

# Transboundary Cooperation in the Hindu Kush Himalayas

Integrating biodiversity management with holistic development



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## Transboundary Landscapes in the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region

Integrating biodiversity management with development is a tremendous challenge, especially in the developing world. An integrated and holistic approach, along with cooperation among different countries, is needed to address the complex and multifaceted challenges of development and conservation.

Recognizing the need for regional cooperation among the eight countries of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, ICIMOD has identified seven transboundary landscapes for cooperation – Wakhan, Karakoram-Pamir, Kailash, Everest, Kangchenjunga, Brahmaputra-Salween, and Cherrapunjee-Chittagong.

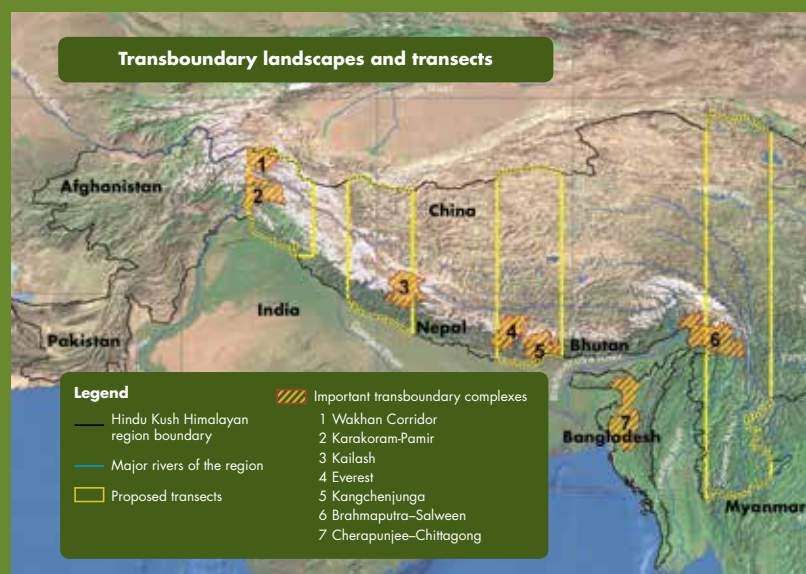


## Regional Cooperation in Transboundary Landscapes

Transboundary landscapes cross national boundaries. Regional cooperation in such landscapes is driven by the common objective of balancing conservation and development to protect globally significant biodiversity while addressing people's economic and sociocultural needs. Regional cooperation entails a shared understanding and commitment, which is established in the following manner:

- The countries have a common understanding of landscape conservation and the issues, challenges, and opportunities for development.
- The countries agree on the proposed outcomes and impacts to be made through a range of interventions and investments.
- There is a mechanism for increased institutional coordination among diverse actors and stakeholders across each landscape.

- The countries adopt strategies for effective and equitable communication and partnership.
- Stakeholders capitalize on tested innovations and promote regional learning and exchange.



## Transboundary Landscapes Regional Programme

### Situation/context

Limited data, knowledge, and governance of transboundary landscapes that are facing impacts from climatic and non-climatic changes

Research and pilot projects

Data, knowledge, and best practices

Dissemination

Enhanced awareness and strengthened capacities of stakeholders and partners

Improved policies and regional cooperation and influencing global agenda

### Expected impact

Sustainable management and governance of transboundary landscapes

Enhanced ecosystem and community/ livelihood resilience

## Transboundary Landscape Conservation and Development Initiatives

Conservation and development initiatives in transboundary landscapes seek to enhance ecological integrity and sustain ecosystem services to improve people's livelihoods and sociocultural resilience to environmental changes.

### Wakhan Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (WLCDI)

- The Wakhan Landscape is home to settled Wakhi farmers and migratory Kyrgyz herders. The initiative focuses on the conservation of high mountain rangelands and deep valley vegetation and on supporting agropastoral communities.
- The Wakhan-Corridor is a narrow area comprising alpine valleys and high mountains. It stretches eastward from the province of Badakhshan, following the headwaters of the Amu Darya River to its source in the Pamir Mountains in Afghanistan. To the north of the Wakhan-Corridor lies Tajikistan, with Pakistan to the south and China to the east. The Corridor extends more than 200 km from east to west and 20–60 km from north to south, covering a total area of about 10,300 km<sup>2</sup>. This includes the eastern-most ranges of the Hindu Kush Himalayas and the southeastern ranges of the Greater Pamir range up to the point where they join the Karakoram.
- The initiative, which is in an initial stage, is developing partnerships among four countries – Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan.



### Karakoram-Pamir Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KPLCDI)

- The KPLCDI is based on a bilateral agreement between the governments of China and Pakistan. The initiative seeks to ensure the protection of Marco Polo sheep and other endangered species in adjacent transboundary protected areas – Khunjerab National Park in Pakistan and Taxkorgan Nature Reserve in China – and maintain the sanctity of protected areas on both sides of the border.
- The ecological health of habitats on both sides of the border is under pressure from the activities of local communities.
- The initiative is working to create sustainable economic opportunities for local communities by building institutional partnerships across the border. Local communities are also mobilized to protect the environment, which could enhance the local economy and improve their quality of life. There is large potential for ecotourism development.





### **Kangchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KLCDI)**

- The Kangchenjunga Landscape includes western Bhutan, Sikkim and Darjeeling in India, and parts of eastern Nepal.
- It is one of the richest landscapes among the Himalayan biodiversity hotspots, with a diversity of species, including 550 types of birds, 600 different butterflies, and several species of mammals including the snow leopard, red panda, takin, blue sheep, serow, Himalayan musk deer, Himalayan tahr, Bengal tiger, and Asian elephant. Vegetation in the landscape ranges from tropical to nival.
- The initiative provides an opportunity to connect isolated patches of habitat of key species in the landscape's 19 protected areas through biological corridors.
- The initiative aims to promote participatory ecosystem and biodiversity conservation while encouraging integrated regional socioeconomic development for enhanced resilience of communities in the landscape.

### **Brahmaputra-Salween Landscape Conservation and Development (BSLCDI)**

- The Brahmaputra Salween Landscape (BSL) spans western Yunnan in China, northeast India, and the Northern Forest Complex in Myanmar. It is located between the Brahmaputra and the Salween rivers (also called Nujiang in China and Thanlwin in Myanmar) along the easternmost extension of the Hindu Kush Himalayas and the western extent of Hengduan Mountains.
- Located at the confluence of three global biodiversity hotspots, three biogeographical provinces, and seven globally significant ecoregions, the landscape is exceptionally rich in biodiversity, and hosts a large number of rare, endangered, and endemic species of global significance.
- About 70% of the landscape is forested, including pristine forest areas, and 50% falls under protected areas. The landscape is also home to diverse ethnic communities with rich cultures and traditions.
- There is a need for effective management of watersheds and ecosystems to ensure equitable delivery of services and inclusive development.

### **Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KSLCDI)**

- China, India and Nepal are currently implementing this collaborative initiative to promote conservation and development in a landscape stretching from the remote southwestern corner of the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, Uttarakhand State of India, and Far Western Nepal.
- KSLCDI is a model initiative that has established a framework for developing regional cooperation through a consultative process while also leveraging national schemes and plans.
- The initiative's activities cover five major components:
  - innovative livelihood options
  - ecosystem management for sustaining services
  - access and benefit sharing for development of resilient communities
  - long-term conservation and environmental monitoring
  - regional cooperation to enable policies and knowledge management



## Regional REDD+ Initiative

The REDD+ initiative, which promotes the 'co-benefits' of forest conservation, addresses biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration at the landscape level. The initiative creates evidence on the viability of REDD+ mechanisms for addressing climatic and contemporary non-climatic issues, such as poverty and inclusiveness.



## Innovations

- Mentoring decision-making stakeholders to ensure long-term ownership of the regional cooperation framework
- Using livelihoods and integrated participatory ecosystem management as key entry points to create awareness and expand the scope for corridor connectivity, long-term environmental and socio-ecological monitoring, access and benefit sharing of bioresources, and regional cooperation
- Bridging traditional knowledge with remote sensing science to develop a consolidated set of interventions for conservation and development
- Applying incentive-based mechanisms such as REDD+ to mobilize local stakeholders to take ownership of and improve landscape management
- Leveraging the economic potential of regional heritage tourism and coordinating among relevant stakeholders for the marketing of high-value products
- Involving the private sector and public schemes in innovative activities for upscaling and outscaling at the national level

## Outreach and Communication

- Operationalizing a regional communication strategy to ensure that all decision-making stakeholders acquire the same level of information and understanding
- Mainstreaming the use of information and communication technologies (e.g., Reuters Market Light service, which delivers agricultural information to mobile phones) to support marginalized communities
- Using standard regional knowledge platforms and networks for generating a coherent regional voice and ensuring long-term cooperation and coordination among regional actors
- Sharing lessons learned through transboundary cooperation with strategic partners at regional and global policy forums



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**Photos:** Alex Treadway, Jitendra Bajracharya, Seema Karki, Umer Rafi, Yi Shaoliang

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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Prepared by ICIMOD Publications Unit, September 2014