

Towards Developing the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape

Report of the Regional Consultation to Develop Future
Strategic Programme for Biodiversity Management and
Climate Change Adaptation



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The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, ICIMOD, is a regional knowledge development and learning centre serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush Himalayas – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – and based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Globalisation and climate change have an increasing influence on the stability of fragile mountain ecosystems and the livelihoods of mountain people. ICIMOD aims to assist mountain people to understand these changes, adapt to them, and make the most of new opportunities, while addressing upstream-downstream issues. We support regional transboundary programmes through partnership with regional partner institutions, facilitate the exchange of experience, and serve as a regional knowledge hub. We strengthen networking among regional and global centres of excellence. Overall, we are working to develop an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem to improve the living standards of mountain populations and to sustain vital ecosystem services for the billions of people living downstream – now, and for the future.



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Foreword

Karakoram-Pamir and Wakhan Corridor are among the seven transboundary landscape complexes in the Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH) that have been prioritized by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) within its Trans-Himalayan Transect and Transboundary Landscape Framework for regional-level interventions on integrated biodiversity management. ICIMOD's engagement in Karakoram began in 2007 with Dr Andreas Schild, the then Director General of ICIMOD, attending a meeting in Urumqi where officials from the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS), informed Dr Schild about the initiative and requested ICIMOD's engagement in the process. In 2008, representatives from ICIMOD participated in a workshop in Kashgar, Pakistan, and shared experiences from other landscape initiatives across the HKH region. After considering ICIMOD's comparative advantage in facilitating regional cooperation, ICIMOD was included as a member of the steering committee.

The Karakoram-Pamir Landscape (KPL) initiative is a regional initiative for enhancing cooperation among countries for biodiversity management and sustainable development in the Sino-Pak border region of the western Himalayas. The initiative began with an agreement signed in Beijing for bilateral collaboration between the governments of China and Pakistan to ensure the protection of Marco Polo sheep and other endangered species in two adjacent transboundary protected areas: the Khunjerab National Park in Pakistan and the Taxkorgan Nature Reserve in China. The KPL has now been formalized through the endorsement of the resolution of the Kashgar workshop in 2008 by the governments of Pakistan and China. The initiative focuses on maintaining the sanctity of protected areas on each side of the Sino-Pak border. Emphasis was given to creating sustainable economic opportunities for the people in the border region and improving their quality of life by mobilizing them to protect the environment which could, in turn, enhance the local or community-based economy.

ICIMOD has been working on various regional ventures with partners such as CAS in China and the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in Pakistan. Given the comparative advantage of ICIMOD as an intergovernmental organization and a regional knowledge development and learning centre, its member countries sought its intervention at the regional level and ICIMOD committed itself as an active member of the steering committee to facilitate the regional initiative in the KPL. Initially, ICIMOD planned an interactive consultation in Gilgit in 2009, but it did not materialize due to some unavoidable circumstances. However, during that time, a process document was developed that analysed the historical and future significance of the KPL in benefitting the environment and the people in the area.

The Regional Consultation to Develop Future Strategic Programme for Biodiversity Management and Climate Change Adaptation for the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape, organized by ICIMOD in Kathmandu 16-17 December 2011, provided an opportunity to further strengthen the initiative. It allowed participants from China, Pakistan and ICIMOD to develop a long-term programme that could facilitate national and regional efforts towards managing the rich biodiversity resources of the KPL. The programme could also strengthen institutions as well as help locals enhance their socioeconomic resilience to climate change and other drivers of change.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBOs	Community-based organizations
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
GBIF	Global Biodiversity Information Facility
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HKH	Hindu Kush Himalayan region
HKH-BIF	Hindu Kush Himalayan Biodiversity Information Facility
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
KNP	Khunjerab National Park
KPL	Karakoram-Pamir Landscape
KSL	Kailash Sacred Landscape
KSLCI	Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation Initiative
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
PAs	Protected areas
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
XIEG	Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography
XWCA	Xinjiang Wildlife Conservation Association

Background

The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region forms one of the most fragile mountain chains in the world. The region is endowed with diverse ecosystems that provide numerous goods and services to millions of people within and outside its geographical boundaries. However, population growth and increasing anthropogenic pressures on these resources are increasingly besieging the irreplaceable biodiversity of the region. The HKH region features four of the 34 global 'biodiversity hotspots' harbouring the largest number of endemic and endangered species under acute human pressure. On account of its conservation importance, about 39 per cent of its geographical area has been brought under protected area (PA) networks. Many of these PAs are transboundary in nature and are important for more than one country in terms of conservation value.

The Sino-Pak border region in the Karakoram area hosts two national parks, the Khunjerab National Park (established in 1974) on Pakistan's side and the Taxkorgan Nature Reserve (established in 1984) on China's side. The region is known for its snow peaks, glaciated valleys, high-altitude wetlands, alpine pastures and unique floral and faunal assemblages, many of them having global conservation significance. However, the conservation benefits of such transboundary PAs are yet to be fully understood and evaluated. Cooperation and coordination efforts among the countries sharing such a critical landscape are still in their infancy. The need for transboundary collaboration to protect the habitats of globally significant species that frequently cross borders into adjoining countries in search of food and other requirements was realized as early as 1989. This realization was translated into action when the first understanding was developed between the staff of the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography (XIEG), the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and WWF-Pakistan during a workshop in Islamabad in 2003.

An important breakthrough for the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape (KPL) initiative came during the International Workshop on Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development in the Sino-Pak Border Region, held in Kashgar, China, in 2008, when participating countries came up with a commitment to no interference in the geo-political and administrative setup of countries sharing the landscape and to improve the local environment and livelihood options. During the Kashgar workshop, it was agreed that while the sanctity of existing protected areas on either side of the Pakistan and China border remained intact, an international protection area would also be created by establishing connectivity corridors in the Karakoram Mountains between the Gilgit-Baltistan Province in Pakistan and the Pamir and Kunlun Mountains in China.

ICIMOD, being an intergovernmental, regional knowledge centre, has been engaged in developing transboundary landscapes through the ecosystem approach in the HKH for the last 15 years. Seven transboundary landscapes have been identified in the HKH, one of which is the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape. Realizing the importance of the initiative and its potential for socio-ecological development in the Karakoram region with a focus on neighbouring communities along the Sino-Pak border, ICIMOD offered a platform to assess the situation, identify gaps and weaknesses that were encountered thus far, and to identify future actions that will enable the initiative to progress. As a follow up to the Kashgar workshop, ICIMOD organized a Regional Consultation to Develop Future Strategic Programme for Biodiversity Management and Climate Change Adaptation in the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape in Kathmandu, Nepal, from 16 to 17 December 2011. During the consultation, participants took stock of past conservation initiatives and revisited the vision and direction of the KPL. Participants also drafted a strategic framework of action to develop biodiversity management and climate change adaptation initiatives in the KPL as well as carve out future strategic actions to promote the landscape's socio-environmental resilience.

Objectives of the consultation

The overall objective of the consultation was to provide a platform to share the progress made towards the conservation of the ecologically contiguous landscape between China and Pakistan and to develop a common

strategic framework of action for the landscape. The specific objectives were:

- to revisit and understand the conservation measures that have taken place in the past in the two adjoining protected areas in China and Pakistan;
- to share the process document on the significance, history and future of Sino-Pak collaboration for the socio-ecological development of the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape with a focus on adjoining protected areas; and
- to draft a strategic framework of action that provides direction for long-term collaboration to address regional transboundary biodiversity management and climate change adaptation issues in the area.

Organization of the consultation

About 35 participants representing academic and research institutes, local, provincial and national governments, international organizations, and ICIMOD gathered for the consultation (Annex 2) in Kathmandu, Nepal. The regional consultation was organized into three sessions (Annex 3).

The inaugural session was graced by His Excellency, Mr Syed Mehdi Shah, Chief Minister of the Gilgit-Baltistan Province in Pakistan. In his inaugural remarks, H.E. Mr Shah expressed pride and pleasure in being a part of the KPL regional consultation. Stressing the geographic distinctiveness of the KPL, its unique culture and rare natural resources, he mentioned the need to protect the landscape from negative externalities such as conflict, disaster, and global climate change. He appealed to experts, scientists and policymakers at the consultation to come up with an effective solution to deal with the challenges imposed on the landscape's environment, biodiversity and people. Appreciating the efforts by organizers to create a logical regional platform for dialogue between the countries, H.E. Mr Shah assured unconditional cooperation and support from his government in developing the regional initiative.

Dr David Molden, Director General of ICIMOD, stated that it is absolutely necessary to engage regional players in order to share ideas and work collectively towards solving development challenges in the region. He reaffirmed the importance in such regional consultations to provide a platform to develop long-term strategic actions among countries and strengthen regional cooperation. Mr Ashiq Ahmad Khan from Pakistan stressed the need to capitalize on the joint wisdom of the region to bring about effective resource management in the landscape and to strengthen the regional initiative.

Linking to ICIMOD's strategic programmatic direction, Dr Eklabya Sharma, Director Programme Operations of ICIMOD, gave an overview of ICIMOD's transboundary and trans-Himalayan transect approaches. Dr Sharma explained their relevance to addressing data gaps in the region, building regional capacity, and increasing



knowledge development as well as to developing a regional conservation and livelihoods initiative for the entire HKH region. He further stressed the need for regional cooperation in order to develop good science in terms of harmonizing methodologies and ultimately supporting informed decision-making. Dr Sharma also elaborated on linkages between transboundary ecosystem management initiatives and other regional programmes at ICIMOD such as the HKH Cryosphere Monitoring Programme, the River Basin Programme in Indus and Kosi, and the Himalayan Climate Change Adaptation Programme. Professor Pei Shengji from the Kunming Institute of Botany in China also highlighted the significance of the KPL and the need for early action on the ground. He further stated that regional cooperation among countries creates the opportunity for regional learning, and that active participation and political engagement from all participating countries are crucial.

The technical sessions included presentations on: the overview of the consultative meeting; process documentation for the KPL; country updates on national-level conservation efforts; experience sharing from the Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation Initiative (KSLCI); HKH Biodiversity Information Facility; and drafts of the strategic programme framework for the KPL. The presentations were followed by group work where various elements of the draft were discussed.

The closing session included a summary of the outcome of the consultation, which was formulated from input from the technical group discussions. The guest of honour, H.E. Mr Syed Mehdi Shah expressed satisfaction at the output, which is a clear roadmap for developing an environmental, economic, and social development programme framework for the KPL. He further assured the full cooperation of his government and all the relevant line departments needed to make this regional initiative a success. He suggested that the government of Gilgit-Baltistan, the relevant governing body from China, and ICIMOD come up with a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in order to carry tangible actions forward. Mr Ashiq Ahmad Khan, expressing satisfaction over some of the crucial decisions made during the consultation, elaborated on the way forward and thanked all the participants, especially the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan for his time, presence and personal attention to the KPL initiative. Prof. Pei Shengji also acknowledged and praised the efforts of the participants in taking a crucial step towards formation of a regional forum on KPL initiatives. Dr Eklabya Sharma reiterated ICIMOD's commitment to use its experience from other regional initiatives in the HKH to help develop a concrete strategy for biodiversity management, sustainable livelihood development and climate change adaptation in the KPL. He reaffirmed the need to strike a balance between conservation and economic development. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks from Dr Nakul Chettri, Biodiversity Specialist and Team Leader-Biodiversity Conservation Management at ICIMOD.

Highlights of the Technical Sessions

The technical sessions in the consultation provided a platform to share the process document that highlighted conservation measures taken within the KPL in the recent past as well as various challenges and opportunities in the adjoining protected areas of China and Pakistan. The presentations on the process document, the KSLCI regional cooperation framework development process, and a draft of the strategic framework of action provided a basis for the group discussions that helped set the direction for long-term collaboration in developing the regional initiative for the KPL.

Sharing of the process document

The process document, entitled ‘Significance, History and Future of Sino-Pak Collaboration for the Socio-ecological Development of Karakoram-Pamir Landscape with Focus on Adjoining Protected Areas’, was presented by Mr Ashiq Ahmad Khan. He explained the significance of KPL as home to several unique and endangered species of flora and fauna and as an important bio-geographic entity located at the junction of China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. Mr Khan summarized the contents of the document including the bio-physical features of the KPL: a landscape with a combination of rugged mountain peaks, glaciers, glacial lakes, high-altitude passes, alpine pastures and rangeland, rare and unique biodiversity, and, most importantly, friendly and culturally rich people. The document brought forward historical perspectives and different conservation tools and interventions being implemented in the two



countries, which aided in the analysis of prevailing biodiversity management challenges and future opportunities. Using several examples of previously common wide-ranged species from the landscape, such as Marco Polo sheep, ibex, blue sheep, urial, snow leopard, markhor, musk deer, brown and black bears, lynx, and the Tibetan wild ass, among others, Mr Khan highlighted the importance of collaboration between China and Pakistan to protect the habitats of such endangered and keystone species and to formulate the means and mechanisms to incorporate people into conservation interventions. For highlights of the process document, see Annex 4.

Mr Khan also shared the results of a recent survey gauging herders’ perspectives on climate change in the Pakistan side of the KPL. The survey revealed that more than 65 per cent of respondents have witnessed changes in glaciers, weather patterns, and a decline in forage quality and quantity in the rangelands. Such changes have affected the socioeconomics of local communities forced to adopt the laborious and expensive alternative of stall-feeding their livestock.

The review of earlier transboundary interventions in the KPL by Mr Khan revealed a number of efforts towards consensus building through written and signed documents. However, the depth of the partnership required for implementation of a regional or transboundary initiative, which also addresses regional and international obligations and creates opportunities on the ground level, is still in the formative stage. It was stressed that in order for the KPL transboundary initiative between China and Pakistan to develop and thrive, it will require long-term support from regional and international organizations and strong national-level commitments from both countries. While elaborating on the institutional mechanism needed for regional coordination, it was unanimously agreed that ICIMOD is apt to facilitate the process of regional cooperation.

Sharing the process of the Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation Initiative

The KSLCI is a regional collaborative programme to promote transboundary cooperation for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the greater Kailash region of China, India, and Nepal. This programme, initiated by ICIMOD with active participation of partner countries, was supported by UNEP and GIZ and follows ecosystem management approaches. Dr Krishna P. Oli, the Regional Coordinator of the programme at ICIMOD, made a brief presentation on various iterative processes and phases of the programme. Dr Oli clarified that during the 18-month preparatory phase, partner institutions within respective countries prepared feasibility assessment reports and developed a conservation strategy and comprehensive environmental monitoring strategic plans based on detailed field surveys and consultation with various stakeholders. Following these activities, a regional workshop was held in 2010 which led to the finalization of the draft of the regional cooperation framework for the KSL. This was followed by a short phase of preparing programme implementation plans by the partner institutions. Dr Oli further clarified that as various phases of the KSLCI progressed, the multi-level participatory process led to the realization of shared responsibilities, national ownership, and differentiated approaches among the various countries, actors, and stakeholders. He also explained that such processes will continue to evolve as mechanisms for cooperation develop and can provide a model of regional cooperation for transboundary ecosystem management that can be replicated throughout the HKH.

HKH-BIF as a regional node of Global Information Biodiversity Facility

Hindu Kush Himalayan Biodiversity Information Facility (HKH-BIF) is a species-level data and information-sharing platform established under the auspices of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) at ICIMOD. Highlighting the importance of HKH-BIF, Mr Deependra Tandukar explained the significance of such a facility for knowledge sharing and for publishing information on regional biodiversity (species-level checklist and occurrence data) from the HKH region. ICIMOD has a server dedicated to hosting data published using the HKH-BIF platform. The HKH-BIF uses the Integrated Publishing Toolkit (IPT) designed by the GBIF to publish the data. This provides a means to standardize the data and later analyse it at the regional and global level. All ICIMOD partners from the eight regional member countries are able to publish their data via the HKH-BIF platform.

Mr Tandukar emphasized that a well-established and highly-functional HKH-BIF would allow the participating member countries to build and globally publish species data from the HKH and show the actual extent of biodiversity resources from the region. Publishing data will eventually increase the benefits from past, present, and future investments in biodiversity research and data collection. He also highlighted that species data published in the GBIF has been used in several research projects such as monitoring national-level biodiversity targets, understanding the impact of climate change on biodiversity – especially focusing on future abundance and distribution of species and populations – and also mapping the potential ecological niche of culturally significant species, among others.

Group discussions

Group work and discussions were held to revisit, refine and draft elements of the strategic framework for promoting transboundary collaboration between China and Pakistan. Participants worked in two groups and discussed and refined key words in the vision and goals of the KPL in order to reflect and highlight the elements of biodiversity management needed for sustaining ecosystem services, ensuring the sustainable use of biodiversity resources, addressing climate change impacts and adaptation, and improving sustainable livelihoods, including women and minority communities. The groups also refined the programme objectives and listed broad actions under each objective.



Discussions ranged from mechanisms for coordination at the country level to identification of various issues and challenges to be addressed on a regional scale. Enhancing scientific understanding of the KPL through research on various landscape elements, ecosystem services and impacts of climate change was a common agenda in both groups. Discussions about effective biodiversity management focused on building biodiversity and community resilience to various drivers of change.

The consultation was successful in producing a concrete, tangible output in the form of a draft strategic framework for developing the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape which will serve as the basis for future collaborations between ICIMOD and its two regional member countries, China and Pakistan, as well as those between all relevant institutions within the two countries (Annex 1).

Conclusions and the Way Forward

Realizing the tremendous importance of the KPL from ecological, socioeconomic and climate change perspectives; considering the current rate of ecosystem degradation and impacts of climate change and the inadequacy of resources to support scientific management of natural resources; recognizing the need to address socio-cultural and socioeconomic issues leading to sustainable development and regional cooperation for transboundary landscape management under the ecosystem approach to conserving irreplaceable and unique biodiversity resources and enhancing the socioeconomic status of the people in the KPL, the participants of the regional consultation from Pakistan and China agreed upon the following as a way forward:

- The KPL comprises an ecologically fragile, culturally unique, and biologically diverse region that assumes global conservation significance.
- The two protected areas on either side of the Sino-Pak boundary, the Taxkorgan Nature Reserve in the Xinjiang Province of China and the Khunjerab National Park in the Gilgit-Baltistan province of Pakistan, are naturally connected and harbour several important flagship species such as Marco Polo sheep and snow leopard.
- ICIMOD, being an inter-governmental knowledge-based organization and having its presence in both the member countries is the natural choice for a regional coordinating agency, which can provide the appropriate platform to facilitate the process of transboundary cooperation between the relevant stakeholders in China and Pakistan.
- ICIMOD expressed an interest in playing the facilitating role and assured support for raising funds to carry out the anticipated activities in collaboration with partner organizations in the member countries.
- It was agreed that all the participating organizations have their own strengths, and that in the future the KPL initiative would make use of their expertise, networks and knowledge bases and benefit from the same.
- Dr Zhigang Jiang from the Institute of Zoology, CAS and Dr Ahsan Ullah Mir, Registrar of the Karakoram International University for Pakistan, were nominated as focal persons for China and Pakistan respectively. Both focal persons shall identify and collaborate with all relevant partners and stakeholders within their respective countries. For China, it was suggested to have two agencies for country-level coordination, namely the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research and the XIEG for research-related issues and the Forestry Department of Xinjiang Province for management-related issues.
- The draft framework developed through joint wisdom of Sino-Pak participants, scientists, and experts from ICIMOD shall be edited together with the report of the workshop, and shall be shared with focal persons for them to share and discuss with all participants in their respective countries.
- Once finalized from their end, each focal person shall start consultative meetings with all relevant stakeholders, scientists, and representatives from interdisciplinary sectors in their respective countries to share the strategic framework of action and get their endorsement in order to make way for the implementation plan.
- The regional coordinating agency, ICIMOD, shall convene a transboundary workshop to develop an umbrella plan for a joint conservation strategy and a comprehensive environmental and socioeconomic monitoring strategy.
- The focal persons, together with representatives from all relevant institutions and stakeholder bodies at the country level, with support from ICIMOD shall develop a comprehensive action programme to be implemented in each country that supports the development of the regional initiative (time frame: 1-2 years).
- Each country's focal institute, together with all relevant stakeholders and ICIMOD, shall develop a subsequent monitoring mechanism as and when funds becomes available (time frame: 2-5 years)
- The nodal institutions in both countries will begin the process of integrated knowledge sharing as the basis of regional cooperation and shall start using some of the regional data and information sharing platforms as presented by ICIMOD during the consultation. For global publishing of species-level data and information from HKH countries, the HKH-BIF platform can be used. For general information on the KPL and protected areas, the HKH Conservation Portal may be used. The portal can be visited at www.icimod.org/hkhconservationportal

Annex 1: Draft Programme Framework for Promoting Transboundary Collaboration between China and Pakistan for the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape

Vision

The natural ecosystems of the Karakoram-Pamir (transboundary) Landscape (KPL) are safeguarded and sustained for its ecological integrity; there is improved flow of environmental services; socioeconomic development, and preservation of cultural heritage benefiting the livelihood of people living in the landscape and downstream.

Goal

The Karakoram-Pamir (transboundary) Landscape is sustainably managed with improved ecological goods and services leading to socioeconomic development and enhanced adaptive capacity with intact cultural heritage as a response to climate change.

Objectives

1. To improve the understanding on biodiversity and climate change science in the KPL
2. To promote transboundary cooperation in the KPL
3. To assess adaptive capacity and the livelihoods of people living in the landscape
4. To conserve and sustain ecosystems and their goods and services provided by the KPL through collaborative management

Strategies and Actions

Strategy 1.1 Promote scientific research for better management of the KPL

Actions:

- 1.1.1 Establish a research advisory board for the KPL transboundary initiative
- 1.1.2 Literature review and gap analysis
- 1.1.3 Identify/prioritize both geographic (places) and thematic research areas (topics) for management guided field research.
- 1.1.4 Develop common protocols, standards and methodologies for research.
- 1.4.5 Design, conduct, monitor and analyse research works to develop knowledge products and establish resource inventory database for the KPL

Strategy 1.2 Promote transboundary technical collaborations and knowledge sharing platform

Actions:

- 1.2.1 Organize seminars, workshops and policy dialogue for technical professionals
- 1.2.2 Organize national and transboundary scientific, community and policy exchanges
- 1.2.3 Develop a regional clearing house mechanism (knowledge sharing platform) through conservation portal
- 1.2.4. Establish a joint monitoring mechanism to support successful implementation of national and regional policies

Strategy 2.1 Create enabling policy environment for transboundary cooperation

Actions:

- 2.1.1 Review the existing policy and legislative documents and identify policy gaps
- 2.1.2 Revisit the existing management plans of each of the protected areas and identify gaps
- 2.1.3 Organize consultative meetings to identify and define cooperation framework/umbrella management plan and TOR among the partner institutions with clear functions and roles
- 2.1.4 Develop and customise the cooperation framework/umbrella management plan with clear guidelines for the country-specific actions ensuring equitable access to and sharing of benefits from use of resources

Strategy 2.2 Establish/strengthen institutions and develop their capacities

Actions:

- 2.2.1 Review the existing institutions with their capacities and strengths
- 2.2.2 Establish transboundary collaborating body
- 2.2.3 Promote and strengthen institutional networks (regional and transboundary)
- 2.2.4 Develop manuals and training modules and organize trainings at all levels for policy and management interventions, ensuring women's participation in research, management and decision making
- 2.2.5 Develop a coordinated institutional mechanism on cooperation and its sustainability

Strategy 3.1 Assess the adaptive capacity of the local communities and enhance community and resilience

Actions:

- 3.1.1 Document indigenous knowledge on climate change, impacts on mountain livelihoods and adaptation practices and validate for scientific accuracy/reliability
- 3.1.2 Conduct climate-related hazard mapping and vulnerability assessments
- 3.1.3 Conduct land use planning (zonation)
- 3.1.4 Climate risk reduction planning & management (adaptation)

Strategy 4.1 Understand the state of ecosystems and their services as valued resources for poverty alleviation

Actions:

- 4.1.1 Assess and determine the state of the ecosystem and ecosystem goods and services
- 4.1.2 Undertake applied research on ecosystem valuation
- 4.1.3 Prepare awareness-raising materials and conduct awareness campaigns on the value of the ecosystem
- 4.1.4 Prepare policy briefs on ecosystem services for policy makers

Strategy 4.2 Promote participatory conservation and management of natural resources in the KPL for sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction (with gender focus strategies)

Actions:

- 4.2.1 Conduct socioeconomic studies with a common framework
- 4.2.2 Determine current levels of poverty and dependence on available resource base
- 4.2.3 Prepare participatory plans and implementation strategy with prioritized intervention areas
- 4.2.4 Implement livelihood and poverty alleviation actions focusing on conservation and management of natural resources interventions (MAP cultivation, value addition, tourism etc.)

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Annex 3: Detailed programme structure

15 December 2011: Arrival of the participants

16 December 2011 (Day 1: Friday)

Time : 9:00–17:00

Venue : Godavari Village Resort

MC : Bandana Shakya

Opening Session

Chair: Eklabya Sharma, Director Programme Operations, ICIMOD

9:00–9:30	Registration	Sami Joshi and Suman Jaiswal
	Welcome/Opening remarks	David Molden, ICIMOD
	Transboundary landscape conservation initiatives across the HKH (15 min)	Eklabya Sharma, ICIMOD
	Remarks (China)	Pei Shengji, KIB, China
	Remarks (Pakistan)	Saleem Ullah, UNDP, Pakistan
	Brief remarks	Ashiq Ahmad, Pakistan
	Remarks by Chief Guest	H.E. Mr Syed Mehdi Shah, Honourable Chief Minister of Gilgit–Baltistan Province, Pakistan
11:00–11:30	Group photo/ Tea break	

Technical Session I: Sharing of process document, experiences from other landscapes in the HKH

Chair: Pei Shengji, Professor, KIB

11:30–13:00	Brief introduction of the participants	
	Regional consultation overview	Nakul Chettri, ICIMOD
	Karakoram Pamir Landscape: Process document presentation	Ashiq Ahmad, Pakistan
	Discussion	
	Summary of the session	Pei Shengji, Professor, KIB
13:00–14:00	Lunch break	

Technical Session II: Country updates, strategic framework draft and group work

Coordinated by Ashiq Ahmad, Pakistan, and Farid Ahmad, Head, Strategic Planning and Monitoring, ICIMOD

14:00–15:30	Country update: China	Luo Peng, CIB
	Country update: Pakistan	Babar Khan, WWF–Pakistan
	Presentation of draft strategic framework of action for KPL	Ashiq Ahmad, Pakistan
15:30–15:45	Tea break	
15:45–17:00	Group work: Revisiting vision, goals and objectives Two groups each facilitated by Prof. Wu Ning and Dr Abdul Wahid Jasra, ICIMOD	
18:00–20:00	Reception dinner	

17 December 2011 (Day 2: Saturday)

Time : 9:30–3:00

Venue : Godavari Village Resort

Technical Session III: Regional landscape initiative and facilitated group discussion

Facilitator: Farid Ahmad, Head, Strategic Planning and Monitoring, ICIMOD

9:00–9:15	Kailash Sacred Conservation Landscape Initiative: Process highlight	Krishna P. Oli, ICIMOD
9:15–11:00	Group plenary presentation from Session II	
11:00–11:15	<i>Tea break</i>	
11:15–13:00	Group work and plenary: Developing strategic and prioritized action points within each objective	
13:00–14:00	<i>Lunch break</i>	
14:00–14:15	Publishing of HKH biodiversity data globally: A brief presentation on HKH–BIF	Deependra Tandukar, ICIMOD

Closing session

Chair: Wu Ning, Programme Manager, Environmental Change and Ecosystem Services, ICIMOD

14:15–14:30	Summary outcome of the consultation	Gopal S. Rawat, ICIMOD
14:30–15:30	Remarks (Pakistan)	Babar Khan, WWF–Pakistan
	Remarks (China)	Pei Shengji, KIB, China
	Remarks (Chief Minister)	H.E. Mr Syed Mehdi Shah, Honourable Chief Minister of Gilgit–Baltistan Province, Pakistan
	The way forward	Ashiq Ahmad, Pakistan
	Closing remarks	Eklabya Sharma, ICIMOD
	Vote of thanks	Nakul Chettri, ICIMOD

Short outing: After 15:30

Visit to ICIMOD's Training and Demonstration site in Godavari, short trek and back to the hotel

Annex 4: Summary of the process document discussed during the consultation

Realizing the importance of the regional landscape initiative and its potential for the socio-ecological development in the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape, ICIMOD in February 2011 involved Mr Ashiq Ahmad to develop a process document that assesses the conservation situation in the landscape, identifies gaps and weaknesses, and suggests a future course of action that will enable the facilitation of the regional landscape initiative and its progress.

The Karakoram-Pamir Landscape

This refers to the Karakoram Mountain landscape falling in the Gilgit-Baltistan Province of Pakistan continuing to the adjacent Pamir landscape of the Xinjiang Province of China. The Karakoram Mountain Range extends over an area of 650 km from its start from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan, extending to, and merging with the Chinese Pamirs to the northwest; and culminating in the Ladakh range of India. The landscape is known for its glaciated peaks, high-altitudinal wetlands, green pastures, and globally significant biodiversity. However, the natural landscape is fragmented because of human settlements, roads and other ill-planned and unsustainable developments that have resulted in the weakening of the socioeconomic systems leading to the loss of natural livelihood base. The situation is further worsened and accelerated by climate change and enhanced populations of both humans and their livestock.

Biodiversity significance

The landscape is comprised of high-altitude green pastures, steep, rugged mountain terrains, montane conifer forests and combination of several agro-ecological units. Altitudinal climate-ecological gradients are clearly reflected by a hygrycally controlled lower tree line and a largely thermally controlled upper tree line. A lower montane belt of more or less open *Juniperus excelsa* stands gives way to closed sub-humid high coniferous forests, dominated by *Pinus wallichiana* and *Picea smithiana*. *Fragaria nubicola*, *Viola rupestris*, *Scorzonera virgate*, etc., characterize the floral associates of these forests. In the sub-alpine belt, higher coniferous forests turn into *Betula utilis* stands, while *Artemisia*-dwarf shrublands on southern aspects, interspersed with Juniper trees. Rangeland forms the significant part of the landscape characterized by alpine pastures, shrubs, and grasses/forbs. Alpine pastures are found above 3,500 m and are characterized by short, cool growing seasons and long, cold winters, and consisting mainly of perennial, herbaceous vegetation, shrubs, mosses and lichens. Shrub species are dominated by *Juniperus communis*, *Rosa webbiana*, *Berberis lycium*, *Berberis* sp. Grass species include *Phleum alpinum*, *Agrostis gigantea*, *Trisetum* spp., *Agropyron dentatum*, *Agropyron caninum*, *Fesruca alpoecurus gigantea*, *Dactylis glomerata*, *Pennisetum lanatum*, *P. filaccidum*, *Clamagrostis pseudopharg mites*, *Oryzopsis* sp.

The faunal diversity of Karakoram is believed to have penetrated mainly from four bio-geographic provinces of the Palearctic Realm – Himalayan Highlands, Hindu Kush Highlands, Pamir-Tian Shan Highlands, and Tibetan. At least nine large mammal species, including markhor, Himalayan ibex, Ladakh ural, blue sheep, Marco Polo sheep, snow leopard, Himalayan brown bear, black bear and Himalayan lynx are found in this area¹. Tibetan wild ass is also believed to occur in the region, mainly along the Chinese Pamirs in the Shimshal area.

The plains of Pakistan, especially its agriculture, are largely dependent on the waters generated by the watersheds of Karakoram. The watersheds of the Karakoram help determine the socioeconomic development of nearly a million people directly, while affecting millions of others indirectly. The region supports a wealth of agro-biodiversity, including traditional cultivars of grain crops, many different varieties of fruit and a wide range of traditional livestock breeds. Biodiversity in the landscape have played an important role in the local economy and have always been a part of local customs, cultures and traditions.

¹ Herwitt, K (2006) 'Glaciers of the Hunza Basin and related features.' In *Karakoram in Transition-Culture, Development and Ecology in the Hunza Valley*, Kreutzmann, H (ed). Cambridge: Oxford University Press, pp49-72

Socioeconomic perspective

According to an estimate, 0.8 million people live in the valleys and slopes of the Pakistani part of the Karakoram. A majority are pastoralist by profession and/or engaged in mountain agriculture. The remaining are employed in fields such as tourism, business or they do jobs in the public or private sector. Herwitt (2006) observed that local inhabitants are largely dependent upon the small ice masses and seasonal snowfall as sources of water for irrigation, water mills and small-scale hydro-power plants. The communities are better organized as compared to those of Himalayas and Hindu Kush primarily because of NGOs such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, the Mountain Areas Conservancy Project, and other projects and programmes. An increasing level of awareness regarding savings and profitable investment prevails that distinguishes the Karakoram society from the rest. Several micro-enterprises are in place as a result of various capacity-building programmes by different organizations. With enhanced capacities and skills, coupled by a willingness to promote the local economy, the Karakoram region has higher potential for successful development in the future.

The people of Karakoram are known for their peaceful behaviour and compromising culture. They are blessed with indigenous knowledge that they use not only to sustain their livelihood through the management of the available resources under harsh climatic conditions but also to protect their traditions and cultures. Being rich in ethno-ecological knowledge and wisdom, the people of Karakoram are familiar with the need to adapt to new approaches in response to changes in the environment, whether short lived or of longer duration. They are willing to accept new ideas and adopt new practices in a well-organized manner if convinced of these being of use to their society.

Threats to the environment and biodiversity

Given the area's complex and fragile geo-morphological features and having the largest glaciers outside of the polar regions, mountain hazards – caused by violent seasonal rainfall events and rapid melting of snow and ice which gives rise to seasonal floods – and frequent earthquake shocks are a constant threat. Localized, high magnitude, relatively low-frequency events include snow and debris avalanches, scree slides, landslides, glacier melt water bursts, river floods, mud and debris flows, and infrequent but large rock avalanches. The management needs of Karakoram are being recognized as a priority due to an increase in the frequency of floods. Degraded watersheds are mostly responsible for the enhanced surface runoff and increases in local temperatures have sped up the process of snow melting.

Being a major source of various human requirements, especially grazing of livestock, fuel wood, fodder, medicinal plants and subsistence hunting, the natural pasturelands of the Karakoram have been greatly degraded, where the capacity of more than half of the pastures used to support livestock grazing have gone down. Fragmentation in the mountain landscape, unsustainable use, and inadequate management of its resources have made the landscape quite sensitive to even small changes in the environment or climate. The wildlife populations, though recovering in some of the sites, have crossed to threatened levels. Erosion of soil and landslides have further affected the productivity levels of agricultural land.

Current conservation initiatives

Protected areas

The creation and management of PAs has been widely used as a conservation tool that sets aside representative chunks of natural habitats to protect species of special concern along with their floral and faunal associates from unsustainable routine-use practices. The landscape hosts several protected areas (see Table 1) covering significant parts of the landscape.

Table 1: List of PAs in the proposed KPL

Name	Country	Area (sq. km)	Year established	Significance
Khunjerab National Park (KNP)	Pakistan	4,455	1975	Especially for protection of Marco Polo sheep; Management plan available but not revised after 1990
Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP)	Pakistan	10,000	1993	Protects greatest concentration of mountain peaks over 7,000 m; Protection of wildlife populations, especially refuge to several endangered mammal species
Naltar Wildlife Sanctuary	Pakistan		1975	Protection of ibex, markhor, snow leopard; Under high community pressure and forest encroachment
Game Reserves (4) Nar Nullah Askor Nullah Danyore Nullah Kilik Mintaka	Pakistan		Around 1975	Hunting allowed without special permits
Community Trophy Hunting Programme (12 sites)	Pakistan		1990s	Involvement of people towards protection of pastures and provision of earning through licensed hunting sport
Taxkorgan Nature Reserve	China (at the juncture of China, Pakistan, former USSR and Afghanistan)			Adjoining to CKNP; Prospects of international peace park; Supports large population of ungulates and carnivores ²

Conservation related projects and programmes

Besides PA management, there are several projects and programmes (see Table 2) supporting the conservation action in the landscape and which have made significant progress in raising community awareness towards biodiversity conservation and towards developing community-based infrastructure for promoting conservation

Table 2: List of already operating projects and programmes in the proposed KPL area

Name of project/programme	Highlights of its intervention
Pakistan Mountain Areas Conservation Programme (PMACP)	Running from 2006-2011 Implemented through national directorate and regional offices in Gilgit-Baltistan (Gilgit) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Peshawar) and the AJK (Muzaffar Abad) Runs projects related to biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction and environmental education for relevant departments, NGOs and community-based organizations such as Valley Conservation Committees, Women's Conservation Committees and Conservancy Management Committees.
Aga Khan Rural Support Programme	Established in 1982 Its mission is to raise the living standards of communities through the implementation of integrated rural development programmes and initiatives. Reducing poverty, developing local institutional capacities and mainstreaming of women in development in the region through implementation of integrated programmes, projects and activities through active involvement of the grass roots communities.
International Snow Leopard Trust and Snow Leopard Conservancy	Snow leopard protection

² Schaller, GB; Talipu, LH; Hua, L; Junrang, R; Mingjiang, Q; Haibin, W (1987) 'Status of Large Mammals in the Taxkorgan Reserve, Xinjiang, China'. *Biological Conservation*, 42: 53-71.

linked livelihood opportunities for local people. Information is either lacking or not available on the projects and programmes contributing to the protection of biodiversity on the shared habitats or focus and on the upliftment of the socioeconomic development of the communities living along the border on the China side of the landscape.

Transboundary initiative between Pakistan and China

The concept of conservation in the border regions is not new. Many countries of the world, with different geo-political situations, have identified certain areas with joint ownership in more than one country and have established parks over such areas for the conservation of species that use such joint areas and for the development of eco-tourism to help the communities living there. At the moment, more than 200 such areas exist all over the world. Transboundary initiatives can play a major role in the socioeconomic development of the people and communities living in the shared border habitats, besides being critical to meeting the country's obligations under the CBD, and contributing to solving major challenging issues at global levels such as climate change, poverty alleviation, etc.

The transboundary initiative between China and Pakistan across the border area of the Karakoram and Pamir Mountains started on the basis of the non-political principle of no interference in the geo-political and administrative setup of the collaborating countries. An improved local environment for enhanced livelihood options and opportunities was envisioned with the long-term objective of maintaining the sanctity of existing protected areas on either side of the Sino-Pak border, creating an international protected area by establishing connectivity corridors spanning from the Karakoram Mountains in the Gilgit-Baltistan Province of Pakistan, to the Pamirs and Kunlun Mountains of China. A brief history of the development of the transboundary collaboration is given in Table 3.

The transboundary initiative between Pakistan and China, which is necessary to meet the current and potential challenges of biodiversity loss due to change in climate and fragmentation of the habitat and to ensure successful socioeconomic development of the host communities will require a long-term commitment from the governments of the participating nations and continued support from regional and international organizations. The participation and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders must be sought, together with a mechanism and platform to strengthen the needful coordination and meetings of the stakeholders, subsequent implementation of strategic action plan, and for regular monitoring of the initiative at the national and regional level.

Opportunities ahead

The transboundary initiative between China and Pakistan, though with its own challenges, has begun and has taken a promising turn to the present stage of collaboration where participating countries are openly discussing opportunities and a joint plan of action for developing a regional initiative for the KPL. There is awareness among the stakeholders and willingness on part of the provincial government of Xinjiang Province in China and the Gilgit-Baltistan province in Pakistan to accept the joint responsibility of safeguarding the rich natural landscape and biodiversity of the KPL and of improving the socioeconomic status of local communities. The governments of both countries are signatories to several international conventions such as CBD, CITES, Ramsar, CCD, UNFCCC, etc., and are committed to meet the obligations of these conventions. There is research indicating that many keystone animal species, especially Marco Polo sheep, snow leopard, etc., move through contiguous habitats that cross borders. Safeguarding the contiguity of this habitat is essential for these species' survival. The countries have realized that only through joint efforts and actions is such a high level of protection for this ecosystem possible. Several mechanisms have been suggested to implement the joint conservation action such as: establishment of a Biosphere Reserve, covering Karakoram in all the three host countries of Pakistan, China and India; establishment of a Biosphere Reserve, covering the Pakistani Karakoram and Chinese Pamir under the 'Man and Biosphere Reserve' scheme; establishment of a Peace Park, covering the Pamirs of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China and Pakistan (idea by Wildlife Conservation Society); establishment of a Peace Park, covering Taxkorgan Nature Reserve, Khunjerab National Park and Central Karakoram National Park; establishment of a transboundary park, covering Taxkorgan Nature Reserve and Khunjerab National Park, etc. However, there is a need to quickly define a realistic action plan with milestones and timelines to formalize and strengthen the regional landscape initiative in the KPL.

Table 3: Chronological events reflecting the progress in the development of the transboundary initiative in the proposed KPL

Date	Event
Jun 1989	Possibilities of transboundary collaboration discussed between the two countries
Dec 1995	Agreement for setting up an international nature park signed in Beijing at the tenth session of the Joint Committee on Economic, Trade, Scientific and Technical Cooperation for the protection of Marco Polo sheep and other endangered species
Dec 1996	WWF-Pakistan and XIEG met to discuss wildlife management issues
1996	Khunjerab National Park management plan approved
Dec 2003	The first formal discussions were held between WWF-Pakistan and the Chinese delegation from XIEG; an MoU suggesting a five-step work plan was signed
Jun 2005	Efforts for the improved management of a Joint Conservation Area along the Sino-Pak Border in the adjoining protected areas started with the signing of an MoU between WWF-Pakistan and XIEG with regards to undertaking a joint field expedition to obtain baseline data, identify common areas for conservation intervention and work out a joint proposal for establishment of conservation area
Aug 2006	UNDP-Pakistan and Xinjiang Wildlife Conservation Association (XWCA) China, joined hands to develop an action plan to support research and exchange of scientific information
Sept 2006	Endorsement of the action plan by the Board of Directors of WWF-Pakistan and the Chief Secretary, Northern Areas (now Gilgit-Baltistan)
Oct 2006	Babar Ali Foundation and UNDP-Pakistan allocated money for implementation of the action plan
Jan 2007	Endorsement of the action plan by the senior management of the CAS in Beijing
Apr 2007	Meeting between Chinese delegation and senior management of GB to discuss possible approaches and mechanisms for transboundary conservation and a sustainable development initiative to be jointly adopted
Mar 2008	A review meeting in Urumqi to formalize the collaboration for a transboundary initiative for the Karakoram-Pamir Landscape
Jun 2008	A resolution was prepared during the workshop on 'Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development in Sino-Pak Region'. The participants adopted the resolution that mentioned setting up a steering committee with relevant individuals/institutions for maintaining contacts and taking forward relevant conservation and sustainable development agenda; promoting tourism and supervising progress related to the creation and management of a Sino-Pak conservation and development area
Sept 2010	MoU signed between Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regional Forestry Department (XUARFD) and the Gilgit-Baltistan Forest, Wildlife Parks and Environment Department, Pakistan, for the conservation of wildlife species in the Pakistan-China border area with regards to generating and sharing knowledge about wildlife species and their habitats and developing a joint management plan addressing the issues of wildlife species and their habitats together with suggestive measures for minimizing negative anthropogenic influences on the environment and helping socioeconomic development of the local communities
Feb 2011	Commissioning study by ICIMOD to develop a process document that could facilitate the development of a regional landscape conservation and climate change adaptation initiative in the KPL
Dec 2011	Regional consultation organized and facilitated by ICIMOD to jointly develop Draft Strategic Framework for Promoting Transboundary Collaboration between China and Pakistan for Karakoram-Pamir Landscape



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