



ICIMOD

Himalica Pilot Project

Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan

Building the resilience of highland communities by improving livelihoods and natural resource management

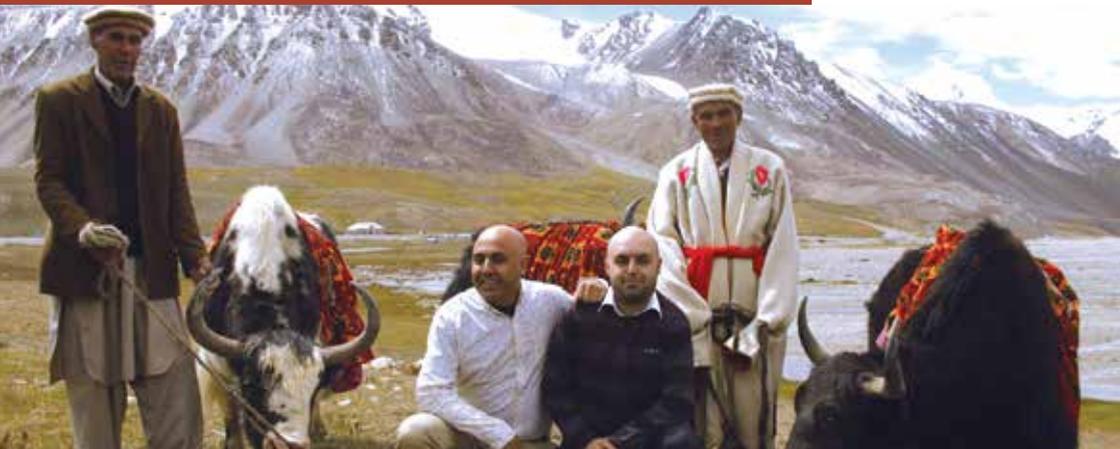
FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE



AKRSP



Project funded by the
European Union



Overview of Himalica

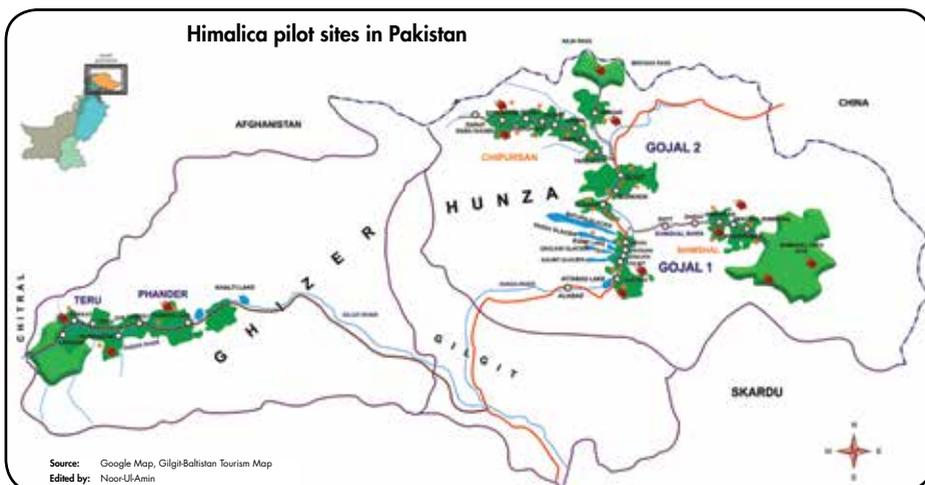
The support to Rural Livelihoods and Climate Change Adaptation in the Himalayas (Himalica) Initiative is a demand-driven programme financed by the European Union and managed by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The programme supports vulnerable mountain communities in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) in mitigating and adapting to climate and socioeconomic changes. The expected results of Himalica are:

- Enhancement of the capacities of national and regional stakeholders in dealing with livelihood development, more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources, and protection of the environment in the HKH;
- Reduction of poverty among mountain people through increased resilience, the unlocking of new livelihood opportunities, and the promotion of equitable approaches that encourage more women and members of marginalized groups to participate in decision making and resource ownership.

Pilot projects in vulnerable areas are a key component of Himalica. Under these pilots, community-specific climate resilient interventions are designed and implemented in collaboration with local partners and target communities.

Himalica pilot project sites

Himalica pilot sites in Pakistan are located in four union councils of two districts in Gilgit Baltistan: Gojal I and Gojal II in Hunza district, and Phander and Teru in Ghizer district. Gojal I and Gojal II lie north of Pakistan in the Karakoram, bordering Afghanistan and China, while Phander and Teru lie west of Gilgit bordering Chitral in the Hindu Kush. Broshaski, Domaki and Wakhi communities live in Gojal I and II. Phander and Teru are primarily occupied by Shina and Khowar people. In general, the Himalica pilot sites are located above 3,000 masl where farming and pastoral communities live. The agricultural production system is based on gravity-led irrigation systems fed with melt water from upstream.



Poverty, remoteness, relative inaccessibility, and ecological fragility are the basic challenges facing people living in the pilot sites. These are further exacerbated by climate change impacts, such as unpredictable weather conditions. Subsistence farming is the main source of livelihood here, despite having untapped natural resources, including vast pasturelands. The unique eco-geographic settings present distinctive yet promising options for piloting livelihoods and climate resilience-building initiatives.

What we are doing

With support from ICIMOD, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) initiated a Himalica pilot project in Gilgit Baltistan in August 2015 to increase livelihood options and build the resilience of the people living in this region. Under the pilot, yak and sea buckthorn value chains were selected for further analysis. Both the value chains are important for revitalizing the diminishing relationship of the mountain communities to their natural resources, including livestock. Yak, in particular, hold an untapped potential for upscaling, value addition, employment, and livelihood resilience in the face of climate change.

Yak and sea buckthorn hold special places in the hearts and minds of the people of Gilgit Baltistan and are beneficial to local people, environment, and ecology. Sea buckthorn features many positive qualities such as control of land erosion control desertification, flood and landslide control, improved pollination, food and medicinal products, and fencing materials. Similarly, yak sources meat, milk, and dairy products, and its dung can be used as fertilizers or fuel for cooking. Yaks are also used to plough fields and transport goods across the harsh mountain terrain.

Despite these potential benefits, both yak and sea buckthorn are currently underutilized in Gilgit Baltistan. Himalica will focus on expanding their use.

What we have done so far

- Conducted analysis of both yak meat and sea buckthorn value chains and developed strategy and plans for upscaling their use;
- Mobilized communities and farmers into structures and networks;
- Organized and nurtured 25 farmers enterprise groups (FEG) consisting of 246 members (about 50% are women);
- Arranged a series of training sessions on pre- and post-harvest technology on increasing sustainable production of sea buckthorn berries and plants by using climate resilient approaches and practices;
- Trained 140 members (40% male and 60% female) from five local support organizations- namely Gojal Rural Support Organization (GRSO), Mountain Area



Support Organization (MASO), and Chepurson Local Support Organization (CLSO), Phandar and Shimshal;

- Provided two-day training to 125 Participants (97 male and 28 female) on yak farming practices and herd management arranged separately in Phander, Teru, Shimshal and Sost;
- Provided a five-day training to 14 participants of the four UCs of Gojal I, Gojal II, Phander and Teru on pasture management to develop community skills in pasture assessment and grazing management at village level;
- Developed package of best practices on yak and sea buckthorn, considering five elements of climate smart agriculture: water smart, weather smart, soil and nutrient smart, energy smart, and knowledge smart.
- Conducted extensive field research to develop a Package of Practices (PoP) on local knowledge, local practices, and technical experience;
- Developed and distributed flyers, brochures and calendars on PoPs in easy to understand language for farmers; and
- Identified over 30 micro entrepreneurs/enterprises related to sea buckthorn and yak products and services for extensive training and mentoring.

Potential for outscaling/upscaling

Thanks to extensive sensitization and awareness-raising carried out with collaboration from local organizations, networks, farmers enterprise groups, and private sector players, there is a growing interest in sea buckthorn and yak value chains amongst the local communities and government. Sea buckthorn and yak value chains do not currently figure into discussions in the government agriculture department but that may soon change.

Each Local Support Organization (LSO) has prepared a micro plan with the explicit discussion of the challenges and opportunities related to sustainable production of sea buckthorn and yak. The private sector has been important for establishing vertical linkages and sustainability. Two private sector players have invested of yak meat processing and sea buckthorn products. Investments like this will give a boost to various players and stakeholders to outscale and upscale their experiences. The success in Gilgit Baltistan also give hope that other areas of the HKH may grow their livelihood options in similar fashion.



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Photos: Amjad Karim

ICIMOD gratefully acknowledges the support of its core donors: the Governments of Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

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