

Conservation and Development in the Far-eastern Himalayan Landscape

Implementing the transboundary Hi-LIFE Initiative



Dulongjiang Valley, NW Yunnan, China



ICIMOD

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The **Far-eastern Himalayan Landscape** in China, India, and Myanmar is a mosaic of diverse and interrelated ecosystems and home to people with varied cultures, traditions, and development aspirations. Management and policy interventions must help to both maintain biodiversity resources in the face of emerging challenges and meet the livelihood needs of people, now and in the future. This calls for holistic, integrated, and intersectoral policy and management approaches that consider all of the landscape's elements as well as their interdependencies.

The **Landscape Initiative for the Far-eastern Himalayas (Hi-LIFE Initiative)** is a regional conservation and development initiative jointly implemented by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and partners in China, India and Myanmar in the Far-eastern Himalayan Landscape. The initiative emphasizes the importance of promoting the transboundary landscape approach to generate both ecosystem and livelihood co-outcomes, thus balancing the objectives of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. It adopts an iterative process framework of implementation, highlighting the importance of regional cooperation and joint planning among the three countries. At the core of the initiative is an emphasis on building wider partnerships and promoting collective action for achieving a shared vision of long-term conservation and development in the landscape.



Hkakaborazi National Park, Myanmar

The Far-eastern Himalayan Landscape

The Far-eastern Himalayan Landscape is located along the easternmost extension of the Himalayas and the westernmost extent of the Hengduan Mountains. The landscape stretches 71,452 km² across China (22%, northwest Yunnan), India (12%, southeast Arunachal Pradesh) and Myanmar (66%, northern Kachin State). As a meeting ground of three global biodiversity hotspots, this landscape supports a variety of ecosystems and habitats, species, and genetic resources. The landscape primarily consists of natural ecosystems, a large proportion of which is forest. Agricultural land within the landscape has long been nurtured by the traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous communities. The ecosystem services from both natural and human-modified ecosystems directly support the livelihoods of the people in the landscape.

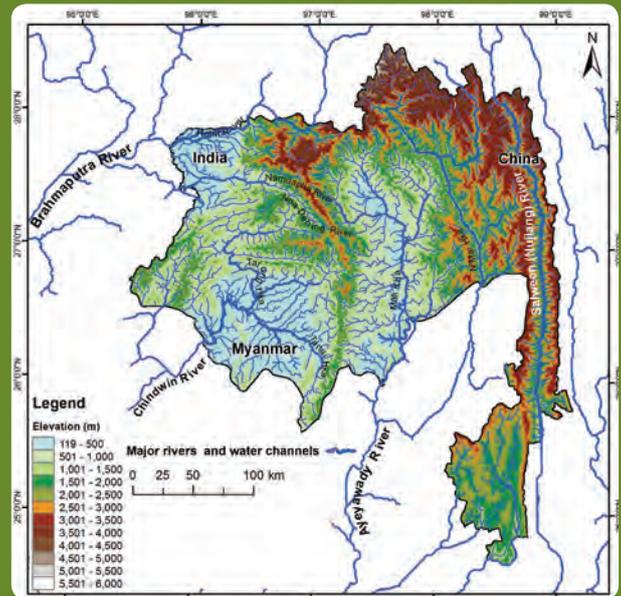
The Far-eastern Himalayan Landscape features:

- A contiguous patch of forests with more than 75% canopy cover
- A well-established network of eight protected areas, many of which lie along international borders, covering almost half of the landscape
- Culturally diverse communities, the majority of whom depend on the landscape's rich biodiversity for their livelihoods
- A paradox of extremely rich biodiversity but poor people with limited economic opportunities
- Conservation challenges that are closely linked to the need for economic development, from agricultural expansion to shifting cultivation to the trade of wildlife, medicinal plants and timber.



The Hi-LIFE Initiative provides the three countries with an opportunity to see the landscape as a single 'management unit', to understand the contours of change the ecosystems and communities in the landscape are undergoing, and to find ways to work together to ensure that the ecosystem services provided by this biodiversity-rich landscape benefit the people, while efforts are also made to ensure the environment is protected.

Map of the Far-eastern Himalayan Landscape



Hi-LIFE focus

The landscape's features and associated ecological, socio-cultural, and economic values are better understood; in identified pilot sites, biodiversity, ecosystem services, and cultural heritage are effectively managed, the communities are engaged into diversified, conservation-linked, socially inclusive livelihoods; and effective implementation of a regional cooperation framework among the three country partners.

Strategic outputs

- Livelihoods and climate resilience of communities strengthened through community-based interventions
- Resource management interventions optimized for generating ecosystem and livelihood co-benefits
- Scientific evidence for informed decision making and policy inputs generated through research and long-term monitoring of changes
- Regional collaboration strengthened through regional dialogue, transboundary exchange, partnerships, and networking development

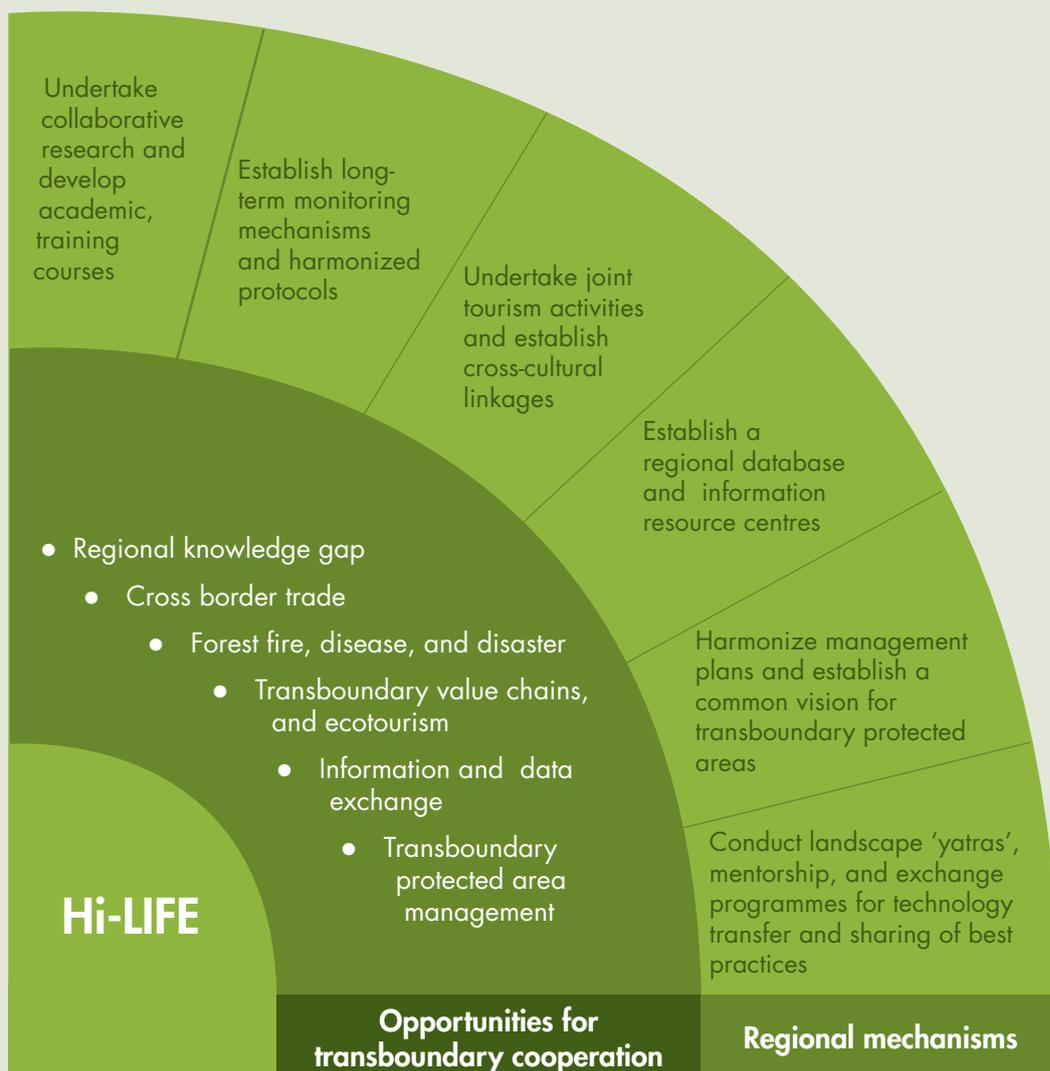


Why implement transboundary landscape management?

- Biodiversity resources transcend political and administrative boundaries.
- Natural capital (biodiversity and other natural resources) and human civilization are interdependent: people derive benefits from ecosystem services, which in turn are influenced by people, their society, culture, and traditions.
- Governance and knowledge systems – including science, management, and policy – that divide the natural capital into sectoral pieces make biodiversity management complex.
- Transboundary landscape management helps to erase sectoral divides and supports decision making for landscape level outcomes encompassing both sustainable ecosystem management and livelihood and economic development.
- Transboundary landscape management provides opportunities to leverage resources among different national and regional programmes and to synergize the efforts of different stakeholders.
- Transboundary landscape management offers substantial opportunities to address cross-border challenges related to the governance, protection, and sustainable use of resources, as well as equitable benefit sharing, within national priorities and policy frameworks
- The landscape approach and regional cooperation are promoted in several international conventions and global multilateral instruments, as well as in national policies

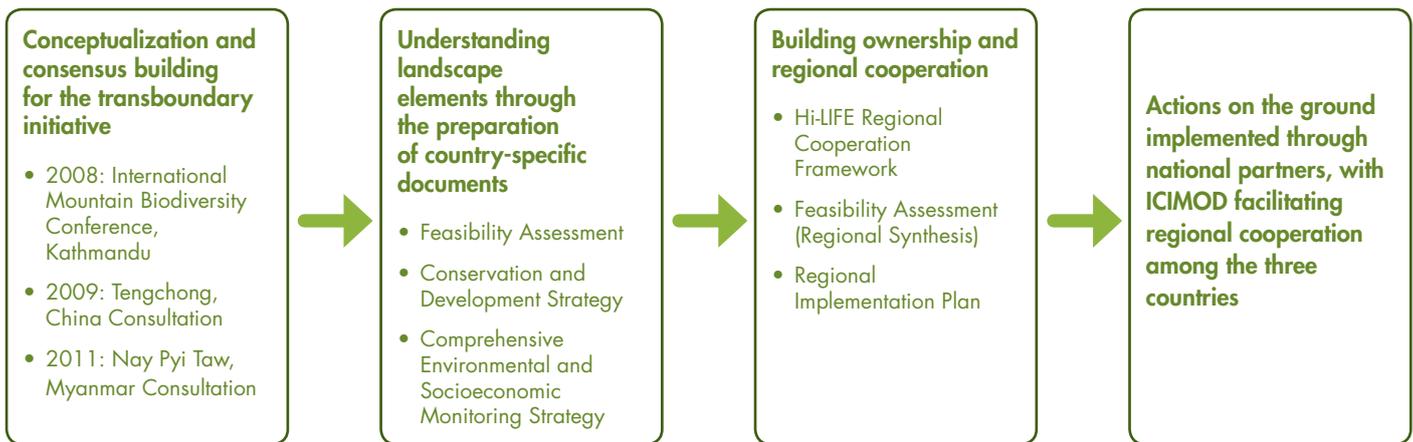
Transboundary issues and regional mechanisms

Several conservation and development issues in the Far-eastern Himalayas are transboundary and require either bilateral or multilateral cooperation. The Hi-LIFE initiative has the potential to build on transboundary opportunities through the creation of regional mechanisms.



Strategic development

A firm foundation for the Hi-LIFE has been laid out through a series of regional and national consultations.



Community-managed land near Namdapha National Park, India

A five-step framework for implementing the Hi-LIFE

Addressing conservation and development issues requires strong cooperation among governments and other partners in the three countries. The Hi-LIFE initiative will facilitate the regional cooperation through interrelated five-step process framework:

1. Establish an agreed basis for cooperation
2. Prepare a joint plan of action addressing country-specific conservation and development priorities
3. Deliver conservation and development outcomes with on-the-ground actions in pilots
4. Create a regional information and knowledge sharing platform
5. Carry out outcome-based monitoring and evaluation

Traditional house of Dulong community, NW Yunnan, China



Elements of the Hi-LIFE Regional Cooperation Framework

The Hi-LIFE regional cooperation framework was developed during a regional consultation held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar in 2014. It reflects the common intentions of countries sharing the transboundary landscape and is intended to encourage fast track planning and implementation of conservation and development actions. The document is prepared jointly by all countries involved and is based on principles of national sovereignty, transboundary cooperation, regional learning and ownership, participatory management, equitability and inclusiveness, sustainability, and partnerships. The document serves as a guide to strengthen regional exchange, partnership development, communications, and the policy environment through transboundary cooperation among the three countries.

Supported by



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