

# Mountains in a Changing World

## *Strengthening Partnerships and Pathways towards a Thriving Mountain Future*

Mountains are home to 13% of the global population, and cover about a fifth of the land surface of the Earth. Mountains also provide essential ecosystem services. Acting as global 'water towers', they provide freshwater for populations around the world, both in the mountains themselves and for many downstream communities far beyond their borders. Mountains are the source of the world's largest rivers,

and 40% of the world's population relies on mountain water for drinking, irrigation and hydropower. Mountain landscapes are often very rugged with special geologic aspects and they form biodiversity hotspots including

endangered wildlife species found nowhere else. This biodiversity forms the basis of many of the ecosystem services that humans rely upon, including many of the world's major food crops. Mountains are also home to 28% of the global forested areas. Mountain areas are particularly sensitive to the effects of global change, jeopardizing many of these critical goods and services. Climate change in particular poses a major threat to mountain areas. Rapidly melting glaciers and permafrost are increasingly altering river flow regimes; causing floods, mass movements and other natural disasters, affecting hydropower infrastructure, and reducing water availability for irrigation agriculture downstream. Changes to precipitation will likely increase stress on vulnerable high plateau grasslands and the livelihoods borne of them, including highly adapted mountain socio-ecological systems inextricably linked with the unique cultural and traditional practices.

Mountain areas are also disproportionately affected by poverty and food insecurity. Whilst food security has increased across the globe over the past two decades, mountainous developing countries have experienced a de facto decrease in food security. This is underpinned

by the vulnerability of mountain food systems to change, and a lack of a systemic understanding of food systems and a limited resilience to change in mountain areas. The local communities that steward the vital mountain resources are experiencing novel challenges in the modern day. Socio-economic and demographic changes have led to outflow of their resources, without

sufficient reciprocity from downstream populations to ensure the long-term stability of mountain communities into the future. Enabling mountain people to conserve mountain ecosystems and to safeguard their resources with sufficient incentives will be a key to achieving this. Now, modern development initiatives are

reaching further into remote mountain reaches than ever before - opening up new frontiers for mountain livelihoods. With this, new opportunities are emerging, changing perspectives of mountain communities and demands for mountain ecosystem services, providing unimagined prospects for sharing mountain-sourced benefits more equally and valuing them at their source.

Although mountains provide huge benefits for global society and these benefits are under enormous stress, mountain regions have yet to establish a strong voice at an international policy level.



As such, policies concerned with mountain services and livelihoods are often made far away from the affected mountain areas, and without local representation. This calls for new partnerships and development pathways, which recognise the significance of global issues such as climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss in mountain areas. Moreover, by exploring new, innovative pathways and engaging in partnerships



between mountain people, we can help to achieve our corporate responsibility to adhere to global frameworks such as the Paris Accord and the 'Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development'. Following three previous *World Mountain Forums*, each in different mountain regions of the world, the WMF 2018 aims to take stock of their achievements and to define inspiring scenarios and ways forward towards a thriving mountain future.

## Goal and Objectives

Referring to the global SDG debate and building on past achievements, the overall goal of WMF 2018 is to develop together a scenario for a *thriving mountain future* - and to sketch out some pathways towards it.

### More specifically, the WMF 2018 aims to:

- Build and strengthen partnerships beyond traditional alliances for advancing the SMD agenda
- Develop and prioritize strategic and innovative

pathways towards a more sustainable mountain future

- Position and reference the SMD agenda in regional and global debates (e.g. SDG, Paris Accord)
- Explore investment opportunities and challenges for mountain areas
- Collect and share best practices and innovative solutions, both regionally and globally
- Strengthen initiatives to form and strength reliable regional mountain alliances

## Thematic focus

The WMF 2018 will be developed in close collaboration with the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, which has identified key challenges to include Climate Change and Landscape Conservation - both of which resonate very well with the WMF agenda through its four main themes. In order to achieve optimal results and outcome, the agendas of WMF 2018 and of the Kyrgyz Government also will be purposefully coordinated and aligned.

The WMF 2018 will reflect on and contribute to ongoing debates related to SMD, by focusing on key thematic realms around which sub-themes and key questions will be addressed and explored. The WMF 2018 furthermore aims to provide a platform and arena for addressing national and regional SMD priorities, fostering alliances, and exploring ways off the beaten paths. The following 4 main themes will structure the sessions:

- Climate Change, Water and Energy
- Poverty, Food Systems, and Agrobiodiversity
- Resilience and transformation within mountain socio-ecological systems
- Investing in mountains - securing the future

## Location

The WMF 2018 will be hosted in Central Asia by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and will take place in Bishkek on October 23-26, 2018.