educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities, and research institutions).

- b. **Implementation role** of key stakeholders at local and national levels is:
  - i. Coordinate and facilitate dialogue at local and national levels
  - ii. Motivate local communities for conservation actions
  - iii. Advocate for sensitisation of policy-makers on transboundary conservation issues;
  - iv. Provide technical support to members for lobbying with local and national governments.
- c. **Key mechanisms** that these stakeholders will implement to achieve regional biodiversity conservation in the Kangchenjunga landscape are:
  - i. Establishing a national working committee in each of the countries;
  - ii. Creation of common platforms to facilitate information exchange and sharing;
  - iii. Strengthening and supporting local and national institutions;
  - iv. Building capacity of stakeholders;
  - v. Preparing a common action plan to build synergy among transboundary stakeholders.

## Regional and international levels

- a. **Key stakeholders** at the regional and international levels are government agencies, regional organisations, international/non-government organisations, research and educational institutions, traditional institutions, and the corporate sector.
- b. **Implementation role** of key stakeholders at regional and international levels is:
  - i. Represent adequately and appropriately in regional thematic working groups and steering committees;
  - ii. Facilitate partners and their roles, and provide global projection of regional cooperation;
  - iii. Facilitate linkages from local to global levels.
- c. **Key mechanisms** are:
  - i. Establishing a steering committee at the regional level for coordination and monitoring of the activities;
  - ii. Creation and endorsement of a joint regional political statement for cooperation in the Kangchenjunga landscape;
  - iii. Customising of existing regional models to the Kangchenjunga landscape;
  - iv. Facilitation of appropriate feedback channels to the Clearing House Mechanism and CBD Secretariat.



Group work in progress to thrash out the Cooperation Framework at the workshop in Sikkim