

Mountain Water

The Hindu Kush – Himalayas contain the largest amount of snow and ice outside the polar regions. Melting of snow and glaciers contribute considerably to the large rivers basins downstream the mountains in which 1.3 billion people find their livelihoods. Despite that many people depend on these water resources, little is known about the volume of water that is stored as snow and ice, as well as the change that these water storages currently undergo.

In order to reduce this knowledge gap, ICIMOD, in collaboration with national partners, is currently setting up a regional monitoring systems of snow and ice, based on remote sensing technology. ICIMOD is also trying to facilitate the establishment of long term glacier mass balance monitoring schemes. The vision is that each country sharing the HKH region should have minimum one representative glacier under long term monitoring.

In another attempt to bridge the knowledge gap and improve accessibility to water related data and information, ICIMOD is facilitating the development of a web based river basin information system (RBIS) for the Brahmaputra basin.

ICIMOD has also set up a regional data base for high altitude wetlands to facilitate collection of knowledge and meet the demand for information on this resource. High altitude wetlands are increasingly recognized as being important for water storage, flood mitigation, and as supporting thousands of livelihoods throughout the region.