

If you thought 1.5 degrees was too ambitious a target, think again.

At the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) located in Kathmandu, Nepal we're very much aware of "the climate crisis you haven't heard of". It's happening in the Hindu Kush Himalaya and it's happening because of elevation dependent warming, a phenomena where warming is amplified with elevation.

This means that our globally important assets – the HKH mountains spanning across eight countries – are under great threat. Even if we remain within the 1.5 degree Paris Agreement target, recently released synthesis science presented by ICIMOD in the *HKH Assessment Report* is that 1.5 degrees is too hot for the Hindu Kush Himalaya, its ecosystems, and its people. This is because 1.5 degree average global warming will result in a 2 degree increase in the mountains. If current emission trends persist, temperatures could increase by over 5 degrees in the mountains.

Why does this matter?

It matters because it will have consequences for our water systems given the combined impact of melting glaciers, snow and permafrost and changing monsoon patterns. This will directly impact 240 million people in the hills and mountains and there will be major knock-on effects for ecosystems and over 1.65 billion people living downstream who depend on these waters.

We are talking about a fourth of the global population, many of whom still live in extreme poverty. Climate change threatens to undo the gains of development and leave them even more impoverished and vulnerable.

It matters because our ecosystems and agricultural systems are also highly sensitive to changes in temperature. We are already seeing effects of increased warming, creating new conservation challenges for a region that hosts all or part of four global biodiversity hotspots and is home to thousands of endemic species. The IPBES estimates that a quarter of the endemic species in the Indian Himalaya alone could be lost by 2100.

I urge each one of you to join us in amplifying this message. 1.5 degrees is too hot for the HKH.

We need to be more ambitious, we need to act now and we need to act together!