

WHY MEDIA MATTERS

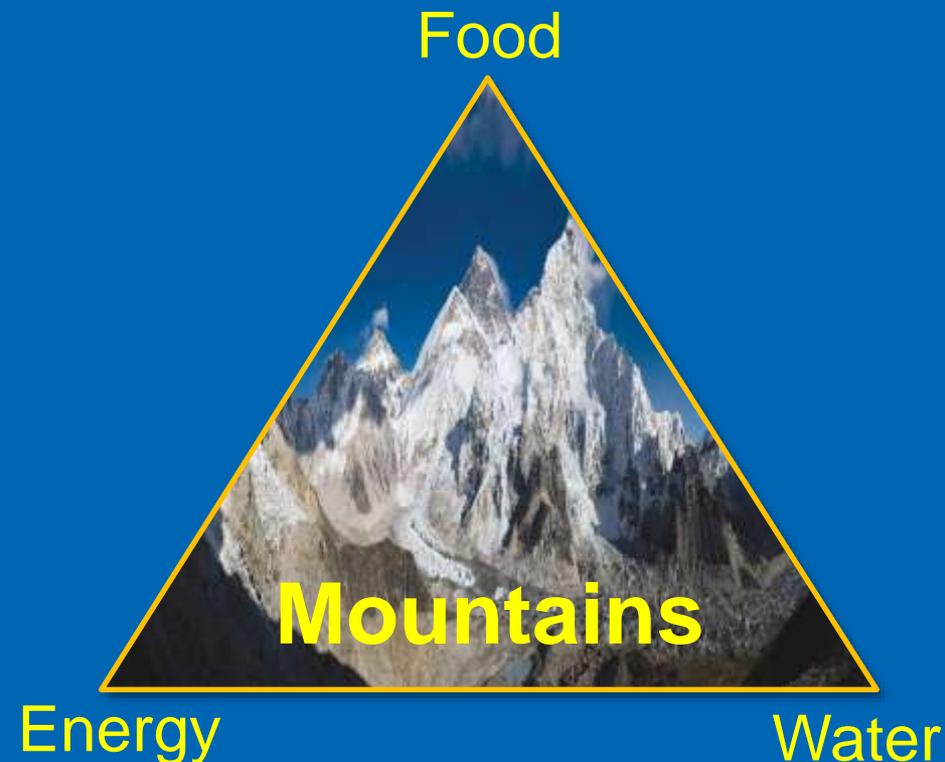
And the role of journalists - the mountain perspective

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

Kathmandu, Nepal

Mountains at heart of future security triangle

- Sir John Beddington, chief scientific adviser to the UK government: future crisis and conflict because of food, energy, and water shortages
- Food-energy-water securities intrinsically linked to mountains
- Mountains to play important political role in the future



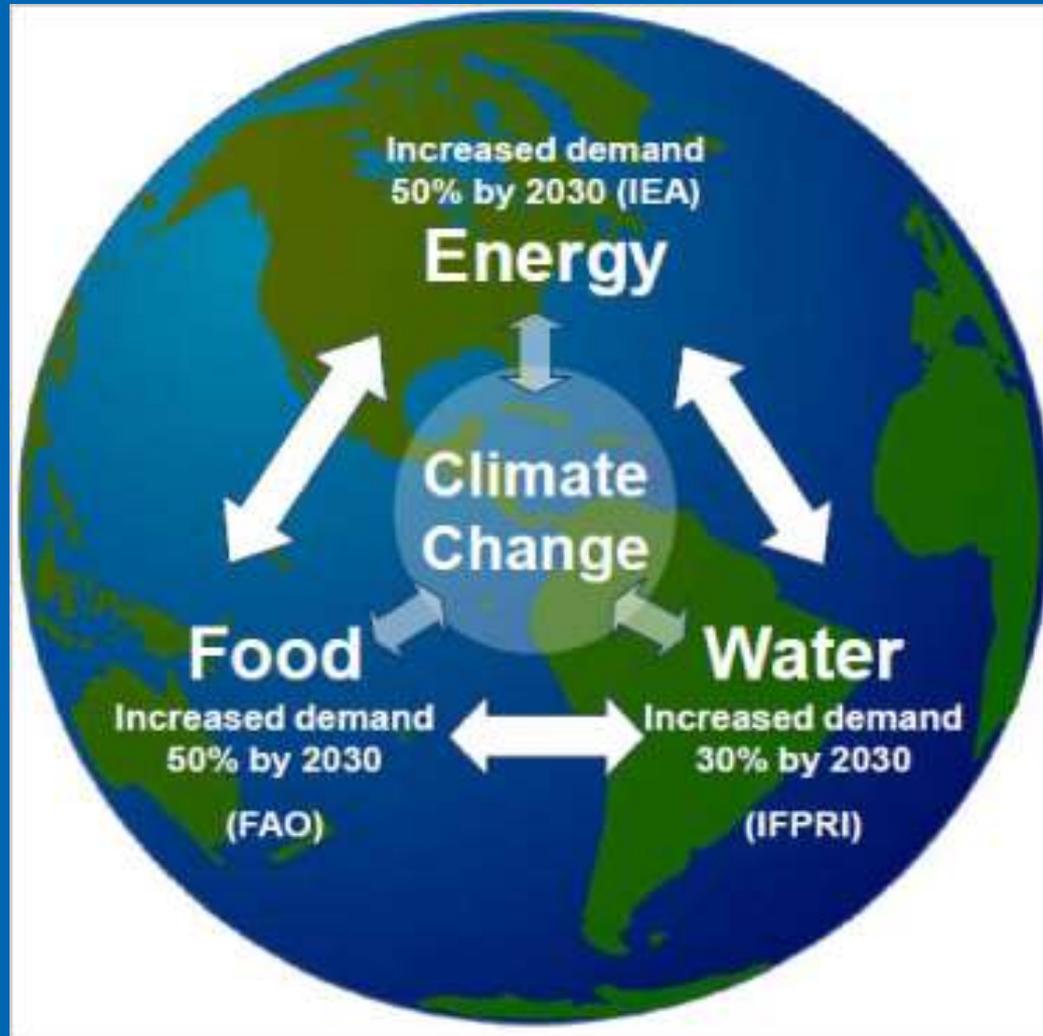
JB's 'The Perfect Storm'

He points to research indicating that by 2030 "a whole series of events come together":

- The world's population will rise from 6bn to 8bn (33%)
- Demand for food will increase by 50%
- Demand for water will increase by 30%
- Demand for energy will increase by 50%

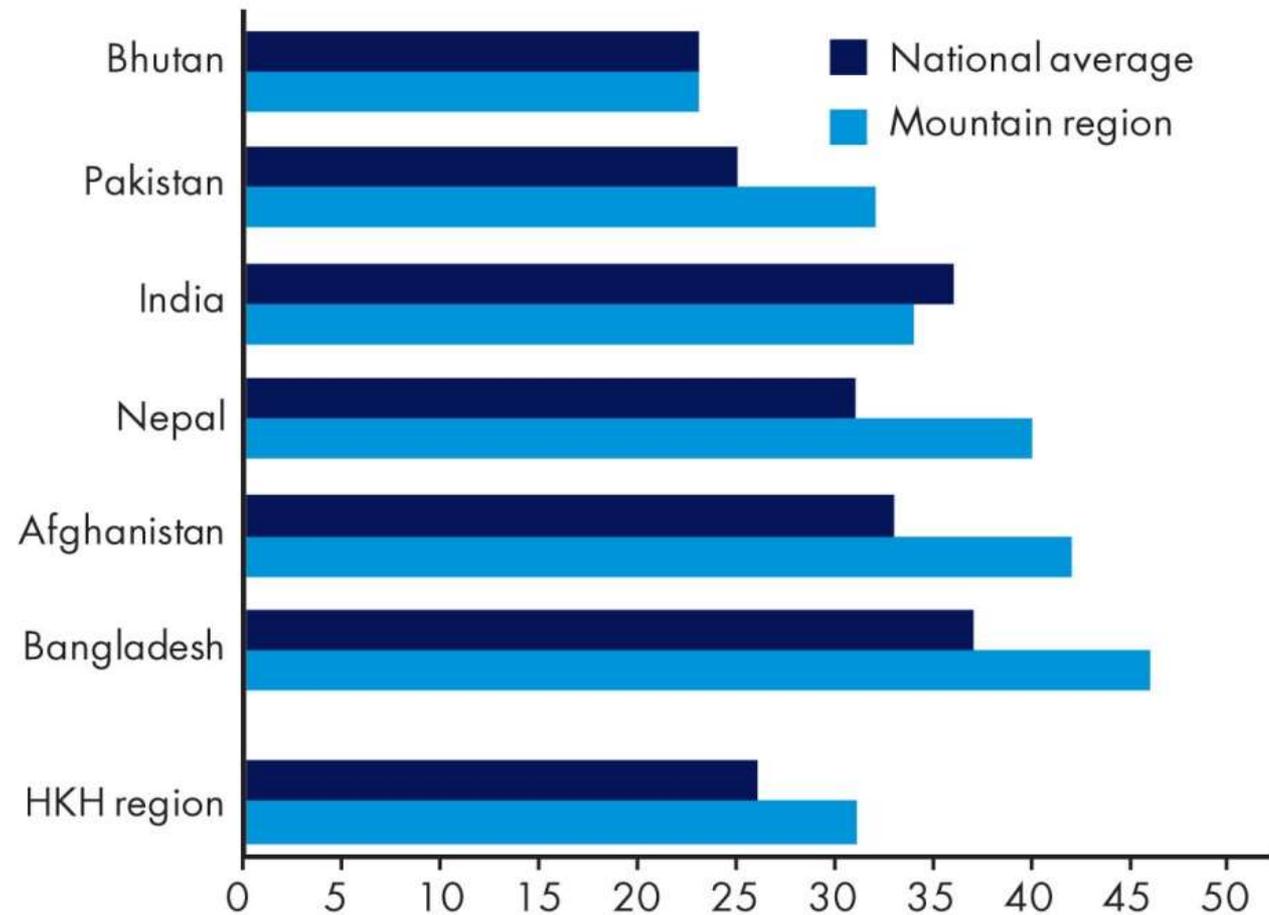
He foresees each problem combining to create a "perfect storm" in which the whole is bigger, and more serious, than the sum of its parts.

JB's 'The Perfect Storm'



Issues and challenges

Persistent poverty & marginalization of mountain areas



Source: Hunzai, K; Gerlitz, JY; Hoermann, B (2011) *Understanding mountain poverty in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas – Regional report for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan*. Kathmandu: ICIMOD

Issues and challenges

- Mountain issues are not reflected in national, regional, and international policies & priorities: example, Mountain countries vs SIDSS
- Inadequate recognition of mountain ecosystems services; insufficient compensation for mountain ecosystem services
- Lack of disaggregated mountain-specific data
- Unclear property rights
- Male out-migration and feminization of mountains

Major issues and challenges: climate change

- Mountainous ecosystems particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change
- Upstream affects of CC accumulate downstream, resulting in changes in seasonal hydrology impacting farming and agriculture
- Extreme weather events, flash flooding and avalanches - people losing homes and assets
- People livelihoods are affected by increasing crop failures and diminishing livestock – deepening poverty and prompting farmer suicides
- More than 1 billion people rely on snow and glacial melt as a source of drinking water – yet more springs are dying in the mountains, ground hydrology is changing

Media's domains of influence

- Political economy of the mass media – propagandas & agendas
- Policy engagement
- Public space & discourse
- Community / social mobilization
- Water politics (hydropolitics – the study of conflict and cooperation)



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Information as power

- Media to ensure steady flow of information in a two-way process
- Besides the traditional top-down flow, the need for bottom-up flow, from the grassroots to the policymakers at state or national levels, essential for designing effective policies and programmes



Focus: close the gaps

- In the HKH region, geo-physical inaccessibility and socio-economic diversities amongst mountain communities pose further challenges for effective information flow between different stakeholders, particularly among state actors at local, state, and national levels
- Information not readily available to those who need it the most
- Information received is often complex and beyond the understanding of decision makers at the local level

Focus: close the gaps

- Need for effective interface between science-policy-practice and effective communication among scientists, policymakers, and local communities
- Need to simplify scientific findings for policymakers and the general public
- Need to build capacities of those who can simply these scientific findings into an easy-to-understand language for better policy formulation
- Role of media in communicating such information must be strengthened

Role of Journalists/ Media

- In absence of institutional mechanisms among various departments/ agencies for two-way flow of information, journalists often come in as interface
- Break down complex and difficult ideas, research findings into simple human interest stories
- Reach out science to vulnerable communities
- Journalists as knowledge brokers and development communication experts

Empowering media

- Media's role cannot be understated
- However, findings indicate that media persons often do not have clear understanding and adequate capacities to report critical issues
- Therefore, capacity building for the media personnel – where institutes like ICIMOD could play important role
- Enhanced capacities of journalists for identifying and capturing human-interest stories

“The defining crisis?”

- “I believe water will be the defining crisis of our century, the main vehicle through which climate change will be felt from droughts, storms, and floods to degrading water quality. We’ll see major conflicts over water; water refugees. We inhabit a water planet, and unless we protect, manage, and restore that resource, the future will be a very different place from the one we imagine today.”

Alexandra Cousteau – environmentalist who advocates the importance of conservation, restoration and sustainable management of water resources for a healthy planet

Thank you

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