



8TH
INTERNATIONAL
WILDLAND FIRE
CONFERENCE

GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES:
Towards an International
Framework
www.wildfire2023.pt

Porto-Portugal
May 16-19th
2023

8th International Wildland Fire Conference

Global Wildland Fire Network – Statement of the South Asia Region

16 May 2023

Introduction

South Asia region has diversified ecosystems and forest types resulting from a wide range of landscapes and climate consequently having diverse fire risk and vulnerabilities. The majority of wildfires are started by human activities, notably in the context of agricultural and pastoral land-use fires.

There are large gaps in awareness levels and fire management capabilities in countries in region. These gaps may be filled by sharing knowledge, skills and technologies among countries in the region.

Faced with increasing fire occurrence and decreasing public budgets, government departments, local organizations, and forest users must consider a range of fire management options and experiences from around the world. The increasing fire problems and their persistence are demanding to review and identify new solutions for fire management. It has been recognized that the importance of information sharing, technology transfer with collaborative efforts for transboundary haze pollution reduction, establishing upstream-downstream linkage within the greater Hindu Kush-Himalaya region for reducing disaster risk caused by wildfires.

Specific landscape fire problems of the region

In South Asia region, almost of wildfires are human-induced, notably in the context of agricultural and pastoral land use. Wildfires if not well managed might pose not only immediate risk to the sustainability of forest and non-forest ecosystems, threat to biodiversity and the recreational, scenic, environmental and cultural value of forests. Populations of the surrounding areas may become seriously affected by injuries, death, and losses in properties. Altogether, the problem of forest fires in the region are complex and should not be addressed on a sectoral level.

There is limited capacity in fire management that need to strengthen human and technical resources of agencies and local communities that deal with fire risk reduction and management.

There is a weak integrated finance mechanism for fire management, to include financial resources from national sectoral budgets and international sources.

There are no or rare assessments on post-fire secondary disasters such as landslides, mudflows or floods, smoke and air pollution, watershed condition degradation, biodiversity loss are additional threats to human populations, especially in the mountain terrains of the South Asia Region.

Recent Developments

A great step forward for national fire assessment was the Forest Fire Monitoring and Detection System in Nepal and Bhutan, with technical support from the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).¹ The system provides real-time information on occurrence and extent of damage caused by fires, and sends SMSs and emails to concerned officials across the country. With the help of

¹ <http://nepal.spatialapps.net/nepalforestfire>



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fire risk zonal maps and other fire monitoring tools, managers can now easily track fire-risk areas and develop fire management strategies.

There is institutional development to deal with wildfire disaster risk reduction and management notably in Nepal. For example, in Nepal, responsibility for fire management fell under the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), which was established in 2019 under Ministry of Home Affairs.² Responsibilities then cascade down to province, district and local levels. State disaster management committees under the chairmanship of the chief minister approve variation of the national plan depending on their different contexts. There are also 77 District Disaster Management Committees coordinated by the chief district officer. At local level, there are disaster management committees in all 753 municipalities. NDRRMA has taken some initiatives:

- Preparation of Forest Fire Resilience Framework and Action Plan
- Organization national/provincial workshops for various targeted audiences
- Designing and development of training curricula and e-learning modules for front-line firefighters
- Stock piling and distribution of firefighting tools and equipment (hand tools, portable fire pumps, fire vehicles)
- Training on the fundamentals of forest fire, integrated forest fire management and technologies for reducing fire risks and suppression of forest fires.
- Study on Forest Fire Damage and Loss Assessment and Risk Evaluation

Moreover, a mechanism of exchange of expertise in fire management between countries globally has been set up in the frame of the International Wildfire Preparedness Mechanism (IWPM).³

Conclusions and recommendations

Altogether the problems of forest fires in the region are complex and should not be addressed on a sectoral level. In order to overcome the limited capacity in fire management there is a need to strengthen human and technical resources of agencies and local communities that deal with fire prevention and response. In most countries of the region, the problems associated with excessive application of fire in land use and the humanitarian and security consequences of fires and fire emissions are not yet solved.

It has been recommended to the fire community responsible for wildland fire science and management in south Asia:

- To promote proactive actions in integrated, participatory and community-based approaches in fire management in most of the countries in the South Asia Region
- To develop / strengthen the national institutional base for fire management, including setting up national inter-agency coordination mechanisms, if not yet in place, which would include representation of academia and civil society groups
- To establish an integrated fire management finance mechanism, which would include financial resources stemming from national sectoral budgets and international sources
- To emphasize community-based fire management, institutional and technological capacity development at all levels, including appropriate training of all stakeholders involved in fire management, notably in wildfire response
- To provide adequate insurance for persons involved in fire management (professionals, volunteers, community members) for the case of injury or death suffered on fireline duty

² <https://bipad.gov.np/en>

³ <https://qfmc.online/iwpm/index-7.html>



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- To establish a Fire Management Resource Center in the South Asia Region for provision of monitoring, documentation, analysis, capacity building and advisory services in fire management
- To develop / enhance/ enhance transboundary cooperation among the countries of South Asia within the UNISDR Regional South Asia Wildland Fire Network and within the Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network cluster for information and technology sharing, joint training, develop bilateral, multi-lateral projects and programmes and improvement of preparedness and interoperability for effective response during wildfire emergencies
- To consider implementation of the recommendations of previous regional and international meetings / conferences / summits
- To enhance regional existing capability in fire management, including fire risk reduction, monitoring, early warning and impact assessment, response and recovery and international cooperation in wildland fire management and wildfire preparedness mechanism
- To encourage the international donor community to financially support the development of Integrated Fire Management capabilities as accountable measures for reducing emissions from fire-induced vegetation degradation and deforestation
- To encourage active participation in dedicated thematic networks, including the annual meetings / activities of the Pan-Asia Wildland Fire Network, the Global Wildland Fire Network and the upcoming International Wildland Fire Conferences.