



CHAPTER 1 BRIEF

INTRODUCTION TO THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA ASSESSMENT



HKH ASSESSMENT CHAPTERS

1. Introduction to the Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment
2. Drivers of Change to Mountain Sustainability
3. Climate Change in the Hindu Kush Himalaya
4. Exploring Futures of the Hindu Kush Himalaya: Scenarios and Pathways
5. Sustaining Hindu Kush Himalaya Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
6. Meeting Energy Needs in the Hindu Kush Himalaya
7. Status and Change of the Hindu Kush Himalaya Cryosphere
8. Water Security: Availability, Use, and Governance
9. Food and Nutrition Security in the Hindu Kush Himalaya
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11. Disaster Risk Reduction and Increasing Resilience
12. Poverty and Vulnerability in Mountain Livelihoods
13. Adaptation to Climate Change
14. Gender and Inclusive Development
15. Migration in the HKH: Governance, Drivers, and Consequences
16. Environmental Governance in the Hindu Kush Himalaya

ABOUT HIMAP

The Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme (HIMAP) is a long-term, integrated science-policy initiative coordinated by ICIMOD that aims to support enabling policies and sustainable solutions and promote regional cooperation to address some of the region's most immediate challenges by:

- Comprehensively assessing the current state of knowledge of the HKH region, including thematic assessments, sub-regional assessments and topical outlooks
- Increasing the understanding of various drivers of change and their impacts
- Developing evidence-based policy solutions and recommendations
- Engaging decision makers across sectors and institutions through a series of HKH Science-Policy Forums

HIMAP is a platform for long-term collaboration and coordination among a broad and diverse group of more than 350 leading researchers, practitioners, and policy specialists working in the HKH. Under HIMAP, experts from the region have come together to develop the first comprehensive assessment of the HKH as the first in a series of monitoring and assessment reports. It deals with major issues such as climate change, biodiversity, energy, cryosphere (frozen water), water, food security, air pollution, disaster and resilience, poverty, adaptation, and gender and migration.

THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA AND DOWNSTREAM RIVER BASINS

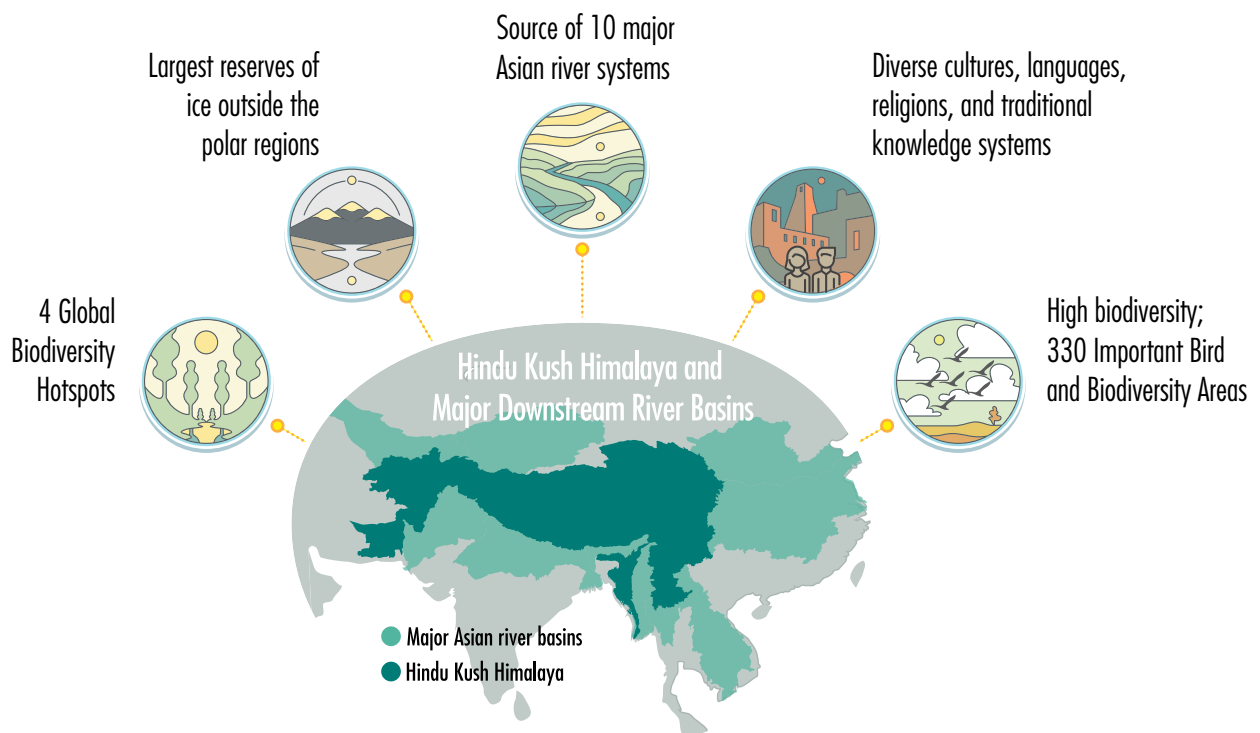


THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYAN CONTEXT

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) is one of the greatest mountain systems in the world, covering 4.2 million km² across eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. The region is home to the world's highest peaks, unique cultures, diverse flora and fauna, and a vast reserve of natural resources. It is the source of 10 major river basins, and provides ecosystem services (including water, food, and energy) that directly sustain the livelihoods of 240 million people in the mountain and hills of the HKH.

Nearly 1.65 billion people living in downstream areas of these river basins also benefit directly and indirectly from its resources and more than 3 billion people benefit from the food produced in its river basins. The HKH and the Tien Shan mountains together form the largest area of permanent ice cover outside of the north and south poles and are also referred to as the 'Third Pole'.

Ongoing changes in the HKH will have major consequences not only for people living in the region, but globally. Urgent regional and international action is needed to protect this global asset.



240 million

people depend directly on the HKH for their lives and livelihoods

1.9 billion

people depend on the HKH for water, food, and energy

> 35%

of the world population benefits indirectly from HKH resources and ecosystem services

KEY ISSUES IN THE HKH

The HKH region is geologically fragile, with young and rising mountains that are vulnerable to erosion and landslides even without human interference. The region is undergoing rapid change, driven by forces such as climate change, disasters, economic growth, globalization, infrastructure development, land use change, migration, and urbanization. Changes on the roof of the world are having and will have major consequences not only for people living in the region but globally. Actions at national, regional, and international scales are urgently needed to sustain this global asset, focusing on more investments and robust regional cooperation for sustaining mountain environments and livelihoods in the HKH and concerted action to keep global warming to less than 1.5 °C by 2100.

From a policy standpoint, achieving food, water, energy, and livelihood security in the region will require exploring various scenarios so that the scientific community, policy-makers, the private sector, and community stakeholders can come together and make optimal governance decisions to sustain this global asset. It will also require country-specific recommendations to guide national-level policy-making.

RATIONALE FOR THE ASSESSMENT

The assessment aims to critically evaluate the current state of knowledge about the HKH with an aim to develop policy-oriented solutions, and inform relevant decision-makers across sectors.

This comprehensive assessment of the HKH region is also intended to inform global assessments reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). It will also contribute to global targets, including like the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015.

The assessment addresses the environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable mountain development and will serve as a basis for evidence-based decision-making to safeguard the environment and advance people's wellbeing. This report will not be a one-time publication. It is planned as the first of a series of monitoring and assessment reports about the HKH.

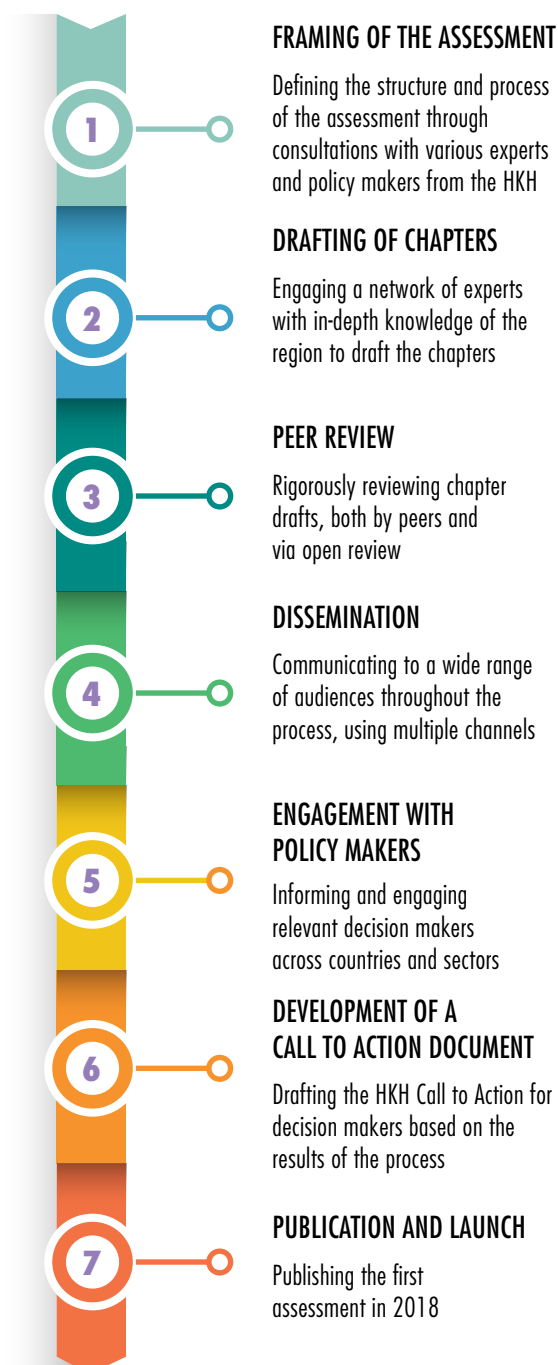
This assessment aims to:

- Establish the global significance of the HKH
- Reduce scientific uncertainty on various mountain issues
- Lay out practical and up-to-date solutions and offer new insights for the development of this region
- Value and conserve existing ecosystems, cultures, societies, knowledge, and distinctive HKH solutions that are important to the rest of the world
- Address contemporary policy questions
- Influence policy processes with robust evidence for sustainable mountain development



ASSESSMENT PROCESS

More than 350 researchers, practitioners, experts, and policy-makers were involved in drafting the HKH Assessment Report. The process involved:

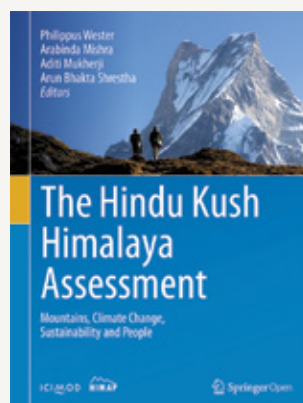


NINE MOUNTAIN PRIORITIES

Considering the issues, questions, and vision as part of this assessment, the chapters and key messages are drafted in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The “Priorities for Mountains and People of the HKH” reflect the ideals of the SDGs.

The nine mountain priorities are:

1. **End poverty in all its forms everywhere in the mountains** and ensure that women, men, and children of the HKH region lead healthy lives in an inclusive and equitable environment.
2. **Promote sustainable production systems to assure food security, nutrition security, and income for mountain people**, with particular attention to women’s changing roles in agriculture.
3. **Achieve gender and social equity** through inclusive and transformative change in the mountains.
4. **Ensure year-round secure water supply in the mountains** with universal and affordable access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and water for productive purposes.
5. **Universal access to clean energy in the mountains** from sources that are affordable, reliable, and sustainable.
6. **Halt biodiversity loss and land degradation and sustainably manage forests and other ecosystems in the mountains** to enhance ecosystem resilience for sustained flow of services.
7. **Ensure integration between adaptation to climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development for the mountains** through evidence-based decision making.
8. **Build resilient, equitable, and inclusive mountain communities** empowered by economic opportunity and investment in mountain infrastructure and connectivity.
9. **Promote a mountain-specific agenda for achieving the SDGs through increased regional cooperation** among and between mountain regions and nations.



This chapter is a part of *The Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment – Mountains, Climate Change, Sustainability and People*.

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