

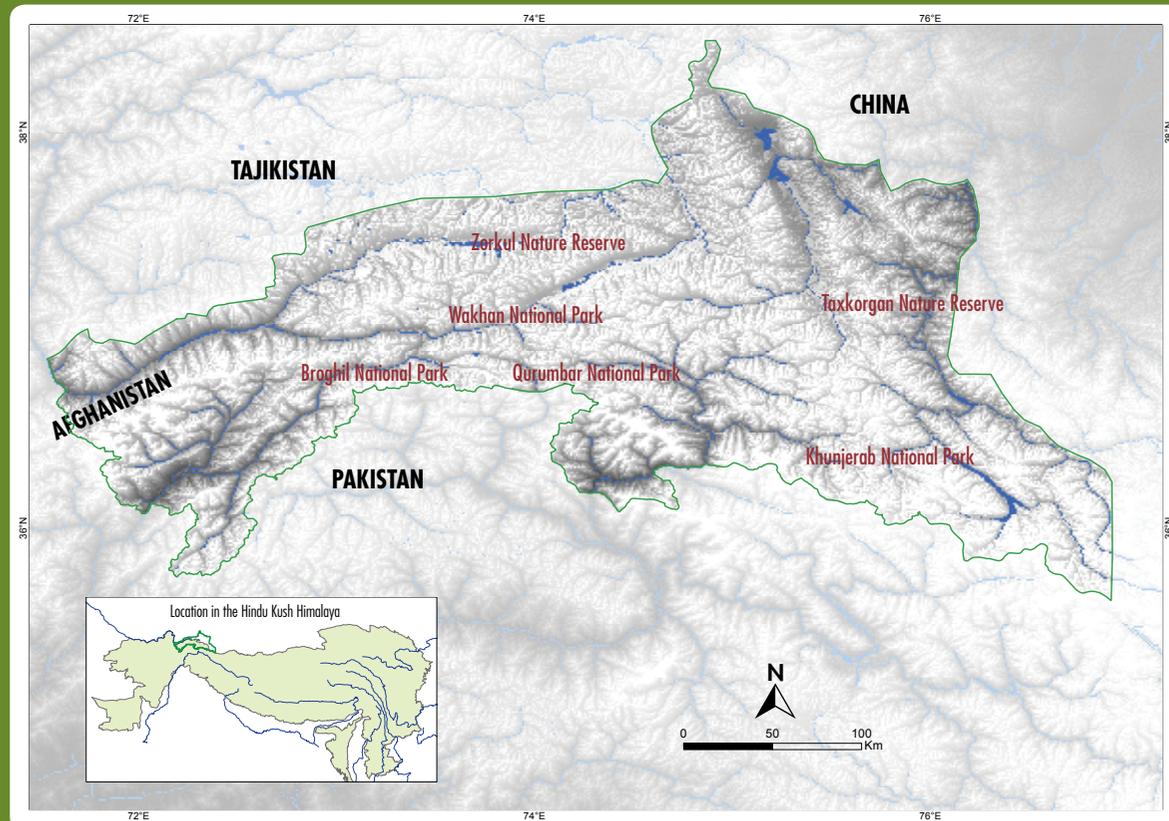
# PROTECTED AREAS IN THE Hindu Kush Karakoram Pamir Landscape

The Hindu Kush Karakoram Pamir Landscape (HKPL) is a transboundary landscape spread over 67,506 km<sup>2</sup> covering parts of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. It is a highly fragile alpine ecosystem at the junction of three mountain ranges – the Karakoram, the Hindu Kush, and the Himalaya.

The landscape is unique and is of high cultural, economic, social, environmental and strategic importance. It was once a part of the ancient Silk Route and a corridor connecting China with South and East Asia and Europe. Now, in the new era, it is a gateway to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), one of the projects under the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Initiative. This landscape is a major source of ecosystem services derived from its rich flora, fauna, glaciers (water towers) and other natural endowments. It is home to diverse indigenous ethnic groups of Wakhi, Kyrgyz, Sarakuli, Kho, Burusho, Shinaki, Yashkun, Pamiri, and Kazakh and their rich cultural traditions.

The Hindu Kush Karakoram Pamir Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative is working to enhance cooperation between Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the area. The initiative is promoting regional cooperation, with a focus on strengthening scientific knowledge sharing and networking, developing common markets for cross-border trade, and building the capacity of stakeholders within the landscape to adapt to change.

## Hindu Kush Karakoram Pamir Landscape



## Key Features of the Hindu Kush Karakoram Pamir Landscape

- Meeting place of three of the world's highest mountain ranges – Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and Himalaya
- Convergence of several important biogeographical regions and linkages with globally important biodiversity hotspots
- Cold desert ecosystem with unique floral and faunal biodiversity, including the endangered snow leopard and Marco Polo sheep
- Source of three major Asian rivers: Amu Darya, Tarim, and Indus
- Six contiguous transboundary protected areas (PAs) covering more than 33,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the landscape
- Nine indigenous ethnic groups (Wakhi, Kyrgyz, Sarakuli, Kho, Burusho, Shinaki, Yashkun, Pamiris, and Kazakh) with strong cultural and socioeconomic ties
- Gateway to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

## Major Challenge: Connecting Conservation Islands to create a Vibrant Landscape

Species like the Marco Polo sheep and the snow leopard require wide ranges to survive. Six protected areas in the landscape (one in Afghanistan, one in China, three in Pakistan, and one in Tajikistan) were established to help conserve biological diversity and protect these keystone species. These PAs are physically connected and transboundary in nature per se, but not in practice – currently, PAs are being managed as isolated 'conservation islands'. There is need for improved cooperation among the six PAs in the landscape on biodiversity conservation and management to transform parks from pockets of conservation to a vibrant mosaic of contiguous habitat, where critical species are better able to thrive in the face of a growing number of challenges. Without inter-park collaboration, biodiversity conservation at scale is threatened.

This folder includes factsheets for each PA that details their unique features, people/s, species of conservation significance, and threats.

