

Concept Note for
International Consultative Workshop

Bridging Boundaries:
Strengthening Regional Cooperation
Across Transboundary River Basins and
Landscapes in the Hindu Kush Himalaya
(HKH Transboundary Cooperation – 2018)

15–16 November 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal

FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE



1. Objectives

The consultative workshop will help strengthen existing transboundary mechanisms and networks to support the social, economic, and environmental pillars of sustainable development. In doing so, it will explore possibilities for further regional cooperation. Specifically, the consultation workshop aims to:

1. Understand key challenges and opportunities in relation to transboundary cooperation for sustainable management of landscapes and river basins, particularly in areas of climate resilience, disaster risk reduction, water-energy-food security, development opportunities, and biodiversity conservation.
2. Identify priority actions for mainstreaming regional cooperation through approaches that enhance upstream-downstream relationships and integrate communities and ecosystems across boundaries.
3. Identify opportunities that regional and global frameworks and agreements provide to better synergize transboundary landscape and river basin approaches for regional cooperation and sustainable development in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH).
4. Understand policy influencing mechanisms for addressing emerging challenges and identify opportunities for bringing policy evidences from community to regional and global fora.

During the event, researchers will discuss the state of scientific knowledge on river basin and landscape management. Practitioners, policy makers, experts, and natural resource governance specialists will look at good practices and policy concerns related to functional institutional mechanisms that enable regional cooperation (e.g. for managing disasters, habitat fragmentation, poverty, adaptation, and mitigation). The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) hopes to strengthen existing transboundary mechanisms, and authorities and networks to support social, economic, and environmental pillars of sustainable development in the HKH. The workshop will also prioritize actions to implement recommendations made by the Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme (HIMAP) Science Policy Forum that will be held prior to this event on 14 November.

2. Expected Outputs

ICIMOD and its regional partners bring out relevant opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation. The workshop will:

- Explore common priority actions to strengthen regional cooperation in the HKH.
- Identify possible areas of synergy between river basin and transboundary landscape approaches to deliver greater impacts in influencing better regional cooperation in the HKH.

- Strengthen regional networking of regional member countries (RMCs) on the subject of regional cooperation through existing institutional mechanisms and explore new mechanisms.
- Explore further policy, science and practice aspects that can help promote agreements and ownership for innovations to be tested for upscaling/out-scaling in future
- Draw attention of the global and regional institutions and donors towards HKH's experience of transboundary cooperation and opportunities it brings for manifesting good regional cooperation.

3. Who will participate?

This International Consultation Workshop will provide a forum for sharing cross-continental best practices between donors, lawmakers, civil servants, regional think tanks, market actors, and civil society. The participants will share experiences and lessons learned in the context of river basin management, cross-border landscape approach, and regional cooperation. While researchers will discuss the state of scientific knowledge with regard to river basin and landscape management, practitioners, policy makers, experts, and natural resource governance specialists will look at good practices and policy concerns with respect to functional institutional mechanisms for regional cooperation. The expected number of external participants is around 100. Close to 20 senior professionals from ICIMOD will form the core group.



4. Event Location

The proposed international event will take place at the ICIMOD headquarters in Kathmandu so that focused discussions can be organized involving ICIMOD professionals and resource persons from all eight regional member countries.

5. Format

The interactive workshop will comprise presentations on international experiences, selected thematic presentations and experiences from the HKH region. The workshop will also include panel discussions and group-work based brainstorming sessions, including a “World Café”, moderated by experienced professionals. These sessions will help distil knowledge and experiences and pave the way for forward-looking actions. The first day’s discussions will focus on common key questions related to four specific objectives. On the second day, the groups will converge to deliver common priority actions on taking forward transboundary cooperation in the HKH and strengthening regional cooperation. The policy-practice-science recommendations will be incorporated in a standard proceedings and disseminated widely. The proceedings will also consist of selected contributions (a maximum of two pages) by participants sharing lessons learned from ongoing work on transboundary cooperation. The conference design/format will be prepared in collaboration with key stakeholders such as focal ministries and key partners. A market place will also be organized during the two-day event where participants/institutions can present their knowledge products.

6. Event Partners

The event is supported by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA); the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Government of Australia; and the Global Landscape Form (GLF). Three ICIMOD regional programmes: Transboundary Landscapes, River Basins, and Mountain Knowledge and Action Networks will jointly organize the workshop.

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7. Background

The HKH is well known for its cultural, biological, aesthetic, and geo-hydrological values. It comprises a vast complex of hills, valleys, plateaus, and mountains and contains some of the world’s tallest peaks, and more than 60,000 km² of glaciers and 760,000 km² of snow cover. These snow and ice reserves represent a massive store of freshwater, providing resources for energy, tourism, and food production, among many other regional needs. The region’s 10 major river basins— the Amu Darya, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Indus, Irrawaddy, Mekong, Salween, Tarim, Yangtze, and Yellow—connect

upstream and downstream areas in terms of trade, culture, communication, and resource management. Over 39% of the region falls under protected areas, and four of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots are located in the HKH region. The region harbours a wide range of ecosystems which provide numerous services in terms of climate regulation, as well as the provisioning of water, food, and biodiversity (Chettri et al. 2008; Sharma et al. 2010), directly and indirectly to 1.9 billion people throughout South Asia, including 240 million people who live in the mountains and hills of the HKH region.

International experiences show that improved sustainable development outcomes could be achieved with shared management of HKH resources. Regional collaboration around shared resources could lead to better management given the magnitude of challenges, particularly in countries highly exposed and susceptible to natural hazards and climate change impacts. Globally, several forums and efforts – such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), and by GIZ – are underway at regional scales. These efforts value the future of life on Earth and share a vision of a world where transboundary cooperation fosters trust among sovereign nations to overcome ideological, political, cultural, and historical barriers; tackle conflicts over natural resources; reduce migration pressures; and promote human wellbeing. Initiatives such as TROSA promote transboundary cooperation at the community level.

ICIMOD has been engaging with river basin and transboundary landscape management approaches to work across borders and achieve shared goals. The Centre's river basin approach takes into account a range of concerns – monitoring and assessment of water resources, water-induced disaster risk management, and climate change impacts and resilience building with a particular focus on the poor and vulnerable. Our engagements in river basins have shown that integrated water resource management and nexus approaches are essential. The management and sustainable use of water and land resources for livelihoods, the impacts on environment, and the pressing need for disaster risk reduction and management of water related hazards in river basins must be taken into consideration. Approaches to address upstream-downstream linkages as well as the links between natural resource management and sustainable livelihoods have ramifications for the prosperity and stability of the entire region and beyond.

There are many examples of landscape level transboundary conservation initiatives in HKH. These initiatives have been implemented in the Terai Arc Landscape, the Kangchenjunga Landscape, the Sacred Himalayan Landscape, and the Kailash Landscape in India and Nepal. Most of these landscapes are home to the last remaining natural forests, alluvial grasslands, and subtropical deciduous forests in the Himalaya, and these extending beyond country borders. Based on past learning, and in order

to make transboundary cooperation work in the future, the focus needs to be on the following:

1. Increase capacity of managers and community workers to effectively manage protected areas
2. Establish a science-based knowledge foundation by accurately generating information on biological resources for ushering correct decisions
3. Create sustainable funding mechanisms to manage protected areas
4. Distribute the benefits of conservation in ways that reach the poorest and most disadvantaged communities.



Existing institutional mechanisms to deliver outcome-oriented transboundary cooperation are still being put in place and strengthened. Given the experience of ICIMOD in last decade or so it is also generally recognised that transboundary cooperation needs to go beyond the notion of cooperation as treaties to a more dynamic view of transboundary cooperation as an on-going and non-linear process in which state and non-state actors establish, challenge, modify and legitimize multi-layered governance structures'.

8. Rationale

The River Basins and Cryosphere, and Transboundary Landscape programmes at ICIMOD have redefined conservation and development perspectives through multi-stakeholder engagements. They have taken up instruments such as the agreed upon Regional Cooperation Framework and South-South dialogue – e.g. Upper Indus Basin Network, Koshi DRR Knowledge Hub, Intergovernmental Steering Committee, and National Coordination Committee. These are essential to forging collective new solutions for mitigating governance deficits, adding value at scale while securing ecosystem services, and finally enhancing both social and ecological resilience. Lessons from our efforts underline common challenges such as human-wildlife conflict, illegal wildlife and non-timber forest product (NTFP) trade, too much and too little water and temporal and spatial dimensions tagged to these, energy and other benefit sharing, and navigation. Issues that have transboundary dimensions present opportunities for cooperation beyond national boundaries to generate and share knowledge, and co-design and implement management plans. Though bilateral treaties and cross-border mechanisms do exist between countries that share physical borders as well as social, ecological, and economic concerns, heterogeneity in the basins and landscapes – interwoven ecological, economic and trade corridors – have been found to be inadequate when it comes to dealing with the complexity of challenges mentioned above.

Though the River Basins Initiative has worked at multiple scales – from community (catchment) scale to sub-basin and basin scales – on transboundary issues, more needs to be done to establish linkages between spatial scales in terms of understanding processes and developing solutions. The focus, among other things, is on fostering regional and basin-level dialogue which can build bases for regional cooperation and the sharing of critical information. In the present context, a river basin approach is expected to address multifaceted problems of management, particularly trade-offs between competing interests and values. While an integrated approach is key to both river basin and transboundary landscape approaches, these are often implemented in isolation. Greater benefits can be achieved if synergy can be drawn between these two approaches.

HIMAP, which is coordinated by ICIMOD, is a platform for long-term collaboration and coordination engaging a broad and diverse group of more than 400 leading researchers, practitioners, think-tanks and policy specialists working in the HKH. In this context, ICIMOD is organizing a high-level HKH Science-Policy Forum on 14 November to explore possible ways to take forward the findings of the first comprehensive assessment to influence policy and the decision making process (<http://hi-map.org/>). Hence, the international consultative workshop, Bridging Boundaries: Strengthening Regional Cooperation Across Transboundary River Basins and Landscapes in the Hindu Kush Himalaya provides a timely opportunity to envision possible mechanisms to implement HIMAP recommendations, contributing to priority actions for the enhancement of regional cooperation.

Programme Agenda

Date/Day/ Time	Topic	Method	Responsible Person(s)
14 November	<i>Arrival of participants and check-in (at Hotel Himalaya, airport pick up by the hotel)</i>		
15 November	DAY 1: Pick up at 08:15 from the hotel lobby		
08:45– 09:00	<i>Registration of participants</i>		
Setting the scene			
09:00–09:10	Welcome remarks	<i>David Molden, ICIMOD</i>	
09:10–09:25	Experiences of cooperation in River Basins and Cryosphere	Presentation	<i>Arun B Shrestha ICIMOD</i>
09:25–09:40	Experiences of cooperation in Transboundary Landscapes	Presentation	<i>Rajan Kotru, ICIMOD</i>
09:40–10:00	Key messages: HKH Science Policy Forum (held on 14 November 2018)	Presentation	<i>Philippus Wester, ICIMOD</i>
Rapporteurs: tbc			
10:00–10:20	GROUP PHOTO AND TEA/COFFEE BREAK		
10:20–10:50	Signifying transboundary cooperation from local to global development targets Rapporteurs: tbc	Remarks	tbc, Alpine Convention (10 min) tbc, GLF (10 min) tbc, TROSA (10 min)
10:50–12:30	Working Session I: Transboundary cooperation in the HKH <i>(formation of six groups to address specific questions; six group moderators)</i> Key questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Does transboundary cooperation matter? b) What are the lessons learnt for effective transboundary collaboration? c) How can it be adapted to the HKH region to harness emerging opportunities? Group presentations on the key messages Rapporteurs: tbc		
12:30–13:30	LUNCH BREAK		

13:30–15:10	<p>Working Session II: Synthesizing river basins and landscapes approaches <i>(formation of six groups to address the specific questions; six group moderators)</i></p> <p>Key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How can we synergise the river basin and landscape approaches to achieve ecosystem and water security and serve the economic and cultural needs of people at the transboundary scale? b) How do we enhance lives and livelihoods – what has worked and what has not? c) Identifying ways to sustain ongoing momentum, what new efforts can be made? <p>Group presentations on the key messages</p> <p>Rapporteurs: tbc</p>		
15:10–15:30	TEA/COFFEE BREAK		
15:30–17:00	<p>Panel discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Best practices for trans-boundary cooperation – triggering change b) How do we establish regional-, national-, and local-level linkages? c) What type of capacities and external support need to be updated or supported? <p>Summing up on the key messages</p> <p>Rapporteurs: tbc</p>	<p>Moderator: <i>Eklabya Sharma,</i> ICIMOD</p>	<p>HKH member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan</p>
18:00–20:00	Reception Dinner		

Date/Day/ Time	Topic	Method	Responsible Person(s)
16 November Day 2: Hotel pick up at 08:30			
09:00–09:10	Recap of key messages: Day 1	Presentation	tbc
09:10–10:30	<p>Panel discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Avenues where donors/partners would like to invest their funds to support transboundary cooperation b) Areas for improvement – process and practice changes <p>Summing up on the key messages</p> <p>Rapporteurs: tbc</p>	<p>Moderator:</p> <p><i>David Molden,</i> ICIMOD</p>	<p>Donors/partners:</p> <p>DFAT, DFID, BMZ/ GIZ, ADA, SIDA, CAS, Switzerland, Norway, MoEF&CC/ NITI Aayog/Planning Commission Nepal</p>
10:30–11:00	LUNCH BREAK		
11:00–12:30	<p>Working Session III: Understanding and developing policy mechanisms for transboundary cooperation (formation of six groups to address specific questions; six group moderators)</p> <p>Key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How do we strengthen institutional mechanisms for improved cooperation? b) How do we sharpen stakeholder dialogues and interfaces? c) What are the ways to enable policies and government facets? <p>Group presentations on the key messages</p> <p>Rapporteurs: tbc</p>		
12:30–13:30	LUNCH BREAK		

13:30–15:10	<p>Working Session IV: The way forward: solutions for river basin and landscapes integration (formation of six groups to address specific questions; six group moderators)</p> <p>Key discussion points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify priority actions for mainstreaming regional cooperation through approaches that enhance upstream-downstream relationships b) Identify common priority actions to integrate people and ecosystems across boundaries c) Identify possible synergy arenas between river basin and trans-boundary landscape approaches to deliver greater impacts in influencing regional cooperation in the HKH <p>Group presentations on the key messages</p> <p>Rapporteurs: tbc</p>		
15:30–16:30	Interaction with poster presenters	Market Place/ Posters/AV Display/ Installations	ICIMOD and participants
16:30–17:00	<i>Closing ceremony</i>		
16:30–16:45	River Basins and Cryosphere Transboundary Landscapes	Remarks	<i>Arun B Shrestha, ICIMOD</i> <i>Rajan Kotru, ICIMOD</i>
16:45–17:00	Vote of thanks		<i>Eklabya Sharma, ICIMOD</i>



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