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International Workshop on Dynamics of Land-Use/Land-Cover Change in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya, 20-25 April 1997

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Forty researchers representing a broad range of disciplines met in Kathmandu to discuss the nature and consequences of land-use/land-cover changes in Hindu Kush-Himalaya (HKH). A strong motivation for the workshop is the growing recognition that understanding the dynamics of land-use and land-cover change (LUCC) is a critical component of the global change research effort. Specifically, land-cover changes may significantly interact with global biogeochemistry to alter future climate. In addition, alterations in land cover often presage changes in resources that are critical to human livelihood. Understanding the local as well as the global implications of current trends necessitates interdisciplinary, multi-scaled studies of patterns and processes.

The overall objective of the International Workshop on Dynamics of Land-Use/Land-Cover Change in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya was to provide a forum where researchers from Asia and around the world could synthesize current knowledge and plan further interdisciplinary investigations into the nature and consequences of land-use/land-cover changes in HKH. The following questions guided our discussion:

What can we learn from comparative case studies of land-use dynamics? What do existing and ongoing case studies for the HKH indicate about the relative importance of various social drivers and proximate causes of land-use change at key spatial and temporal scales?

What can we learn from direct observation of land-cover dynamics? How can information from satellite remote sensing be linked with analyses of land use to best inform our understanding of land-cover dynamics?

How do we forge integration at regional to global scales? Can we define a framework and science plan that fosters integration of case study approaches with data sets derived from remote sensing?

A prominent integrating theme in the workshop discussions was the characterization of the HKH region as a high energy environment with many 'fragile' ecosystems. This fragility is a manifestation of the tight and sensitive coupling between human activities and the state of the land cover. Workshop participants sought to refine these notions by identifying those land-use/cover changes that are most critical for basic research (e.g., developing a general models of dynamics of change) as well as more applied research (e.g., sustaining livelihoods of local people). Breakout groups identified the following as critical changes for the HKH: changes in forest cover, including conversion as well as modification of structure and species composition, and changes in land use, including intensification of agriculture (crops and livestock).

These changes were, in turn, linked to key regional trajectories such as: changes in forest use leading to declining forest resources and ecosystem degradation; abandonment of marginal agricultural lands leading to conversion to woody species and invasions of exotic species; intensification of agriculture leading to increased output with varying ecosystem impacts; decreased fallow area in the absence of other inputs leading to degraded cropped lands; and increased socioeconomic and biophysical links between highland and lowland areas leading to complexity in the identification of causal linkages and policy options. Both human and biophysical factors were identified as key forces driving the observed changes. Workshop participants identified economic restructuring, population growth, infrastructure of access, resource institutions and entitlements, urbanization, stakeholder conflicts, and cultural values as critical human drivers. Water resources, soil fertility, biological invasions, climatic variability, and the general nature of mountains as high energy environments were identified as important exogenous biophysical drivers and/or feedbacks to land use.

Given that the HKH is one of the most diverse regions on Earth in terms of biophysical and human

measures, how might we proceed with an integrated study of critical land-use/cover issues? Participants agreed that a transect approach should be developed that simultaneously accounts for broad gradients in biophysical variables (e.g., monsoon) as well as socioeconomic variables (e.g., demographic pressure). Participants also stressed that the results from any coordinated regional activity include outputs in a form broadly accessible to user groups and decision makers. We agreed that several of the established non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the HKH are well placed to foster effective communication between researchers, local users, and decision makers.

Participants agreed to work together to coordinate existing research efforts and to develop new initiatives. One mechanism of coordinating activities is to develop a Regional Activity Plan in association with the Land Use and Land Cover Change International Project Office and the Global Change and Terrestrial Ecosystems International Project Office. These International Project Offices serve to coordinate international scientific

activities and play an advisory role to national science boards and funding agencies. Towards that end, a Draft Regional Activity Plan based on the workshop will be sent out for comments during the next several months and submitted for approval in the Fall of 1997. In addition, we are seeking funding for further regional activities, including research initiatives and workshops focused on specific research issues.

We recognize that the workshop did not necessarily represent the full range of people and institutions active in studies of land-use/cover change in the HKH region. We are actively seeking input from others working on these issues. Please contact either Lisa J. Graumlich (University of Arizona, Tucson; (+1-520) 621-9010 or graumlich@lrr.arizona.edu) or Sharad Adhikary (Himalayan Climate Center, Kathmandu; (+977-1) 415-741 or hcc@himac.mos.com.np). You can also visit the workshop WWW site (http://www.arl.arizona.edu/ispe/lucc_hkh.html) to get updated information on future.

Teachers Workshop in Nepal, July -August 1997

Himalayan Research Bulletin co-sponsors a Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad

Teresa Bulman and Barbara Brower, Portland State University
Gwenda Rice, Western Oregon University

Nepal shares with Oregon a mountainous spine, high and dry desert, wet, green lowland, and productive inner valleys. A land of farmers, herders, and a skyrocketing population of city folk, Nepal like Oregon struggles to cope with accelerating change in society and economy. Nepal, like Oregon, must find ways to reconcile competing demands for the natural resources that support its people. A \$50,000 Fulbright-Hays grant has been awarded to Portland State University in support of an innovative program to give Oregon teachers a hands-on experience of life in the Himalaya. Co-sponsored by the Oregon Geographic Alliance (\$40,285), Portland State University (\$11,932), and the Himalayan Research Bulletin (\$2,712), the Teachers Workshop in Nepal is funded under the Department of Education's Group Projects Abroad Program. The project authors, Barbara Brower and Teresa Bulman, Department of Geography, Portland State University and Gwenda Rice, School of Education, Western Oregon University, designed a seminar to take 13 teachers from Oregon's public schools to Nepal this summer.

The seminar will introduce teacher consultants of the Oregon Geographic Alliance to the environmental and cultural complexities of allocation and management of

natural resources in Nepal. The setting, Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park, will provide a rich cross-cultural experience as a vehicle to expand participants' understanding and appreciation of other peoples while providing hands-on training in techniques of cultural and environmental field research. The workshop offers the teachers an international experience that will prepare them to engage their students in innovative comparative studies of the Himalaya and the Cascades. The teachers will participate in conservation-based field work in the mountainous environment of the Himalaya, equipping them for comparative studies of the Cascades mountains of Oregon. They will gain an understanding of the environment and appreciation for resource use and conservation practices within the context of Nepalese law and society. The experience will prepare them to infuse their classrooms and curriculum with international studies material generated by the seminar.

Project evaluators praised the unique partnership of a university geography department (P.S.U.), a school of education (W.O.U.), and K-12 classroom teachers (O.G.A.) and touted the seminar as a model for future Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program applications.

New Journal: Studies in Nepali History and Society

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