

Poverty and Vulnerability in Mountain Livelihoods

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Introduction

Critical review of the existing knowledge on livelihoods, poverty and vulnerability in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). The characteristics of mountain areas (referred to in the chapter as ‘mountain specificities’) uniquely condition the lives and development of people. While inaccessibility, fragility, and marginality act as constraints on development, the abundant biological diversity, ecological niches, and adaptation mechanisms present windows of development opportunities for mountain people. Mountain specificities need a distinct frame of analysis from what is used in the lowlands.

Detailed exploration of the changing context of mountain economies and livelihoods, as well as of the determinants and challenges in measuring and addressing poverty and coping with vulnerability to climate change.

Key Messages

- 1. Blanket country-level poverty reduction approaches are likely to miss crucial sub-national and local manifestations of poverty.
- 2. The acute shortage of mountain specific poverty data makes knowledge building a high priority.
- 3. Drivers of vulnerability and of poverty in the HKH region overlap substantially.
- 4. Apart from remoteness, poor accessibility, excessive dependence on natural resources, and demographic factors, conflict and ethnicity-based discrimination are major drivers of poverty in the region, with a distinct gender dimension.

Policy Messages

- 1. We need more mountain specific poverty reduction programmes.
- 2. Governments in the HKH region need to invest in more location-specific data that takes note of mountain specific factors and sub-national regions.
- 3. Because vulnerability and poverty in the HKH region share similar causes, certain types of intervention can address them in tandem and reduce them together (e.g. mountain specific policies in the water and energy sectors).
- 4. Poverty reduction efforts should focus more on targeting marginalized groups such as indigenous people, poor women, and Dalits.



Poverty in China by Ethnic Minority Categories, 2003

Region	Share of population (%)	World Bank Poverty Line			
		Income		Consumption	
		% who are poor	Share of poor (%)	% who are poor	Share of poor (%)
Ethnic minority	7.7	24.1	26.9	36.6	21.6
Non-ethnic minority	64.8	7.7	72.3	15.7	77.7

Source: World Bank. 2009.

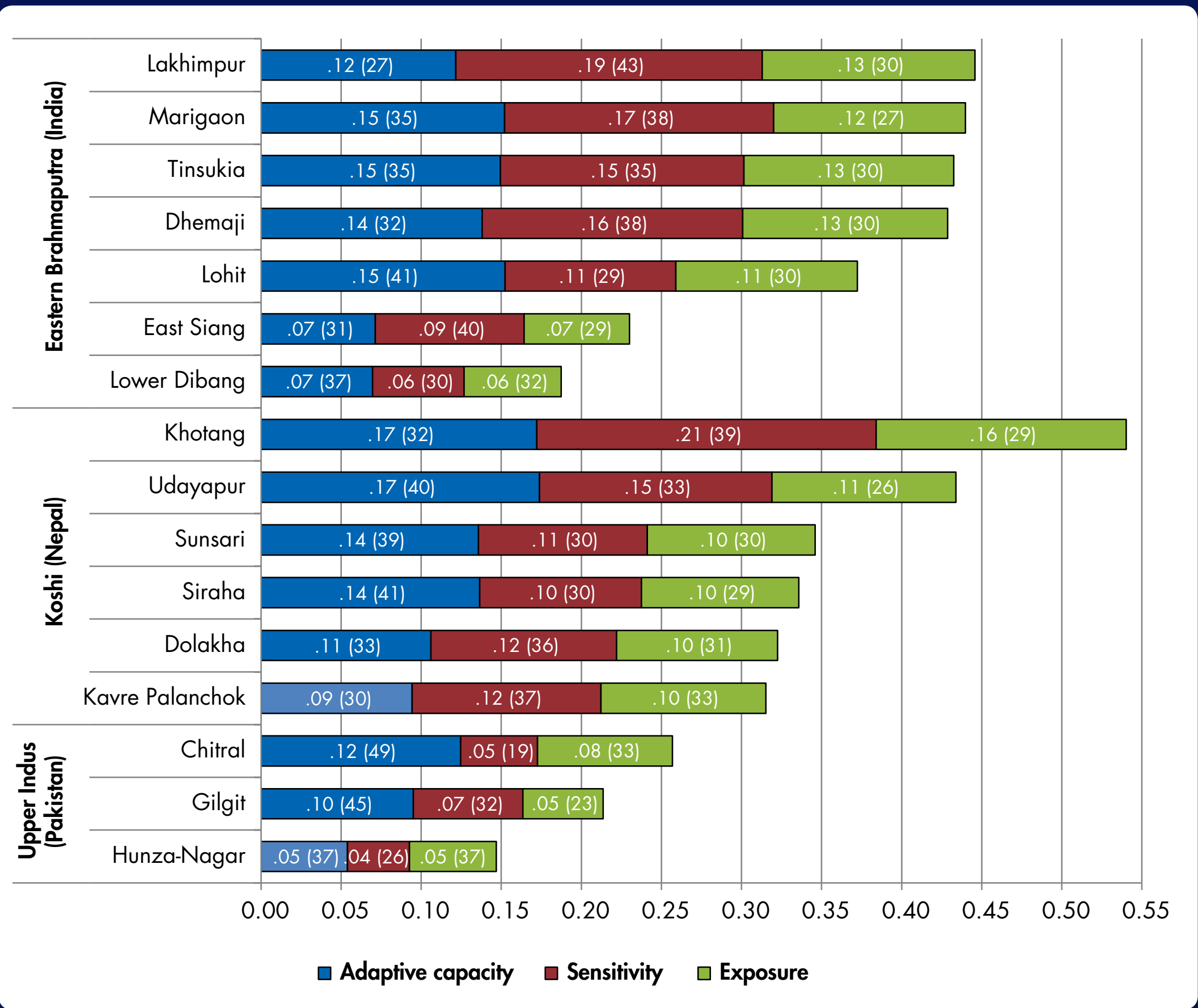
Poverty by Social Groups in India, 1993/94 to 2011/12

Social group	Share in population	Percent population below the poverty line				Percentage point poverty reduction	
		1993/94	2004/05	2009/10	2011/12	93/94 to 04/05	04/05 to 11/12
ST	8.9	63.7	60.0	45.6	43.0	3.7	17.0
SC	19.0	60.5	50.9	40.6	29.4	9.6	21.5
OBC	44.1	39.5	37.8	30.0	20.7	8.1	17.1
FC	28.0		23.0	17.6	12.5		10.5
All	100.0	45.7	37.7	29.9	22.0	8.0	15.7

ST=Scheduled tribes, SC=Scheduled castes, OBC=Other backward class, FC=Forward class

Source: Panagariya and More 2013.

Vulnerability in Three Sub Basins of HKH - Absolute and relative contribution of vulnerability dimensions by district (Gerlitz et al. 2016)



Mountain Poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

With respect to the SDG1 of eradicating poverty by 2030 (“end poverty in all its form everywhere”), the international poverty line for mountain areas in the HKH should be higher (USD 1.5/capita/day) than the globally accepted threshold of USD 1.25/capita/day, because of mountain specificities (higher prices of food commodities, higher calories requirements, and higher heating costs in mountain areas with respect to the plains).

Consistent with the SDG indicators of the proportion of men, women and children living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions, national governments should promote the use of the multi-dimensional measures of poverty, which are more appropriate in general, and even more so for mountain areas.