

Wildland Fires in South Asia Region: Where are we? The UNISDR Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network Activities 2011- 2015: Progress and Prospects

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Abstract

In the South Asia region almost all fires are human-induced and some of which are linked with livelihoods of the people. Wildfires, among other natural disasters, have been emerging as a significant threat during the last decade, adversely impacting socio-economy and environment in the region. Observations indicate that the occurrence of wildfire is increasing as a consequence of regional warming and extended dry spells aggravated by human activities adversely affecting forests and other natural vegetation, an increasing vulnerability to communities and secondary effects of fire e.g. accelerating sediment-related disasters (e.g. soil erosion, landslides, floods etc.) and impacts of fire and smoke pollution on human health and security.

In this context, the community-based fire management approach is strategically becoming accepted in the region. Experiences of participatory community fire management initiatives from Nepal can be examples for sharing with neighbors as was demonstrated in the “Regional Pan-Asia / Pacific Consultation on Building Advanced National and Regional Capacities in Integrated Fire Management based on Participatory Involvement of Local Communities” in Lalitpur, Nepal, in November 2012. Both capacity building of local communities and international exchange of expertise in fire management has been facilitated by the UNISDR Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network in the spirit of the recommendations of the 4th and 5th International Wildland Fire Conferences of 2007 and 2011.

This paper reports on recent developments, identifies the gaps and issues, and suggests future directions for wildland fire management in South Asia region.

Key words: *Forest fire impacts, Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network, Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network Cluster, Global Wildland Fire Network, Community-based Fire Management Nepal*