

#GLFBiodiversity

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The Hindu Kush Himalaya call for action

Maintaining the 'pulse of the planet'

One
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White paper

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Background

The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region extends across eight countries, from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east, crossing Pakistan, India, China, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The region is well known for its high mountains and has the largest ice reserves outside the polar regions. It is the source of water for 10 major Asian river systems. It also hosts diverse ecosystems, biodiversity and culture. This region is home to four global biodiversity hotspots, six UNESCO natural World Heritage Sites, 30 Ramsar sites, and 330 important bird and biodiversity areas. The HKH is home to diverse cultures with more than 1,000 languages, along with a unique range of traditional knowledge systems associated with these cultures. The unique environmental, socio-cultural and economic values of the HKH make it a global asset.

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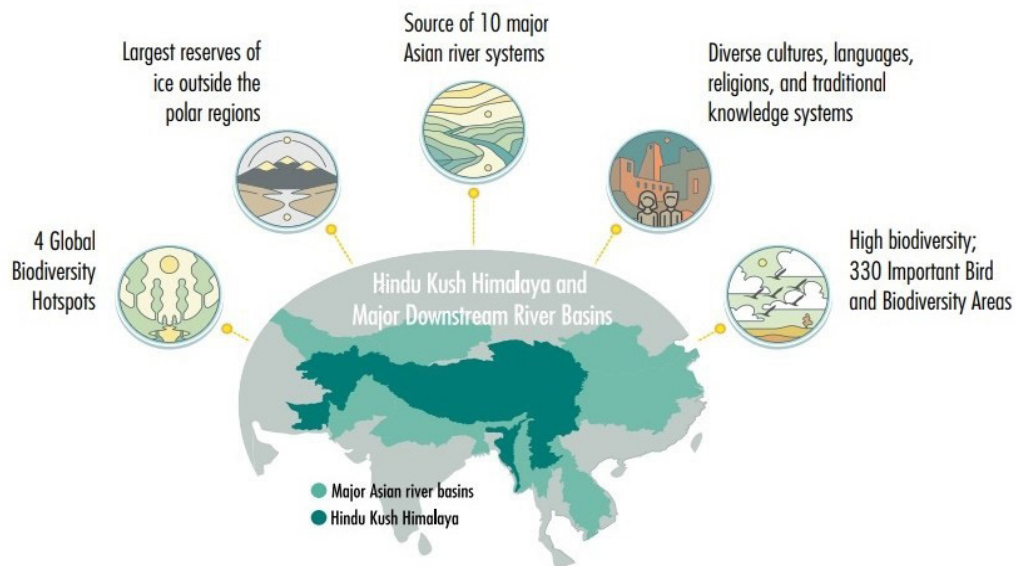
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Drivers of change in the HKH

Some 240 million people who live in the hills and mountains are directly dependent on the HKH for their livelihoods and well-being, while almost 1.65 billion people living in the river basins downstream depend on it for water, food and energy. However, the region is experiencing environmental, socio-cultural, economic, and political changes that are complex in nature and influenced by local, regional, and global developments. These changes, particularly human drivers and climate change, have brought about multi-dimensional challenges to livelihoods and the environment in the region. Moreover, the consequences of these changes will have impacts at the global scale. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the risks and vulnerabilities affecting the region.

There is a need for urgent action at the national, regional and global levels to sustain this global asset. These actions include increased investments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the mountains, strengthened regional cooperation, and ambitious climate action to limit global warming to 1.5°C.



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

Figure 1: Significance of the HKH region (ICIMOD, 2019)

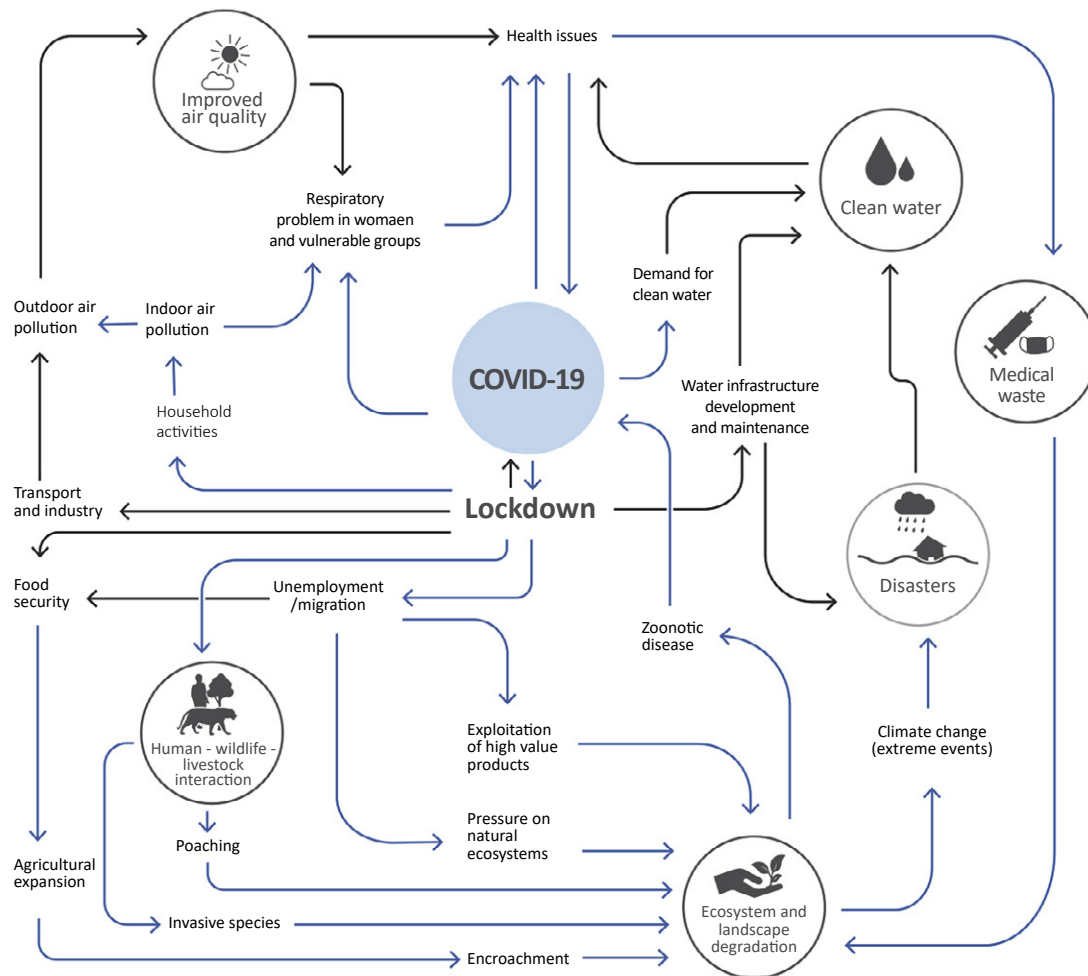


Figure 2: The environmental impacts of COVID-19 in the HKH region (ICIMOD, 2020a)

Description of the session at GLF Biodiversity Digital Conference

The HKH is the youngest global mountain biome and is one of the most ecologically and culturally diverse ecosystems in the world. The region has rich experiences in participatory and community-based approaches in biodiversity conservation that build upon traditional ecological knowledge, cultural beliefs, and social values. Such systems can play a major role in promoting cooperation and collaboration to halt biodiversity loss while ensuring sustainable development.

During our session, we will explain why the HKH is the 'pulse of the planet' and share the 'Hindu Kush Himalaya call to action' with a global audience. We will then engage a diverse group of eminent speakers from the region to share their experiences and key lessons learned from implementing biocultural approaches to biodiversity use and conservation. This will be followed by a Q&A session, where participants can raise questions and interact with the panelists.

Some of the key questions for discussion with the panelists include:

- What are some of the most successful examples of biocultural approaches to biodiversity conservation in the HKH?
- In a region where poverty and gender inequalities persist, what are the key factors that enable inclusive and equitable biodiversity conservation?
- How can we reinforce positive relations between biodiversity, landscapes, culture, and health, particularly in a post-COVID 'new normal'?

- How can we bring global attention to the uniqueness of mountain communities and their challenges?

The learnings from the session will be used to refine our key recommendation for the GLF Biodiversity Policy Brief as an output of the conference. The learnings will also be used to set our future course of action with the aim of sustaining mountain environments and improving livelihoods of mountain communities in the Hindu Kush Himalaya.

References

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Figure 3: The HKH Call to Action (ICIMOD, 2020b)

Participating organizations

GLF Biodiversity Digital Conference 2020 would not be possible without the support and participation of the following hosts, partners and organizations. For a full list of everyone involved, please visit:

events.globallandscapesforum.org/biodiversity-2020/partners

Global Landscapes Forum

The **Global Landscapes Forum** (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihood, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with its co-founders UN Environment Programme and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter Members: CIAT, CIFOR, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, EcoAgriculture Partners, EFI, Evergreen Agriculture, FSC, GEF, GiZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, ILRI, INBAR, IPMG, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, RRI, SAN, UN Environment Programme, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, part of Wageningen Research, WFO, World Agroforestry, World Bank Group, WRI, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative.



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