Environmental Peacebuilding and the Transferability of EcoPeace Middle East's Strategy

by

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ABSTRACT

Environmental peacebuilding is a theory of conflict management used by EcoPeace Middle East in the Jordan River Valley. The theory posits that despite a seemingly intractable conflict, communities that come together for the protection of their common natural resources can simultaneously build a foundation for peace while also helping the environment. This study assessed the potential transferability of EcoPeace's environmental peacebuilding model to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in the Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH). Two primary questions were proposed: What organizational, strategic, and contextual factors enable or constrain each organization's activities and progress?" and "What factors should EcoPeace consider when assessing the transferability of their environmental peacebuilding model to the HKH region?" In-person interviews were conducted with nine interviewees in Kathmandu, Nepal at the ICIMOD headquarters. A semi-structured interview guide was used to better understand staff perceptions of organizational, contextual, and strategic factors that influence the work being done. Additionally, publicly available information was collected to understand how those three broad factors influence the work of EcoPeace Middle East. Key limiting factors of the transfer of the environmental peacebuilding model include the genesis of the organizations, the geography and scope of the conflict being operated within, the existing international policies, and the broader strategies pursued. Additional organizational factors identified in the study include the focus of the work, funding, staffing decisions, and short-term vs. long-term progress. Other contextual factors identified include the sense of urgency in the region and additional strategic factors include data-sharing and collaboration with private industry. Despite limitations in scope, this study highlights the important organizational, contextual, and strategic factors that an organization should consider when transferring a model to another conflict or region.

Introduction

Background

Ecosystem boundaries rarely align with political boundaries, meaning that the sustainable management of ecosystems necessitates collaboration between multiple governments, communities, nongovernmental organizations, businesses, and landowners who share the resources (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000; Petersen-Perlman, Veilleux, Wolf, 2017). Sometimes, these populations exist at odds with each other due to a larger conflict that is not necessarily centered on the shared ecosystem, making collaboration more difficult. EcoPeace Middle East, formerly known as Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME), is a non-governmental organization operating along the Jordan River Basin where there is a longstanding conflict among Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. EcoPeace is working to protect the shared environmental resources of these three countries by encouraging collaboration between communities who share the water of the Jordan River and the other natural resources in the region. Environmental peacebuilding has become the foundation of EcoPeace's work in the region.

Environmental peacebuilding is a theory of conflict management that is viewed as a strategy to build a foundation for peace in regions where there is a shared natural resource in the midst of a larger conflict. This larger conflict might be based on political, social, religious, or other differences between the populations sharing the resources. According to Ogden (2018), "Environmental peacebuilding represents a paradigm shift from a nexus of environmental scarcity to one of environmental peace. It rests on the assumption that the biophysical environment's inherent characteristics can act as incentives for cooperation and peace, rather than violence and competition." Environmental peacebuilding requires that communities in conflict are provided the opportunity to work together to address shared environmental resource issues. The theory posits that the resulting collaboration will lead to a better understanding of each community and will develop relationships that could build the foundation for a solution to the larger, seemingly intractable conflict. Bringing local, cross-border community groups together puts the underlying environmental resource issues at the forefront, creates the potential for joint fact-finding and ownership over the problems, and allows the groups to push the larger conflict aside to solve the immediate issues confronting

them. In theory, environmental peacebuilding does not necessarily resolve the conflict in its entirety, but creates a foundation for peace while protecting the important natural resources (Dresse et al., 2019; Ide, 2018)

EcoPeace utilizes three main approaches to mobilize the principles of environmental peacebuilding. Their "top-down" and "bottom-up" strategies are region-specific practices to help build collaboration and protect the resources in the Jordan River Basin and will be discussed in depth later. The third approach is the "Going Global" strategy in which EcoPeace identifies other regions around the world where the lessons learned in the Jordan River Valley could be relevant. Lessons from their "Good Water Neighbors" program have been taught in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Sri-Lanka, and on the India-Pakistan border ("Going Global", n.d.). The "Going Global" strategy is the catalyst for this outreach. EcoPeace has identified the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region in Nepal as a potential partner and believes that the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) could be a strong focal agency for collaboration. EcoPeace's potential collaboration with ICIMOD relies on an understanding of how the two organizations and their social, political, and ecological contexts are similar and different in practice. This comparison could allow the two organizations to more effectively collaborate, share lessons, and support each other in the future.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to help EcoPeace Middle East understand the similarities and differences between EcoPeace and ICIMOD, particularly in regard to their organizational and geospatial contexts. Taking what EcoPeace has learned in the Jordan River Valley and applying it to regions facing different issues can be difficult and costly, so there is a need for an in-depth understanding of the potential regions. Therefore, this comparative case study of EcoPeace and ICIMOD was undertaken to address two core objectives that have emerged from a gap in knowledge about the organizations.

The first objective of this study is to compare and contrast the two organizations. Understanding what each organization does and why they do it will outline a model of each organization so they can be more readily compared across similar attributes. Specifically, this study seeks to assess the organizational, strategic, and contextual factors of each

organization. How decisions are made within each organization and why actions are taken are important factors because outcomes are largely dependent on how each organization operates.

The study's second objective is to assess the opportunities and constraints for application of EcoPeace's model in the HKH. In particular, this study poses two primary questions:

1. What organizational, strategic, and contextual factors enable or constrain each organization's activities and progress?
2. What factors should EcoPeace consider when assessing the transferability of their model to the HKH region?

This comparison will allow EcoPeace to more effectively assess opportunities to expand its work to the HKH region through ICIMOD.

This study describes each organization as a whole and analyzes the factors that have enabled or constrained each organization's ability to progress towards their goals. The paper discusses the existing literature and the study's contribution to it, and finally concludes with an assessment of findings and considerations related to the cooperation between ICIMOD and EcoPeace in applying EcoPeace's environmental peacebuilding model to the HKH context.

Methods

The study's first objective is to compare and contrast EcoPeace and ICIMOD. To do so, several steps were taken. First, preliminary data was collected on both organizations. Publicly available information was collected and analyzed to gain a sense of the history, direction, and perceptions of the leadership of each organization. Using the existing environmental conflict management literature (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2017), three broad categories of factors were selected to focus the study – organizational, strategic, and contextual.

For ICIMOD, a semi-structured interview guide (see Figure 1) was developed using insight from the existing literature on environmental conflict management to address the research questions. In particular, these interview questions were designed to elicit insights about the three broad categories – organizational, strategic, and contextual - and the semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in the conversations with interviewees. Additionally, the interview structure gave the interviewees the opportunity to discuss factors and examples that were relevant to the research question but not directly probed in the interview guide.

In-person interviews were conducted on-site with nine employees within ICIMOD's "Transboundary Landscapes" and "River Basins and Cryosphere" programs. Of the nine interviews, seven were recorded and transcribed while the remaining two were recorded via handwritten notes. The interviewees were selected based on their work on transboundary collaboration and with the guidance of leadership within ICIMOD. Interviews were conducted until the information collected in each interview became redundant.

Due to a limited amount of time spent in the field with the staff of ICIMOD, collected data was restricted to approximately one-hour interviews with each interviewee. Due to an inability to interview the staff at EcoPeace, publicly available information on the EcoPeace website and the published literature was used to assess that organization's history, mission, activities, and accomplishments. Given that the data collected on ICIMOD was derived directly from perceptions of staff while the EcoPeace data was derived from secondary sources, this study's findings should be viewed as a preliminary framework for analysis that might be further developed and validated by future researchers.

Figure 1 displays the interview guide used to interview the staff at ICIMOD. The "Background" questions were intended to give context to the interview not only to better

understand the range of work being done at ICIMOD, but to understand how the interviewee perceives their work and the direction in which their work is going.

For "The High Level Conflict" questions, the goal was to understand the specific context in which the interviewee and the organization operates and how the interviewee perceives that context as a factor in ICIMOD's progress. Existing norms and attitudes of the many governments and communities in the region within which ICIMOD works can influence the work being done at ICIMOD. Therefore, it made sense to probe the staff's perceptions of the relevant stakeholders, governments, policies, and institutions.

"The Collaborative Process" questions address both contextual and strategic factors. This portion of the interview guide was adapted significantly over time to reflect differences in the work being done by the interviewees. Most ICIMOD staff do very little work within communities, but often work with local and regional partners or land managers. This portion of the interview guide was modified as needed to better understand issues of urgency within broader regions and longevity of programs implemented, rather than focusing solely on key individuals and factors within local processes.

"The Structure of the Organization" questions sought to understand the decision-making process within ICIMOD's leadership and how that influences how staff members are able to pursue their program's strategy. This section examines both structural influences within ICIMOD as well as how the public and other external influences might impact how those decisions are made.

Finally, the "Conclusion" questions provided the opportunity for the interviewee to consolidate their thoughts and describe their work in a few closing sentences. Question 14 in the interview guide allowed the staff member to quickly prioritize the factors they felt were most important to their work, which often provided answers that addressed both objectives of this research.

Using a grounded theory approach, collected data was transcribed and coded to identify the key factors discussed by the interviewees and how those factors influence the organization's activities. Finally, the identified factors of ICIMOD were compared and contrasted with the collection of EcoPeace's publicly available information to develop this analysis. To address the second objective of this research, the analysis was leveraged to

identify what factors EcoPeace should consider in assessing the possible transferability of their model to the HKH region.

Background:
1. Tell me a little about the projects you are working on, the day-to-day work, and the general goals of the work you do for ICIMOD.
   a. How closely do you work with stakeholders?
2. What was your motivation to begin working with ICIMOD?
   a. What keeps you motivated when there is resistance/busy schedule/etc.?

The High Level Conflict:
3. Describe what your experience working with the region's governments has been like.
   a. What has been the nature of the influence by the government when trying to create transboundary collaboration?
   b. What type of influence does ICIMOD have over development of resource management plans/policies/programs?
4. How have ICIMOD's participants and partners (community members, community leaders, etc.) responded to the idea of transboundary collaboration?
   a. What kinds of social norms/pressures are there to avoid/participate with other communities?
   b. How do the local populations perceive the idea of collaboration on shared resource management issues?

The Collaborative Process:
5. How does the community perceive ICIMOD?
   a. How does government and external funder involvement influence that perception?
6. What is the level of interest in sustainably managing the natural resources when you first enter a community?
   a. How urgent is addressing natural resource issues compared to other issues in the daily lives of the communities?
7. When you begin a project within a community, what kinds of partners do you seek out to involve in the process?
   a. Examples of champions in the community?
   b. How difficult is it to enlist partners?
8. How committed to the long-term strategy of ICIMOD are the collaborative partners in the communities?
   a. How frequently do you interact with them directly?

The Structure of the Organization:
9. How are decisions made about what projects to prioritize and pursue?
   a. What is your level of autonomy within ICIMOD to pursue projects?
   b. Resistance via organizational leadership?
   c. Resistance via government/other external sources?
10. What factors influence the overall direction of ICIMOD's strategy, in either enabling or constraining ways?
11. Can you describe the leadership structure in ICIMOD and how that plays out when transboundary collaboration occurs?
12. How is public input included in the overall strategy of ICIMOD?
   a. At what point is public input sought out?

Conclusion:
13. What is the end goal of the work that ICIMOD does?
14. What advice would you give others who are trying to implement similar processes elsewhere?
   a. Given hindsight, what might you have done differently in this specific context?

Figure 1: Semi-structured interview guide used to collect qualitative data from staff members at ICIMOD.

Organizational Profiles

EcoPeace and ICIMOD reside and function within significantly different contexts which inherently influences how they have been able to move forward as organizations. Since their formation, different external programs and policies have shifted the geopolitical landscapes within their respective regions which has resulted in the need to adjust their strategies. This section provides profiles of each organization, describing key attributes of EcoPeace and ICIMOD in regard to their geographic context, mission and organizational evolution, and their activities and accomplishments.

EcoPeace Middle East

Geographic Context

Geopolitically, EcoPeace operates in a politically complex and violent region. The Dead Sea Rift Valley, where EcoPeace has bounded its work, is displayed in Figure 2. This small territory is home to tens of millions of people, making freshwater resources scarce and highly contested. The ongoing conflict in the region has challenged the status quo for water management, resulting in pollution and overuse of the river, and further adding to the uneven power dynamics between Israel and Palestine as Palestinians have historically been on the receiving end of these negative impacts. Political borders are often contested due to historic claims to the land and the important religious sites located around the cities. These factors, combined with ongoing international interference, have created the conditions for almost constant conflict between the three countries, a fact that EcoPeace must acknowledge every day[1].

[1] For more on the Israel-Palestine conflict, see:

Council on Foreign Relations. (n.d.). Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | Global Conflict Tracker. Retrieved from https://www.cfr.org/interactive/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict

Beauchamp, Z. (2018, May 14). Everything you need to know about Israel-Palestine. *Vox*. Retrieved from https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18079996/israel-palestine-conflict-guide-explainer

Gregory Har, & Todd M. Ferry. (2012). The Palestine-Israel Conflict. GB: Pluto Press.

*Figure 2: EcoPeace works along the watersheds within the Dead Sea Rift Valley, primarily along the Jordan River and Dead Sea ("*Partnering Communities, Watersheds*", n.d.).*

Mission, Focus, and Organizational Evolution

Founded in 1994, EcoPeace Middle East is a nongovernmental organization working along the Jordan River Valley to advance sustainable management practices for the natural resources and land of Israelis, Jordanians, and Palestinians alike, while simultaneously attempting to build a foundation for peace in the region. EcoPeace was initially founded by volunteers as a first attempt at creating regional cooperation on sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices. Decades of conflict had devastated the natural resources in the region. Initially, the organization resolved to operate outside of the conflict by implementing projects that were dedicated to environmental protection. The organization's website does not offer much insight to specific projects during this time period. Today, EcoPeace's mission statement reads, "EcoPeace develops cross border environmental solutions by working with constituencies and building partnerships in the Middle East and in other global regions that foster a collective commitment to a sustainable, prosperous and peaceful future" ("Strategic Five Year Plan", 2017). This mission statement guides the organization's decisions and strategies as they pursue projects in the region.

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The organization is governed by a Board of Directors with nine members who oversee and guide the direction of the organization. Within the governance structure, EcoPeace has advisory committees that lead the organization's strategy on particular topics. For example, the International Advisory Committee advises the leadership on expansion and connecting with strategic partners. From an operational perspective, EcoPeace is led by three national directors, each leading the office and staff in Israel, Jordan, or Palestine. The three directors lead their offices to achieve the goals laid out by the Board of Directors.

Gidon Bromberg, EcoPeace founder and current director of the Israeli office and often the public face of EcoPeace, separates the organization's history into three main phases. From 1994-1998 their work was guided by the efforts of organizations advocating for peacebuilding like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and rooted in the work of Dr. Aaron Wolf. Wolf, a professor of Geography at Oregon State University, has written extensively on the value of transboundary landscape management and the issue of water scarcity and conflict along the Jordan River (Wolf, 2009). Wolf has often been recognized for his work on water conflict management, and EcoPeace has used his work, along with others, to ground their efforts in science. Since the early 1990s, Wolf has recognized that water specifically, and natural resources generally, can and should be considered during peacebuilding efforts. As EcoPeace was trying to become a stable institution in the region, Wolf was actively arguing that water will play a significant role in Middle East conflicts and their resolutions (Wolf 1995).

Initially, EcoPeace attempted to bring environmental protection to the ongoing discussion of peace in the region. According to EcoPeace, "...the work of the organization nevertheless acted from a very rational, single minded focus on the environment." They had not developed the rationale for the programs they operate now, which are dedicated to solving broader issues like sustainable development, water scarcity and pollution, and preservation of biodiversity and natural resources.

From EcoPeace's biography:

> "The second period in the short history of the organization is from 1998 to 2001
> where the organization experienced great turmoil both internally and externally
> - greatly impacted by the failure of the Oslo Accords to improve the lives of
> people and advance peace" (Bromberg, n.d.).

The organization's biography describes how the work of EcoPeace was met with skepticism during that period:

> "FoEME itself was increasingly being condemned and attacked as an arm of
> this failed peace effort, seen by some on both sides as a fraud or conspiracy to
> maintain the status quo. Arab/Israeli cooperation was labeled collaboration,
> serving the interests of the 'other side'" (Bromberg, n.d.).

The intifada and failed treaty process left both sides uneasy about the idea of collaboration. The Oslo Accords, led by the United States and designed to bring peace to the region[2], had devastated EcoPeace's legitimacy in the region and most of the region's remaining collaborative spirit. At that point, EcoPeace looked at environmental peacebuilding more holistically, realizing that communities needed to see direct economic and social benefits alongside the environmental benefits, marking the beginning of the organization's third and current phase.

Activities and Accomplishments

Like many organizations, EcoPeace has both long and short-term goals to guide their day-to-day strategies. Figure 3 depicts EcoPeace's current five-year plan ("Our Strategy", n.d.). This short-term strategic plan is designed to move EcoPeace toward their broad vision: "EcoPeace's vision is to secure a sustainable, prosperous and peaceful future for the people of the Middle East" ("Strategic Five Year Plan, 2017-2021", 2017). Specifically, this plan identifies inputs that EcoPeace intends to utilize to produce a set of outputs, all while scaling up their global influence. Inputs range from increasing town hall meetings and seminars for their Good Water Neighbors Program to beginning a full feasibility study and pilot program

[2] For more on the Oslo Accords:
The Oslo Accords and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process. (n.d.). Retrieved February 9, 2020, from https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/oslo

for their Water-Energy Nexus initiative. Generally, these inputs pursue outputs related to institutional change (top-down) and constituency building (bottom up). EcoPeace plans to develop joint commissions between the three countries and identify stronger outcomes in terms of empowerment and engagement, among other outputs.
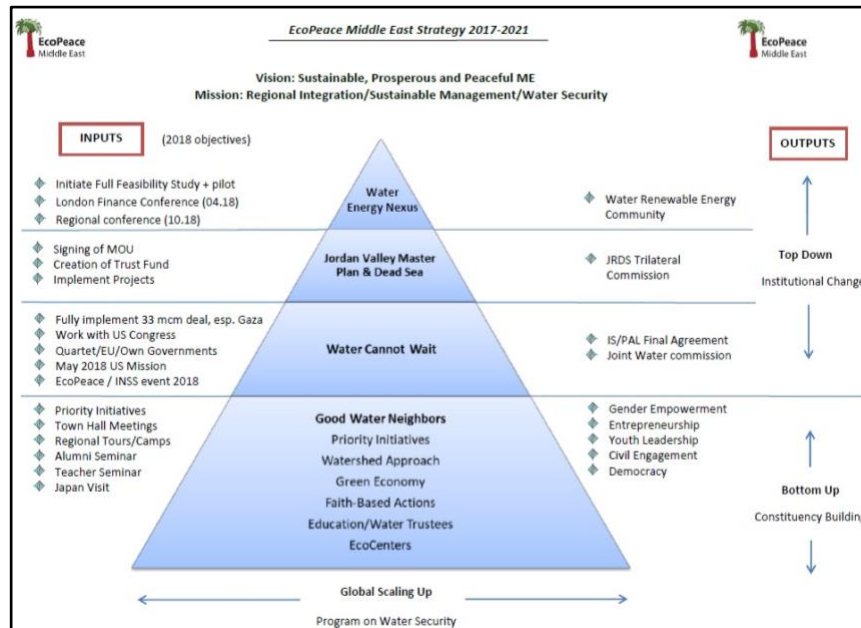

Figure 3: EcoPeace's current five year strategy. On the left side, "Inputs" are the immediate actions that EcoPeace plans to undertake. On the right side, "Outputs" are separated in to their top-down and bottom-up strategies. As you move from top to bottom, the triangle grows in size, relating to EcoPeace's plan to expand the programs to a global scale ("Strategic Five Year Plan, 2017-2021", 2017)

EcoPeace houses their efforts in three separate offices to avoid the appearance of bias. One office is in Israel, one in Jordan, and one in Palestine. EcoPeace has around 50 employees in total. Many of those employees work alongside volunteers to work on community-based projects (described below), while others work at the governmental level to influence policy and build support and funding for the community projects that arise. While it has not always been the case, the three offices work independently, yet in tandem to implement projects in their respective communities.

EcoPeace's keystone program is the "Good Water Neighbors Program" which brings together communities in many different fora to develop an understanding of how the region's water is a shared resource for everyone. The Good Water Neighbors Program began in 2001 to address the need for cooperation between communities sharing resources. Along the Jordan River, there are communities on both sides of the river that are in conflict with each other, but rely on the same water for agriculture, consumption, and other uses. Each

community relies on the other to help maintain the river for continued use. The Good Water Neighbors Program was developed to "create local constituencies that empower youth, adult residents, mayors and other municipal officials to call for and lead necessary cross-border solutions to regional water issues" ("Bottom Up, n.d."). To implement this mission, EcoPeace connects a community on one side of the border to the community on the other side to work on transboundary water issues. In the past, communities have worked on issues like sewage and water management by training community members to be vocal advocates of transboundary cooperation and environmental protection. At this point, EcoPeace is able to work with local government officials to gain support for new projects because some of the local officials have been participants of the program. While progress has been slow, the program has supported projects like the development of a "model farm," where local Jordanian and Israeli farmers work together to develop sustainable farming practices ("Community Involvement", n.d.). Initially, 11 communities on either side of the river were connected by EcoPeace. The program expanded to 28 communities on each side of the border, and EcoPeace is now looking to broaden the program to create regional cooperation between all communities.

While the Good Water Neighbors program embodies the mission of the organization, EcoPeace has been able to expand their work into other aspects of the region. In terms of scale, EcoPeace has expanded beyond the Jordan River and now works on sustainable management of the Dead Sea and has created two EcoParks to aid in the protection of biodiversity and the development of community participation. The Sharhabil Bin Hassneh (SHE) EcoPark in Jordan was planned by EcoPeace in the early 2000s and the Jordan Valley Authority provided the land to develop an ecological habitat to protect the land. Since 2004, EcoPeace has used that land to educate local communities on the importance of nature, conducted collaborative trainings with communities from all three countries to support existing programs like the Good Water Neighbors Program, and eventually used the success of the park to lobby Palestine to develop Auja EcoCenter, a similar park to the one in Jordan ("EcoParks", n.d.).

EcoPeace has also been able to expand their existing programs to empower women, youth, and faith-based leaders to have a stronger role in the protection of natural resources. Through the Good Water Neighbors program, EcoPeace hosts programs to educate

community members – primarily young students – to be strong protectors of the environment and peacemakers. They teach students how to participate in citizen science and enable them to better understand the health of the water around them through workshops and classes. The program connects students on each side of the river so both student groups can see that they use the resources in similar ways. The program allows participants to explore the synergy between the environment and the peacebuilding process in a constructive manner (Friends of the Middle East, n.d.).

At the foundation of their strategy, EcoPeace adheres to the theory of environmental peacebuilding because of the intense conflict in the region and the rapidly deteriorating river valley. To combat the degradation of the environment around them, EcoPeace has undertaken programs that work to solve the problems that communities on either side of the river face like water scarcity, water pollution, and desalination. For example,

> "...the construction of a sewage collection network in the Palestinian community of Baka el Sharkiya, and the connection of this newly built network with that of the neighboring Israeli community, Baka el Gharbiya, by which the Palestinian wastewater is now being transferred for treatment on the Israeli side, no longer polluting the nearby Hadera/Abu Naar Stream" ("Community Involvement", n.d.).

EcoPeace lobbied local officials and the municipal agencies, while also organizing support from the local communities, to develop this project and others like it. While they did not physically build the facility, EcoPeace led the charge to make sure it was implemented. This project included public input and participation, collaboration between communities, and effective solutions for a shared problem.

Environmental peacebuilding is a relatively untested theory, and EcoPeace is one of few organizations dedicated to using it. EcoPeace pursues environmental peacebuilding primarily from two angles: "top-down" and "bottom-up." In the context of this study, "top-down" refers to the strategy of influencing relevant decision-makers to change the policies that influence the region's resources. From their website, "EcoPeace's *top-down programs* are based on research, on the publication of policy briefs, and on the holding of events that highlight the national self-interest of each side in advancing our policy recommendations ("Top Down", n.d.). The organization must be cautious when approaching advocacy work

due to the tension between the governments in the region, but has committed to continuing to push for policy and agreements from all three governments. The primary example of a "top-down" approach from EcoPeace is the Water & Energy Nexus program. From EcoPeace's website, "the project includes researching the technical, economic, and geo-political pre-feasibility of Jordan as a provider of large-scale renewable energy for the Levant₃ with the coastal region of Israel and Gaza producing the desalinated water" ("Water & Energy Nexus, n.d.). This program is attempting to provide the technical basis for continued cooperation on a national level, which could lead to increased community-level cooperation as projects are explored and identified at the community-level, but might need some form of support from local or national governments. EcoPeace's belief is that by providing well researched objectives to policy makers, they will be more willing to support EcoPeace's projects from the top-down, whether it is by allowing a project to move forward, by providing much needed funding, or by advocating for EcoPeace on a national scale.

"Bottom-up" refers to the strategy of working with communities and stakeholders to build projects, programs, and agreements to protect the shared land. The "bottom-up" approach is integral to EcoPeace's progress specifically, and environmental peacebuilding generally. Again, from EcoPeace's website, "Our *bottom-up approach* is about educating local constituencies to call for, and lead, necessary cross-border solutions to regional water issues."[10] The Good Water Neighbors Program is EcoPeace's prime example of their bottom-up approach. The program brings community members together to better understand their environment and the ways in which multiple communities utilize the resources around them. Community-building is a key tenet of peace, so EcoPeace cannot progress toward the organization's objectives if they do not constantly prove that the communities can greatly benefit from collaborating with the organization and the other communities.

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3 Generally, the Levant refers to the broader eastern Mediterranean region including the Jordan River Valley, see:
Graf, D. (2010). Levant. In The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome. : Oxford University Press. Retrieved 9 Feb. 2020, from
https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195170726.001.0001/acref-9780195170726-e-706.

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

Geographic Context

Geographically, Nepal's region comprises a vast and complex landscape that is home to rich biodiversity, many cultures, and some of the most valuable natural resources in the world including the ingredients to traditional medicines like yartsa gunbu, or the "caterpillar fungus." The HKH covers approximately 3,500 kilometers, hosts a population of around 240 million people, and holds the headwaters of ten major river systems ("The Pulse of the Planet", n.d.). The region includes glaciers (cryosphere), mountains, forests, river basins, and many other landscapes, all of which are leveraged by different populations to sustain their livelihoods. For example, the Indus River basin supports rural farmers in the mountains, large-scale agriculture, fisheries, cities in India and Pakistan, and various flora and fauna. Politically, China and India hold a considerable amount of power over the HKH, and there are ongoing territorial disputes in Tibet and Kashmir, to name but two examples[4]. As a result, respecting the sovereignty of each representative nation is paramount for ICIMOD and their apolitical approach influences the way in which the organization is able to engage with each country.

Mission, Focus, and Organizational Evolution

Founded in 1983, The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is an intergovernmental organization based in Lalitpur, Nepal ("Programme History", n.d.). The organization was founded after discussions at a UNESCO meeting in 1979 led to an agreement between Switzerland and Germany to fund a program to increase cooperation within the HKH. The government of Nepal agreed to host the organization, and then the member countries were brought together to direct ICIMOD. ICIMOD works in the HKH region to promote regional transboundary cooperation to protect the natural resources of the eight member countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan) (see Figure 4). The intergovernmental leadership requires ICIMOD's

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[4] For more on the politics of the region, see:
Piers M. Blaikie & Joshua S. S. Muldavin (2004) Upstream, Downstream, China, India: The Politics of Environment in the Himalayan Region, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 94:3, 520-548, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8306.2004.00412.x

efforts remain apolitical, a factor that heavily influences the organization's strategy. An apolitical mandate is believed to be necessary because of the ongoing political and social tensions throughout the HKH and between the national governments of the member countries. Transboundary collaboration is one small part of each country's interests, so they do not want the collaboration to lead to regional conflicts.
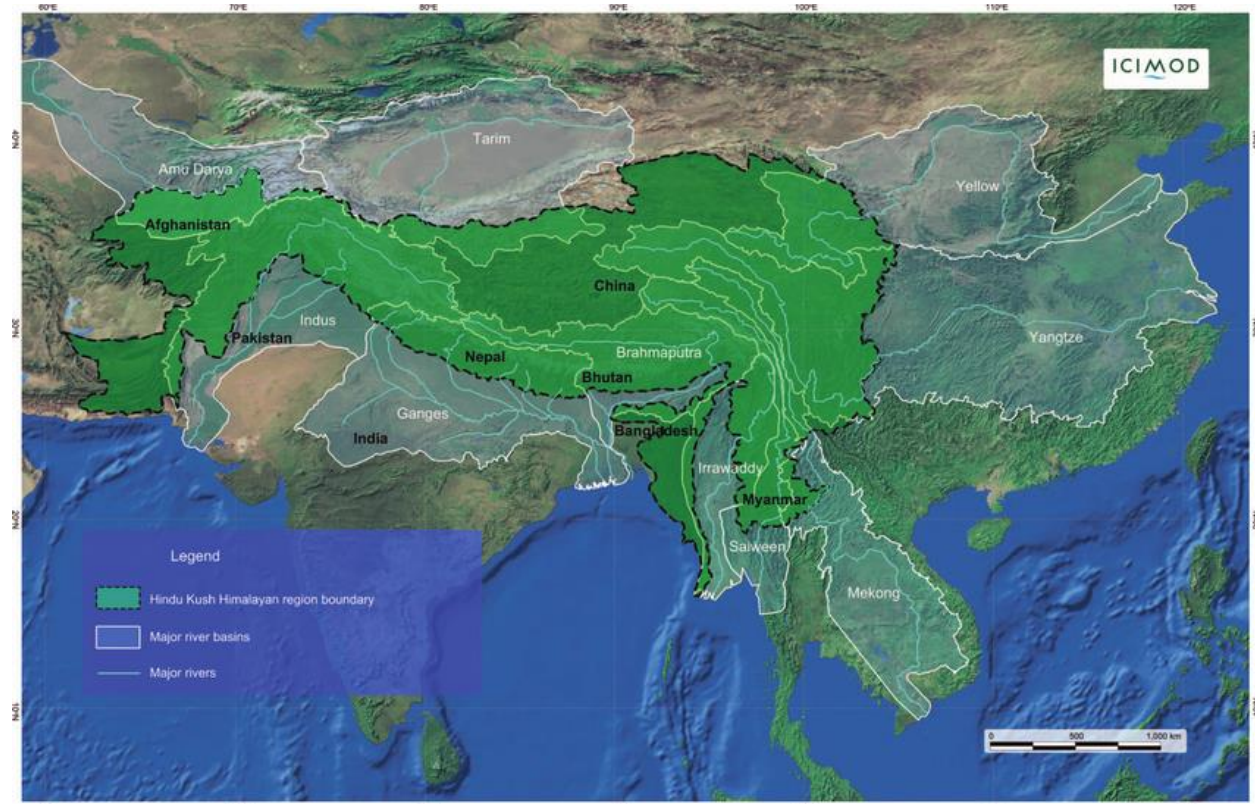
Figure 4: ICIMOD operates within the Hindu Kush Himalayas, displayed here. The green highlighted region is the actual HKH, which is home to the headwaters of 10 major rivers in the region, shown by the blue highlighted region (Sharma et al., 2016)..

The organization's direction is set by a board of directors comprised of representatives appointed by each member country. For its first ten years, ICIMOD's programs were dedicated to ecological management issues like "Watershed Management" and "Information Systems for Mountain Development." During that time, trainings and workshops were the primary focus of ICIMOD's work, though the frequency and size of events were dependent on expertise within the organization and funding availability. One current example of an ICIMOD workshop is "Air pollution and health in Nepal and the HKH." The workshop brings researchers and policymakers together to identify key areas of collaboration and potential information sharing (Sharma et al., 2016). ICIMOD currently

holds dozens of workshops and trainings similar to these each year, but they were less frequent in the beginning of the organization.

As the organization grew in resources and staff size, ICIMOD continued to expand and adapt their programs to the needs of the region to find their specific niche. ICIMOD began to connect and work with other organizations in the region and form partnerships to expand the scope of their influence and diversify their funding sources. By present day, ICIMOD has adjusted their programs to encompass a more holistic landscape approach to their mission, developing programs like the Indus Basin program and the Kailash Sacred Landscape program, described below.

ICIMOD's mission is "to enable sustainable and resilient mountain development for improved and equitable livelihoods through knowledge and regional cooperation ("Our Mission", n.d.)." As an intergovernmental organization, ICIMOD has focused heavily on developing a regional framework for the advancement of sustainable practices and economies in the HKH region for all member countries. In pursuit of broader, bilateral agreements, ICIMOD has managed to bring partners from both the public and private sector to the table to discuss agreements, though no significant formal agreements have been signed. ICIMOD works with regional partners to implement data-sharing plans and to develop techniques that local officials can use to more effectively manage the ecosystems. For example, ICIMOD uses their Knowledge Park at Godavari to test landscape management techniques and to host trainings with foresters on how to implement those techniques in their region ("Visitors and Training, n.d.).

Activities and Accomplishments

ICIMOD uses medium-term action plans, or MTAPs, to help plan their activities so they align with the overall strategic plan. MTAPs are five year plans that build up to the organization's twenty year goals, which in turn advance the broader mission. ICIMOD has six "Regional Programmes," each of which is broken down into subregions. Only certain portions of the Regional Programmes relate to transboundary collaboration and are listed in Table 1. The various other programs and subregions deal primarily with research and technology development.

The theory behind transboundary landscape management acknowledges that ecosystems do not begin or end at a political border. As ICIMOD describes it, "We adopt the

landscape approach across boundaries to manage biodiversity and ecosystems, defining the landscapes by ecosystems rather than administrative boundaries. We seek to bridge peoples of the HKH and their unique histories, cultures, knowledge, environments, and conservation practices ("Transboundary Landscapes, n.d.)." In contrast to the Middle East, the HKH is not, for the most part, experiencing an intense, long-term conflict, meaning ICIMOD is able to adopt different approaches than EcoPeace to achieving its objectives. For ICIMOD, transboundary landscape management strategies in the HKH have focused less on building trust at the community level and instead have relied almost entirely on the benefits that a country as a whole can gain from collaboration.

Regional Programme	Initiative	Countries	Key Issues
Transboundary Landscapes	Cherrapunjee-Chittagong Landscape	India, Bangladesh	Regional Framework Agriculture Water access
	HI-LIFE	China, India, Myanmar	Regional Framework Biodiversity
	Hindu Kush Karakoram Pamir Landscape	Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan	Regional Framework Agriculture Livestock
	Kailash Sacred Landscape	China, India, Nepal	Regional Framework Sustainable development Tourism
	Kangchenjunga Landscape	Bhutan, India, Nepal	Regional Framework Biodiversity Ecosystem Services
	REDD +	Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal	Forests
River Basins and Cryosphere	Indus Basin	Afghanistan, China, India, Pakistan	Research Data-sharing
	Koshi Basin	China, India, Nepal	Research Data-sharing

Table 1: ICIMOD's initiatives related to transboundary collaboration and their key issues.

ICIMOD focuses exclusively on the "top-down" approach to create the conditions for collaboration between the governments of the region. By helping create the available data and the relationships between national and local policymakers, ICIMOD is trying to put the national policymakers in a position where they can make transboundary agreements. The

tense political atmosphere and power of India and China limits ICIMOD's ability to bring all eight countries together to create a regional landscape management framework. Hence, ICIMOD has subdivided the HKH into specific ecosystem-based regions that span multiple borders to turn the focus to the specific ecosystems.

For example, the Kangchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KLCDI) brings together Bhutan, India, and Nepal to protect the ecosystems surrounding Mount Kangchenjunga. Broadly, this particular initiative's objective is "improved cooperation among India, Bhutan and Nepal for sustainable and inclusive ecosystem management in Kangchenjunga Landscape for enhanced and equitable livelihood benefits, contributing to global conservation agendas" ("Programme outcomes, goals and objectives", n.d.). Many of the other initiatives list similar objectives. Thus far, KLCDI has pursued this objective through ecotourism so far, mainly because it supports the local economies and can gain more traction and support within the governments of each country. The primary outcomes at this point from KLCDI have been dialogues with local leaders and business owners to begin developing plans for increased cross-border ecotourism. Sometimes, these dialogues take the form of a workshop where ICIMOD trains local leaders and business owners on how to encourage sustainable economic growth through ecotourism. Tourism has resonated within many of ICIMOD's initiatives.

ICIMOD often engages in policy dialogue with the governmental actors (ministers of agencies, agency staff, regional political leaders, etc.) of each member country to begin laying the foundation for future agreements. These dialogues often occur in the form of the workshops and trainings mentioned earlier, and usually in an informal manner. Even when the necessary land managers or policymakers come together at ICIMOD to work on an agreement, the national government is not yet involved enough to formally agree to any final product. Therefore, the policy dialogues occur at the subregion level to avoid significant political differences between member countries and to keep the focus of the dialogue on the particular subregion being discussed. Figure 5 shows a simplified version of the structure of ICIMOD and how a particular initiative might bring relevant stakeholders together.
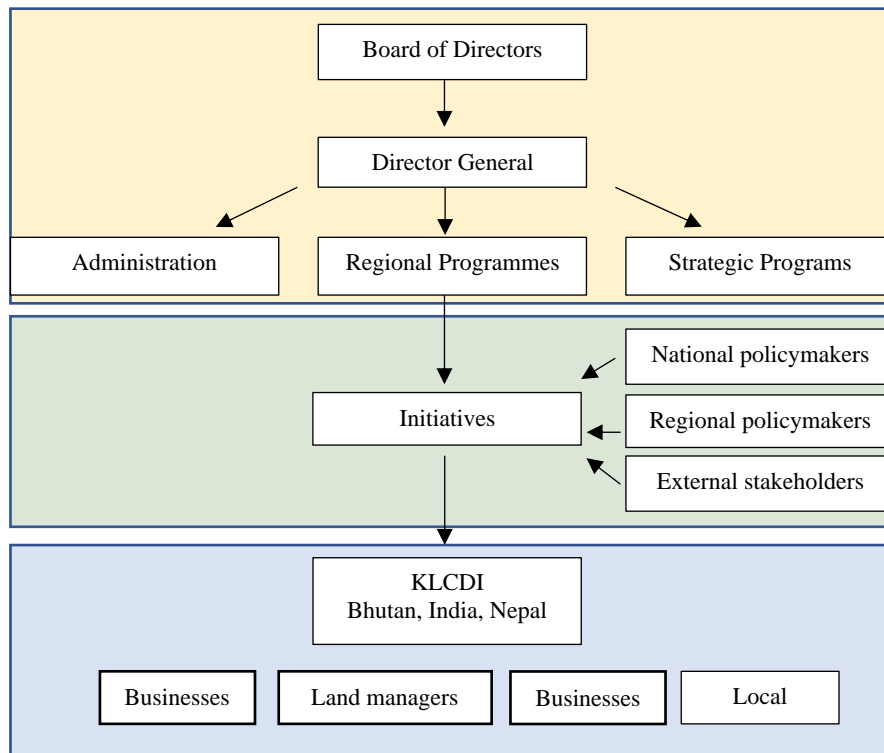
Figure 5. A streamlined version of ICIMOD's organizational structure to focus in on the relevant portions of the organization for this study. The top section (yellow) hosts the governing and strategic bodies of ICIMOD. The middle portion (green) is where high-level strategy begins implementation. External stakeholders like policymakers and ministry officials often access the programs at this level. The bottom section (blue) highlights the Kangchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative's (KLCDI) structure. The staff at ICIMOD works with and alongside representatives of various local community groups.

Another approach for ICIMOD is to develop research programs within key regions. These programs enable joint fact-finding to occur and can create a sense of shared ownership over the outcomes. At the very least, trainings on uniform data collection techniques allows data to be more credible and useful to other researchers in the future, even if the sharing of raw data does not occur immediately. The data collected can eventually be used to persuade countries to participate in future agreements. ICIMOD operates other programs, but they are less focused on transboundary collaboration and more focused on research and data collection.

Literature Review

Environmental peacebuilding, transboundary landscape management, and collaborative resource management are three topics that are well covered in the scholarly literature. This literature was used to inform the development of interview questions and codes for analysis. Environmental peacebuilding, transboundary cooperation, and collaborative resource management are important to the objectives of both EcoPeace and ICIMOD, and are therefore important to this analysis. As a comparative case-study, this research aims to add to this existing literature base by examining two specific cases of how peacebuilding and transboundary cooperation is occurring and how resource management is being approached at a regional level.

Environmental Peacebuilding

Scholars of environmental peacebuilding generally agree that it is exceptionally difficult to objectively evaluate the case studies that have been produced thus far. Ogden (2018) argues that each real-world attempt at environmental peacebuilding encounters political, social, ethnic, religious, and other conflicts that have manifested in relation to a particular region. Unsurprisingly, researchers have struggled to find a common framework that persists throughout all of the available case studies.

Many researchers identify potential gains to be made from cooperation between communities, as well as complications, both shown by the available case studies (Krampe, 2018; Ide, Sumer, & Aldehoff, 2018; Valenzuela, 2018). Conca (2012) discusses the importance of ensuring mutual access to environmental resources within a conflict to both limit humanitarian concerns and to provide the context for environmental peacebuilding strategies. Peacebuilding requires at least a minimal level of trust between two parties, which can be complicated when one party uses the resource as leverage over the other. One common example of this power imbalance occurs between upstream and downstream river communities. Complications in the peacebuilding process can occur when the larger conflict becomes embedded or internalized within the local communities, meaning that the natural resources become part of the conflict (rather than the conflict remaining focused on external forces like the national governments) as Wolf (2007) observes. Even with that possibility, Wolf argues that it is uncommon for water conflicts to turn into water wars. In turn, it is

possible that the governments use environmental protection under the guise of cooperation, while really using it as another tool in the conflict through exploitation and destruction of livelihoods.

There is limited research on organizations implementing environmental peacebuilding. Moreover, it is difficult to attribute any gains or losses in a region solely to the practice of environmental peacebuilding. That being said, findings have indicated that, as the theory suggests, trust-building and "the cultivation of interdependence" are often the focus of organizations adhering to environmental peacebuilding (Ide and Tubi, 2020). Carius (2007) indicates that there are both political and institutional conditions that must occur for environmental peacebuilding to be sustained. According to Carius, institutions need the backing of high-level policy or treaties, must integrate different economic and social sectors of the communities, and must account for traditional management practices of the community. Finally, Ide (2020) argues that environmental peacebuilding has the potential for six primary negative categories of impacts that could harm communities. These categories ("the six D's") are "depoliticization, displacement, discrimination, deterioration into conflict, delegitimization of the state, and degradation of the environment." Ide points out that these categories have not been sufficiently studied but should be acknowledged before the international community places too much hope on environmental peacebuilding.

Transboundary Cooperation

The literature regarding transboundary cooperation provides studies of successful cases where collaboration created better outcomes than in cases where there was no collaboration. ICIMOD's staff has contributed to this subset of literature. Molden et. al (2017) argue that transboundary collaboration has been relatively successful in the HKH, but that creating agreements between governments currently in conflict continues to be difficult. This discussion leads to the broader topic of environmental governance, where one current trend points to the value of transboundary cooperation when environmental governance is decentralized. Even so, Oosterveer and Van Vliet (2010) point out that decentralization encountered problems with implementation in Uganda. It is possible that allowing regional and local authorities to dictate environmental policy could lead to a complex mosaic of conflicting policies along a border.

Some researchers have identified ways that transboundary cooperation has already been pursued. Ioannides, Nielsen, and Billing (2006) discuss how tourism can be used as an enabler for cooperation. Their article considers how national and regional interests may play a role in collaboration by attempting to create a shared identity. Further, Plummer, Baird, Krievins, and Mitchell (2016) point to the complicated nature of transboundary collaboration. By collecting qualitative data about perceptions and uses of the St. John River Basin in Canada, the authors identify factors related to the initial context and power dynamics in the region as indicators of the potential for successful transboundary collaboration. In the case of the St. John River Basin, the factors indicating the potential for successful collaboration include a common understanding of river health and a strong structure of connected actors, while collaboration was mitigated by the assertion of power and the context surrounding the initiative.

Collaborative Resource Management

Researchers have explored how collaborative resource management can lead to stronger outcomes than a traditional, top-down approach (Koontz and Thomas, 2006; Day and Gunton, 2003). Among the factors that influence the effectiveness of collaborative resource management, Wondolleck and Yaffee (2017) observe that there are "bricks" and "mortar" in the process, both of which can influence the outcome of the collaboration. The tangible "bricks" include measurable factors – a table to gather around (proximity), an initiative's niche, the initiative's governance structure, and codified roles and responsibilities. In contrast, "mortar" refers to intangible process factors such as the motivations and relationships of the participants, a sense of place and purpose, an effective and rewarding process, and sustained commitment and leadership at all levels. Mortar is just as influential of a role as the bricks, albeit less measurable.

Wagner and Fernandez-Gimenez (2008) echo the importance of social capital in collaborative processes. Through surveys and interviews, the authors found that many pre-determined social capital variables increased throughout a collaborative process for the participants. For larger-scale organizations working on collaborative resource management, Heikkila and Gerlak (2005) point out that there are attributes of the resource being managed that influence collaboration, but there are also attributes of the stakeholders and the

institutions that play a significant role in success. Resource characteristics include physical extent, population size, resource uses, resource problems, and identified causes and indicators of resource problems. Stakeholder characteristics include types of stakeholders, prior efforts, leaders of institutional design, and external institutional triggers.

Analysis

Returning to the original research question, this section analyzes the organizational, strategic, and contextual factors that enable or constrain EcoPeace and ICIMOD's efforts to advance environmental peacebuilding in their regions. This analysis identifies common patterns that emerged from the interviews and publicly available data that was collected. Those patterns and themes emerged as individual factors. The identified factors were then given context through quotes and other data. By the end of this section, it will be clear that both organizations must grapple with organizational factors (genesis of the organizations, focus of the work, funding, staffing decisions, and short-term vs. long-term progress), contextual factors (sense of urgency, scope of the conflict/geography of the region, existing international policy) and strategic factors (broad strategy, data-sharing, collaboration with private industry) in ways that are best suited to achieve their goals. The actions of both EcoPeace and ICIMOD are in part enabled or constrained by these factors. Each is discussed below.

Organizational Factors

Organizational factors relate to the structure of the organization and how that structure influences how decisions are made. The key organizational factors that emerged in this comparative analysis of EcoPeace and ICIMOD are: the genesis of the organizations; the focus of the work; the funding sources; staffing decisions; and short-term vs. long-term success. These factors could be influenced by the context within which the organization operates and, in turn, influence each organization's strategy.

Genesis of the Organizations

The formation of an organization entails the development of a guiding statement which often comes in the form of a mission statement or mandate. The mission statement or mandate determines how an organization makes decisions, pursues its work, and changes its

direction. A mission statement is usually more flexible and broader in nature, allowing an organization to more readily adapt to the context within which it operates. A mandate is typically more rigid in nature, and is often used by governments to provide legitimacy and consistency to their institutions. Therefore, the guiding principles that EcoPeace and ICIMOD operate within can determine how they determine and pursue their objectives.

EcoPeace Middle East

     EcoPeace was founded in a bottom-up manner by environmentally-concerned individuals in the Jordan River region. It is a nongovernmental organization. As such, it does not have a government mandate requiring it to pursue specific objectives or activities in specific ways. The genesis of EcoPeace provides flexibility to pursue its mission and respond to the needs of the region as it deems appropriate. That being said, the organization is nonetheless beholden to public opinion for multiple reasons, including the organization's need for public awareness, support, and funding, as well as to adhere to the tenets of environmental peacebuilding.

     EcoPeace has worked hard to remain as nonpartisan as possible so they can continue to effectively bring cross-border communities together without appearing biased. The reality is that it can be difficult not to point fingers at the governments in the region when the environmental concerns are often traced back to poor policy of one country or another. Withholding water and the dumping of sewage in disadvantaged communities are just two examples of how the water in the region is being decimated by targeted policy. Therefore, EcoPeace has had to carefully critique the policies in place without showing inflammatory bias. To do so, EcoPeace's leadership has focused on solutions to problems instead of policy causes, but has also been quite vocal in speaking about the issues. For example, Gidon Bromberg stated in an interview, "Communities came to see…that the only way to promote economic development in my community was to work with the other side, to develop relations and to move forward on a common agenda" (Barnard, 2019). Regardless of where the parties are starting, EcoPeace is trying to bring them to a place of mutual understanding and cooperation.

     EcoPeace is unable to ignore the realities of the region's political tensions, but the organization works to retain its legitimacy. One way that EcoPeace has worked toward

regional cooperation is the operation of three offices. EcoPeace maintains an office and a staff for each country which, in theory, allows them to build stronger relationships with the communities in which they are working. Communities can often become suspicious of organizations that are headquartered in only one of the region's countries because it provides the impression of an inherent bias. In a region that has faced decades of violence between countries, suspicion and concern is quick to arise and slow to subside.

Overall, EcoPeace has continued to cautiously but confidently approach the political realities of the region. As tensions arise between Israel and Palestine, EcoPeace has managed to adequately respond because they were founded as a nongovernmental organization and hence are not inherently beholden to a government. A recent example was EcoPeace's rejection of the Trump administration's Middle East Peace Plan (U.S. White House, 2020)[5], due to the lack of multilateral support:

> The 25 year experience of EcoPeace is that Israeli/Palestinian peace can only be achieved through dialogue, negotiation and compromise. Unilateral actions will not advance peace. Annexation of the Jordan Valley or other areas of the West Bank will never lead to peace. On the contrary unilateralism through annexation will lead to further instability and tragedy not only in Palestine and Israel but also in Jordan and the broader region (EcoPeace Middle East, 2020).

This statement likely would have faced considerable backlash if EcoPeace, rather than being an independent NGO, were instead a government entity within one of the three governments in the region.

ICIMOD

Unlike EcoPeace, ICIMOD is a product of an intergovernmental agreement. As an intergovernmental organization, ICIMOD is directly mandated by its eight member countries to approach their work in a cooperative, non-political manner. Many interviewees referred to ICIMOD's inability to engage politically in the region as "an apolitical mandate." While the exact mandate of the organization is unavailable, the mission statement is a good surrogate

[5] For more on the Trump administration's plan, see: Specia, M. (2020, January 29). What to Know About Trump's Middle East Plan. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/29/world/middleeast/trump-peace-plan-explained.html

for their "mandate". While public opinion is still of great concern, ICIMOD's legitimacy arises from this mandate, however inflexible it might be. As described below, ICIMOD has identified activities like data collection and sharing as opportunities to bring policymakers together in an apolitical manner to pursue activities of shared interest.

Recent events in Myanmar illustrate this tension. A rebel group has taken over a significant portion of the country and while they have developed some measure of legitimacy in the region, they are not recognized by Myanmar's government. The rebel group has appeared open to working on transboundary landscape cooperation with other organizations, but ICIMOD has decided to work only with the government of Myanmar, even though it has been less cooperative. This means that progress has stalled in the region due in part to ICIMOD's unwillingness to work with the rebel groups. The overall perception from the staff was that this was an acceptable setback in pursuit of the larger, long-term goals of ICIMOD as they continue to pursue action in more stable and official policy channels.

While all interviewees supported the apolitical nature of ICIMOD, there is an ongoing conversation about how conservative the organization should remain. As one interviewee commented: "But I do believe that sometimes we are also very conservative. My inner feeling is that we could be a little bolder." For example, ICIMOD has no program that focuses on connecting with faith-based organizations or stakeholders to help protect the resources in the region. The region is filled with important religious sites and sects of religions, all of which could be utilized in their programs, but the discomfort of some member countries about other religions means that ICIMOD is unable to engage with those groups.

Returning to the broader goals, remaining apolitical does allow ICIMOD's staff to build stronger relationships with government officials who can make decisions to move regional cooperation forward. Interviewees perceive that, with enough time, the organization will be able to prove the merits of collaboration. A sentiment expressed by one interviewee was shared by many others, "Bringing them together now means thinking together, if we start thinking together, we also start growing together." The staff dedicates considerable effort to build the necessary relationships just to have a chance at bringing the right officials to the negotiation table. The perceived importance of relationship-building is supported by the

literature on collaborative resource management and the factors that enable the success of collaboration (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2017).

Focus of the work

 Due in part to the differences in their regions, EcoPeace and ICIMOD have pursued significantly different projects in attempting to influence cooperation across borders. Human-nature interactions, biodiversity protection, and sustainable resource use are all examples of how an organization might pursue an objective like protecting the environment. The angle at which an organization focuses its work determines the specific projects and actions it might pursue.

EcoPeace Middle East

 The small geographic area, high population density, and socioeconomic realities of the Jordan River Valley have pushed EcoPeace to focus their efforts on projects that will directly benefit communities. Generally, EcoPeace's work is quite human-centric. Their goal is to demonstrate how collaboration can benefit both the ecology of the river basin and the health of humans in the region. Projects focused on providing fresh, clean water for farmers along the Jordan River or to communities who need it for drinking water are promoted more for their benefits to human health rather than for the ecological benefits.

 EcoPeace is able to focus on the social and economic outcomes of collaboration because the Jordan River provides drinking water to millions in the region, making the health of the river a particularly visible and salient issue for those in the region. EcoPeace operates in a region that is densely populated and a fraction of the size of the Hindu Kush Himalayas. There is not a lot of land or biodiversity that is untouched by the people who inhabit the river basin, meaning that more traction can be gained by relating the ecological issues to the lives of the people in the communities. Removing sewage from the river or maintaining water levels are very tangible and important goals to the people who use the water every day.

ICIMOD

 Initially, ICIMOD focused primarily on issues related to wildlife and conservation. A frequently mentioned example was creating protocols between countries to protect the movement and habitat of snow leopards, a strictly environment-focused initiative. Because

funders and governments want their efforts to more directly help their citizens, ICIMOD began to work on projects that were based on economics and societal development. Recently, ICIMOD has worked to increase ecotourism in the region, maintain yak populations in the mountains, and legitimize the illegal trade of certain plants used for traditional medicine. These are still conservation-based projects, but they also bring in a human element. While ICIMOD does very little work on the ground, their focus on the human-wildlife conflict rather than just the wildlife has been prevalent in their policy dialogues.

ICIMOD has focused on issues that are easier to sell to the governments involved. Time and funding is limited, so governments often want to see immediate impact occurring on the ground. Hence, issues like eco-tourism and the legitimization of illegal medicinal plant trade offers a short-term, relatively quick boost to poor communities while also building the foundation for long-term projects, confidence-building, and larger economic gains. In the background of these projects, the wildlife and resources are being sustainably managed and protected.

Keeping the new focus in mind, ICIMOD continues to build a scientific foundation with research programs in the cryosphere or along the Indus River basin, for example. The perception is that understanding the landscape in as much depth as possible allows the staff to make a stronger case to governments for the need to collaborate across borders. ICIMOD has leveraged this scientific research to create a sense of ownership over the data among the member countries, a strategy that will be discussed in more depth later. Overall, ICIMOD has worked with governments at a national and local level in the region to determine where the entry points are for projects that will continue to benefit the resources in the region and the humans who use them.

Funding

The almost constant concern over funding is not a problem unique to ICIMOD and EcoPeace. Both have to limit the scope of their work due to budget limits and the influence of external donors is a very real component of the projects that each pursues. In the context of each region, though, limited funding and the funding sources influence how program staff perceive their respective short-term goals and how efficiently those short-term goals end up advancing the long-term goals. Information on how EcoPeace pursues funding and how that funding influences the organization's decisions is unavailable, so an analysis of that

information has not been included here. However, staff at ICIMOD addressed this factor frequently.

ICIMOD

      For ICIMOD, funding comes from two general sources. There is funding from the member countries which generally goes toward the core funding of the organization. That funding can be used however the leadership at ICIMOD sees fit. External funders make up the other portion of ICIMOD's funding. This funding often has stipulations and goals that ICIMOD is required to work toward if they are going to continue to receive funding in the future.

      Because core funding is limited at the moment, ICIMOD seeks grants from external funders like Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the United Kingdom's Department of International Development (DFID), and other international partners who are working toward different but related goals. As discussed earlier, progress can be viewed from many different angles, and the success of completing a grant is one version of progress, even when it might not clearly relate to the organization's short-term goals. While it might not directly move ICIMOD toward a regional cooperation agreement, external grants often help fund projects that help build relationships between governments and communities, develop workshops and trainings, or build research groups in important regions. External funding is the life blood of ICIMOD at the moment, limiting the organization's ability to pursue projects that advance its long-term goals, rather than remain beholden to external funding requirements. According to one interviewee, their goal is to limit external funding that includes stipulations that are unrelated to their objectives as often as possible and work strictly from the core funding by investing money that will allow ICIMOD to be self-sustaining.

Staffing Decisions

      The staff of an organization is often the public face of the work being done, and therefore can significantly impact the support received within the region. Because there are cultural and political conflicts in each region, the staff must be conscientious of norms within the regions they work. How each organization hires and utilizes their staff can enable or constrain the connections and relationships they build with stakeholders at both the governmental and community levels.

<u>EcoPeace Middle East</u>

While not the case for all positions, EcoPeace will often try to select their staff based on their citizenship. Due to the intense conflict in the region and overall lack of trust of the other countries, it can be easier to build relationships in a community if the population identifies with the organization's employees. Combined with the fact that EcoPeace works out of three separate offices, it is apparent they are doing what they can to limit the appearance of political bias.

EcoPeace is particularly selective for its governmental liaison in each country. As with many governments around the world, knowing the right people in the government helps influence policy. The reality in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan is that relatives and friends of high level officials have influence that others might not and are therefore highly sought after when trying to make policy changes from outside of the government. The ability to successfully lobby a government comes with connections, so EcoPeace tries to hire those who have the strongest connections.

<u>ICIMOD</u>

The staff of ICIMOD must frequently interact with government officials, NGOs, and land managers. The people selected for these roles in an organization as apolitical as ICIMOD can significantly impact the organization's legitimacy and how other countries perceive them as a whole. As with any organization that works on policy, there are liaisons and specialists who are well-versed in the norms and politics in each country, as well as in the region as a whole. These staff members are often consulted when a program is making a decision that a member country might have a concern about. For example, when discussing who to invite to a particular conference or negotiation, one of ICIMOD's staff might consult with a specialist to determine who can be invited and which issues can be discussed. This approach allows ICIMOD to remain neutral and to preserve the confidence of their member countries as they move forward. Generally, the transboundary staff consists of citizens of the member countries, which helps to create the foundation for a strong understanding of the regional cultures, politics, and resources.

Short-term vs. Long-term Progress

What the staff experiences in the day-to-day work might differ from what the leadership experiences, and that can result in a difference of opinion on what the short-term goals should entail to achieve the long-term goals. This dichotomy may reveal itself through the staff perceptions of organizational goals and priorities.

Unfortunately, an analysis of staff perceptions of long and short-term goals would be best served by interviews with those staff members, so there is no analysis here of EcoPeace's staff's perceptions of their progress. It remains an important factor, and many interviewees at ICIMOD addressed the factor.

ICIMOD

For ICIMOD, the staff's perception of progress can differ at times from the organization's mandate and strategy. While the staff is well aware of the long and short-term goals laid out by the organization, there is, at times, a difference of opinion between the mandated goal and what the staff believes to be a feasible outcome. Based on the interviews, the issues that a staff member might face in implementing projects or other activities might be seen as an indication that the short-term goals of the organization might not be the most effective path toward the long-term goal. There is no indication that staff members are critical of the long-term goal or mandate they are working toward, only that the short-term goals to achieve that progress are not always apparent in their day-to-day work.

An example from ICIMOD deals with one of their short-term goals of achieving a multilateral agreement between the three countries in one of their designated regions. At times, the staff members have difficulty convincing government officials from certain countries to even attend meetings. This does not mean that the staff member believes a regional framework to be impossible, but that the short term goal of a multilateral agreement is not necessarily the most productive short-term goal for that region. While the staff might not believe that a multilateral agreement is the next step in the process, resources continue to be allocated for the pursuit of an agreement since ICIMOD's leadership makes funding decisions.

Contextual Factors

The context in which an organization is created and operates influences the decisions made at both the organizational and strategic levels. EcoPeace and ICIMOD exist within two very different contexts and that affects what they are able to accomplish. Notable contextual factors include: the sense of urgency about the issues; the scope of the conflict and the geography of the region; and the existing international policy.

Sense of Urgency

Even if everything else lines up as planned, when the community and relevant stakeholders do not believe there is a need for change, progress can be slow. The presence of urgency within the region is necessary to build a foundation of support for an organization's goals.

EcoPeace Middle East

The level of urgency in the Jordan River Valley can be examined at three different levels: international, national governments, and local communities.

The international community's general sense of concern over climate change and the near constant discussion of the Israel-Palestine conflict means that there is quite a bit of focus on any strategies that could help bridge the divide. The United Nations's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN Security Council's various statements on the conflict as a whole underscore an international focus on the region. From an international perspective, the interest in EcoPeace seems less focused on the protection of the resources and more on the collaborative peacebuilding process. Either way, EcoPeace has been subject to considerable attention, and that attention appears to be growing as the situation along the river grows more dire. International organizations and foreign governments looking to build peace in the Middle East or create some sense of stability in the region can now look to EcoPeace as a potential partner.

From the national governments' perspective, there seems to be variation in the level of interest in cooperation. The power dynamics in the region leave Israel as the well-funded, powerful leader along the river and the Israeli government has been less willing to acknowledge the need for cooperation to provide clean drinking water to people outside of Israel. Beyond that, Palestinian and Jordanian leadership seems to understand the need for

protecting the river basin's resources, but there is still significant distrust and therefore a lack of support for collaboration at the government level. In 2013, a memorandum of understanding was signed by the water ministers of all three countries to commit to working on shared water and energy issues ("Water & Energy Nexus, n.d.). While the signatures are non-binding and very little has occurred to build on that MOU, it is certainly a step in the right direction.

At the community level, people are well aware of the environmental and health issues being faced by those on either side of the river. Farmers have limited access to water for irrigation, sewage collection is a constant problem, and the river water is heavily polluted. Due to the urgency of those dependent on the river, there is certainly an initial interest in cross-border collaboration, despite the ongoing conflict between the states. For example, EcoPeace points out that "the establishment of a model farm in the Jordanian community of South Ghore, where the local farmers and Israeli farmers from the Tamar Regional Council work together to improve the local agricultural practices in order to both increase productivity and solve the problem of houseflies…("Community Involvement, n.d.)" The issue appears to be cultivating an urgency and desire to collaborate.

ICIMOD

The level of urgency in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region can be examined at three different levels: governmental, regional land managers, and local communities and partners.

At the governmental level, the ICIMOD staff perception is that governments are generally aware of the importance of protecting the environment and the danger of climate change. It seems they are less aware or possibly less convinced by the value of collaborative transboundary landscape management. Governments have a finite number of resources to handle a seemingly infinite number of problems, meaning they can only contribute so much of their capacity to landscape management. ICIMOD works with many organizations or agencies at the national level, many of which do not share the same mandate as ICIMOD, even tangentially. For example, the focal point for their relationship with China is the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). While individual employees of CAS might feel that regional cooperation is the best way to move forward, their resources are not going to be diverted to it because that is not the academy's mandate. The issue for ICIMOD is that the

government officials are the decision makers who are able to sign on to regional agreements, a major goal of the organization. Therefore, the lack of urgency at the governmental level constrains ICIMOD's progress because they first have to prove that transboundary, regional agreements are not only an option, but the best strategy for countries to pursue.

Similarly, regional partners like the forest managers or regional agencies that oversee environmental issues often do not hold the same mandate as ICIMOD. Ministries of Forestry, for example, are often strictly focused on the forests of their country. While there are countries in the HKH that allocate a significant amount of resources toward resource management, the focus is on the country's own resources. Again, the problem for ICIMOD is that they now need to find ways to implement their strategies with agencies who do not necessarily need to work with ICIMOD. The way ICIMOD works around this reality is to fund and organize trainings and workshops that educate agency employees about the programs ICIMOD is focusing on. One example of success in this regard deals with poaching. As one interviewee commented, "...we did a training between India and Nepal foresters, and after six months, they caught snow leopard skins based on that training." This interviewee goes on to describe how border security was able to confiscate other skins after being trained on what to look for from people smuggling poached animals across the border to sell to other communities. Once again, there might be a sense of urgency at the individual level in these agencies, but their own organizational mandate limits the actions they are able to take toward ICIMOD's goals. Hence, it is imperative for ICIMOD to show how the two can work together.

In contrast, the communities in the region are perceived to have a sense of urgency about the relevance of transboundary cooperation in the HKH. Business owners, traders, herders, farmers and many other groups have first-hand experience with how ecosystems require transboundary collaboration and the risk that climate change presents. Many economies are reliant on trade between villages across the border from one another, so the issue of illegal trade and tourism are very relevant to people in each community. In Tibet, an industry has developed around a fungus that grows on caterpillars during the winters, and can only be harvested during a short period of time in the spring. Nicknamed "Himalayan Gold" due to the exceptionally high value, this fungus is used as a natural remedy to certain medical issues. Historically, it has been regulated by the Chinese government at certain times, but

deregulated at others. The uncertainty that inconsistent policy creates makes business difficult for traders of the fungus. Climate change is creating warmer winters, leading to shorter harvesting seasons, which is leading to a shortage of the fungus. From both the economic perspective and the ecological perspective, communities are quite aware of the issues at hand.

The perception from the ICIMOD staff is that those communities are not in agreement on how best to go about solving the problem, specifically from an economic perspective. While an agreement between China and Nepal would be an option for regulation, traders worry about changes in regulation over time and the uncertainty that brings. ICIMOD's perception is that the communities feel that continued illegal trade is the path forward because it is a system they know and understand. ICIMOD's role at that point is to work with partners in the region to implement programs that would develop a better understanding at the regional and national level of the problem.

Scope of the Conflict/ Geography of the Region

In the most general sense, the two regions in question are experiencing vastly different types of conflicts in regions that differ substantially. The Jordan River Valley is a fraction of the size of the Hindu Kush Himalayas. Additionally, the natural resources, ecosystems, populations, and cultures of the two regions are all vastly different. The attributes of the regions and conflicts influence each organization's decisions.

EcoPeace Middle East

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most intractable conflicts in modern history, and the struggle that plays out on a daily basis affects virtually every aspect of life in the region. The conflict is consistently violent and decades of war have created pervasive distrust between communities based solely on nationality. Israel holds substantial power in the region, bolstered by significant funding from the United States' military aid package. Palestine has struggled to hold on to any power, resulting in frequent settler disputes as more Israelis settle in Palestinian territory. Jordan has historically been a strong ally of Palestine, legitimizing their claim to parts of the region. Combining the high level conflict with the damaged water resources, this region is a perfect example of where environmental peacebuilding could be used.

In the spirit of environmental peacebuilding, EcoPeace's response to this conflict has been to work with communities to implement projects that benefit multiple stakeholders. Often, direct collaboration is limited between communities due to the high level of ongoing conflict and distrust. Despite this tension, EcoPeace has continued to develop programs and projects on each side of the river that have seen progress and continue to work on building the relationships necessary for peacebuilding to eventually occur. Considering the scale of the conflict in the region, EcoPeace has continued to focus efforts on the eventual agreements they hope for.

ICIMOD

The fact that the HKH region (with the exception of Kashmir) is not experiencing as direct of a conflict as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict allows ICIMOD to approach transboundary collaboration differently than EcoPeace. Overall, the HKH region is influenced heavily by soft-power that comes from pressure that India and China are able to exert over the rest of the region (the Indian-Pakistani border is a relatively separate issue that ICIMOD has been careful to avoid). Because of this regional dominance, ICIMOD has focused primarily on the issues outlined previously like snow leopard protection and ecotourism, rather than contentious issues like shared water resources for example.

As shown by the Transboundary Landscapes initiative at ICIMOD, there are complexities in the HKH that require the organization to break the larger area into smaller, more manageable regions. These regions are largely based on significant transboundary ecological areas like forests or basins for which ICIMOD would like to create a regional plan. From there, ICIMOD is able to individualize the five year, short-term goals to each region. Many of the regional programs pursue similar strategies and focus on human-wildlife interactions, but are able to make better progress at a smaller scale than if they strictly worked on an entire framework for the HKH as a whole.

From a political perspective, the size of the region lends itself to differences in how each country pursues its objectives. Differences in culture, ethnicity, religion, politics, and countless other traits in the region mean that agreements are inherently difficult to develop. Even when it comes to implementation of projects and programs, one interviewee discussed how certain countries use different criteria to determine which communities to select:

"[The Chinese], they consider it a demonstration site, a pilot area, so they
always choose places where it's easy to go. But in [Myanmar] they choose these
places where they think they need it most, the type of support. In [India], I think
they consider the accessibility and also their dependence on the resources."

These differences cause difficulties with implementation. Another interviewee
mentioned that some sites are within minutes of an airport while others require a multi-
day hike. The scale of the HKH region, and even of the smaller regions ICIMOD has
outlined, creates challenges but also allows for ICIMOD to focus more on "soft issues"
like tourism and trade.

Existing International Policy

One factor that influences the context of each organization is the existing
international policies that relate to their work. Often, international organizations set
standards, make a call to action, or prompt discussion on relevant topics. Adherence to
international policy can influence funding to the organization, but this section focuses on
how it can spark the development of programs and ideas within each region.

EcoPeace Middle East

In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, international policy has had a
significant influence on the progress of EcoPeace. The success and failure of certain policies
has defined the direction EcoPeace has been able to find growth. Direct foreign interference
in the conflict and policies less directly related have both enabled and constrained the
progress of EcoPeace.

Even today, EcoPeace has been forced to deal with the repercussions of the ongoing
conflict in the region, the broader context of the Middle East, and the international attention
both of those bring. For example, the United States has relied on Israel as a stable partner in
the Middle East for decades, and has consistently funded vast portions of Israel's military. In
return, the United States gains an ally in a chaotic region. The two states almost always vote
to support each other at the United Nations. In 2019, the United States decided to step up its
support of Israel, leading to a decrease in United States Agency for International
Development (USAID) funding going to Palestine. Part of that funding was planned for
EcoPeace and its efforts, but was cut due to the presence of an EcoPeace office in Palestine.

ICIMOD

In the HKH region, there has been a call from climate scientists for the collection of more data. In particular, the 2019 IPCC report recognized the lack of research in the HKH, particularly on the cryosphere. In response, ICIMOD worked with regional and national partners to develop the Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme Report (HIMAP) to address the many factors influencing sustainable development and management of the HKH region. Long before the 2019 IPCC report, ICIMOD began advocating for sustainable management of forests in their member countries in response to goals outlined in the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, and that advocacy eventually led to their REDD+ program. Specific international policies can often motivate direct action.

More broadly, calls to action from organizations like the United Nations and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) begin to provide standards for countries to rally around when looking at sustainable development. On one hand, these policies at times provide legitimacy to the work of ICIMOD when they work alongside skeptical partners. On the other hand, funding can often be based on progress toward achieving a particular SDG, which might pull ICIMOD away from their main goals. Overall, international policy can enable ICIMOD's progress by increasing awareness and funding for the issues, but may constrain progress toward long-term goals.

Strategic Factors

Each organization has pursued a different strategy to progress toward its objectives. How these organizations implement their programs and interact with governments or the public can influence how they progress. The key strategic differences include: the broad strategy, data-sharing, and the inclusion of private industry.

Broad Strategy

The operationalization of an organization's mandate develops into its overall strategy. As defined previously, "top-down" and "bottom-up" refer to how, where, and with whom ICIMOD and EcoPeace pursue activities.

EcoPeace Middle East

EcoPeace employs a combination of the "bottom-up" and "top-down" strategies to advance the protection of the resources in the river basin. The prevailing focus for EcoPeace

staff seems to be on the community level projects, but they realize that building strong relationships with the governments in the region is equally important because governments have the power to limit which projects move forward. The use of both strategies enables EcoPeace to have more influence over the process of land management at both the community and government levels.

EcoPeace specifically identifies these two strategies as the basis for their project development and resource allocation but, in general, they have worked to find projects that are relevant to as many communities as possible, while trying to create a sense of ownership over the outcomes. Whether this is done through connecting communities, working with the agriculture industry, or changing policy is less important to the organization than adhering to a strict strategy. The general perception appears to be that the community development side of EcoPeace is the more resilient and effective method for building toward future agreements.

ICIMOD

ICIMOD has chosen to approach transboundary landscape collaboration from a different angle than EcoPeace. While ICIMOD continues to support organizations that are working at the community level, their focus has been almost exclusively on regional agreements between countries. By breaking the landscape down into broader ecosystem-based regions, they hope to convince governments in that region to work together to protect the shared resource. Most of the interviewees spoke about the commitment to achieving bilateral and multilateral agreements. Almost no projects are focused on a "bottom-up" approach at ICIMOD.

The general belief at ICIMOD is that transboundary landscape management in the HKH will be most successful with a high level policy to which all of the countries in the region can agree. From ICIMOD's perspective, centralized governments hold the vast majority of the power when it comes to protecting the landscape. While this does not necessarily align with the literature which has pointed to the potential value of decentralizing landscape management efforts (Ribot, 2003), ICIMOD has pursued that premise almost exclusively.

ICIMOD's focus on decision-makers means they are able to utilize their available resources more effectively. Included in their top-down strategy are activities like education and facilitation, of which they perceive the latter to be their primary strength. Facilitation of workshops, trainings, and negotiations as a neutral party to the government officials at the table is an effective way for ICIMOD to remain relevant when there are many other organizations working on similar issues. While they have decided to limit the scope of their strategy to the "top-down" approach, they have worked to find their own space in that setting.

Data-Sharing

The organizations both see data-sharing between communities and policy makers as a first-step toward broader environmental protections and peacebuilding. Though EcoPeace and ICIMOD pursue their research and data-sharing differently, they both anticipate that the process could lead to stronger communication and agreements between the participants.

EcoPeace Middle East

While EcoPeace has focused heavily on community development, there is a portion of their work that is research-based. In the spirit of peacebuilding, the organization has focused its research efforts on developing the data necessary to prove that their proposed programs will be productive. The "Water and Energy Nexus" program at EcoPeace has identified the need for energy and desalinated water by the three states and allocates the responsibility of production to the areas that are best suited for it. If successful, the program would build a foundation for collaboration, provide important resources to all communities, and strengthen the argument for continued sustainable development. The involvement of all three countries allows each stakeholder to feel a sense of ownership over the project as a whole, and the development of credible research on the topic means that there should be a sense of trust in the final program.

At the community level, EcoPeace engages in trainings, workshops, and education programs to bring key sectors together. Teaching school children about the health of the river alongside their cross-border counterparts could show that despite the cultural differences, there is a common connection to and interest in the protection of the basin. This is the epitome of the "bottom-up" strategy for EcoPeace. Working on the ground to provide

communities an opportunity to engage with and learn about their environment creates a baseline, shared understanding of the status and uses of the river. EcoPeace's version of research and data-sharing is a fundamental pillar of their work, and will likely enable their progress.

ICIMOD

ICIMOD has made "data-sharing" a foundational step before moving forward with transboundary collaboration. They see the development of data collection techniques and knowledge sharing as a way to influence the region without forcing governments to make political commitments. For example, ICIMOD has developed the Indus Forum, which is a program staffed by researchers of each country along the Indus River that seeks to collect data on the cryosphere and the rest of the basin and share that data amongst the countries. Projects like these are developed at the government level, particularly by the central governments of the countries.

The foundation of data-sharing in the region is standardizing the data collection process. A standardized data collection process is a way for countries to work independently but trust that the data collected by other countries is reliable and valid. One way ICIMOD tries to do this is by getting groups like the Indus Forum to agree to a set of standards before pursuing research. More generally, though, ICIMOD uses localized workshops and educational trainings with experts in a particular science to show other researchers how to standardize their data collection practices. Bringing in an expert legitimizes the program while a group training provides ownership over the practices and the potential for relationship-building.

Research and the pursuit of data-sharing agreements can build the foundation for long-term trust between researchers first, and eventually agencies as a whole. The other benefit of this strategy is that it avoids conflict because everyone was involved in the research process, making it difficult to claim bias from another country. It is far easier to build toward a regional agreement when all of the research supporting the proposals was developed by representatives of the countries.

Collaboration with Private Industry

Historically, economic interests generally are at odds with environmental interests. The broad umbrella of private industry includes industries like manufacturing, energy production, trade, and countless others. While there are many stakeholders in each of these regions, private industry's involvement in environmental policy generally and transboundary landscape management specifically has been quite minimal in the past. How ICIMOD and EcoPeace utilize the resources and expertise of the private sector has enabled a shift in the outcomes of their programs.

EcoPeace Middle East

One significant action that EcoPeace has taken to protect the water in the region is to work with local farms to implement more sustainable farming practices. EcoPeace has worked on water reduction techniques, pollution reduction techniques, and is looking at how to reduce the use of plastics in agriculture.

As will be discussed next, ICIMOD must use the private industry as a partner to prove their worth to the individual governments. EcoPeace, on the other hand, can use the local farms as another step toward collaboration and peacebuilding, while continuing to further their environmental goals. In the case of plastic reduction in agriculture, EcoPeace has responded to the issue by studying the benefits of plastic mulch film use, identified sustainable methods to produce similar results, and shared them with farmers across the region. From here, technical reports like the one developed from EcoPeace's plastic mulch film research can be used to connect communities through shared experimentation and learning while turning toward sustainable farming practices (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency et al., 2019).

While partnerships with small-scale private industry – like local farms – can certainly build good will within the respective governments, it does not seem to be the main intention of EcoPeace in this case. Returning to the plastic mulch film case, EcoPeace partnered with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and Battelle, a research and development agency, to produce the reports and recommendations for farmers. The information has been shared and used along the river by farmers and communities. Instead of partnering with one government over another, EcoPeace worked to create objective data that could help farmers

implement more sustainable practices without increasing the burden on the agricultural industry.

ICIMOD

Initially, ICIMOD was exclusively focused on the protection of the ecological aspects of the transboundary landscapes - forests, endangered species, water, etc. During that phase, private industry's role in the decision-making process at ICIMOD was virtually nonexistent. When they finally transitioned toward a focus on the human-wildlife conflict aspect of transboundary landscape management, a greater emphasis was put on including private industry in their work.

Because many of the human-wildlife conflict issues ICIMOD is focused on include some form of a private industry, there is potential for ICIMOD to work with that sector. They see three main points where the private sector could or should play a prominent role. First, due to the complications involved in creating transboundary agreements, private industry could help educate and develop communities around ecotourism and transboundary medicinal plant trade. For example, some communities in China have more success in attracting tourists than their counterparts across the many borders. ICIMOD sees this as an opportunity to involve those business owners within the collaborative process by including them in trainings and the development of action plans to educate others. Additionally, enabling business owners to train business owners on the other side of the border how to grow medicinal plants would limit the impact that changes in biodiversity trade policy have on local economies. This appears to be more a "soft" entry into the collaborative process for the private sector. Next, as transboundary collaboration becomes more established, many interviewees see the private sector as an important consultant in the regulatory process. As experts in their respective industries, they may have a lot to offer in determining how effective particular agreements on landscape management might be or how it might impact their business. Finally, ICIMOD sees the private sector as a potential ally from a coalition-building standpoint. The countries in the HKH will continue to work on moving from the "developing category and create a strong middle class" as one interviewee stated. They added that this means "...development initiatives, making big hydro dams, building six lane highways, but then you cannot go against those development fundamentals of a nation." To

move forward under those circumstances, ICIMOD will have to work with the private sector that is pushing for those development projects. Working with the private sector in that capacity might not be ideal, but it could be the only way to simultaneously advance transboundary landscape management goals.

Conclusion

The initial objective when pursuing this research was to better understand transboundary ecosystem management and the collaborative processes that enable it, in both theory and practice. EcoPeace provided an opportunity to observe an organization using a relevant theory – environmental peacebuilding – in a particularly intense conflict. Therefore, this study provides both case-specific and broader insights to transboundary ecosystem management.

This study also adds to the existing literature of case studies regarding the implementation of environmental peacebuilding. The findings of the study align with the existing literature on collaborative resource management and transboundary landscape management. Relationship-building, the importance of urgency among participants to address pressing issues, and many other factors have been shown to be important throughout the literature, though the study also identified factors that were particularly important for environmental peacebuilding. Future research might identify the relationships between these organizational, contextual, and strategic factors to develop a stronger understanding of the conditions in which transboundary ecosystem management occurs. Further research into any of these factors could provide insight to the relative importance of each factor.

Objective 1: Key Organizational, Contextual and Strategic Factors

The first objective of this research was to identify the organizational, strategic, and contextual factors that enable or constrain each organization's activities and progress. Understanding these factors and how they are similar and different across the two organizations provides a basis for assessing the potential transferability of the EcoPeace model to the ICIMOD world. This study identified and analyzed 11 factors.

Organizational Factors

Organizational factors identified include the genesis of the organization, the focus of the work, funding sources and requirements, staffing decisions, and short-term vs. long-term progress.

The *genesis of the organization* relates to the formation of each organization and what that formation means for each organization's ability to operate within its region. The genesis of an organization determines the parameters within which it can work and what the organization can or cannot do. EcoPeace was formed as a nongovernmental organization

with a mission that focuses on the importance of community-building. As a nongovernmental organization, EcoPeace's strategy and operational decisions are guided by a board of directors who are in turn guided by the mission of the organization. This structure and genesis gives EcoPeace the ability to work with the public and the governments of Israel, Jordan, and Palestine with the flexibility to engage in political discourse when necessary. The downside for EcoPeace is that their genesis is not legitimized by the backing of the three governments, meaning that EcoPeace must use their flexibility to ensure that communities on either side of the Jordan River trust the work being done. In contrast, ICIMOD is an intergovernmental organization that was created by an agreement between eight countries in the Hindu Kush Himalayas (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan). The mandate formed by the member countries requires that the organization remain apolitical in all of its functions. ICIMOD uses the legitimacy bestowed upon it by the intergovernmental agreement to engage organizations and local governments in a top-down manner, but lacks the flexibility to pursue some issues that might help the organization to better protect the resources and the people of the HKH region. Transboundary agreements are still pursued, though the sovereignty of the member countries is always a priority.

The *focus of the work* relates to the projects that each organization has pursued to achieve their goals. EcoPeace has largely focused on human-centric projects. EcoPeace's work engages communities on either side of the Jordan River to develop projects that will not only protect the river's health, but that will also help communities solve issues that are relevant to them like water scarcity and pollution. EcoPeace uses the protection of the natural resource to bring people together. ICIMOD focuses primarily on ecological management and conservation. ICIMOD still works with communities to promote sustainable resource use, but its focus is on protecting the wildlife and ecosystems within the HKH region. This distinction between the two organizations stems from the vastly different resources found in each region. The small region and high population density of the Levant require EcoPeace to engage communities first, while the massive scale of the HKH and the resources within it allow ICIMOD to focus on the ecosystems.

Funding sources can heavily influence how an organization pursues its objectives and how the staff perceives the feasibility of the long and short-term goals of the organization.

While information on the funding sources of EcoPeace was limited, interviewees at ICIMOD spoke frequently of the difficulties they face with funding. Part of ICIMOD's funding comes from the member countries, while the other part of their funding comes from grants from external funders. The external funding is often used to fund particular programs while the internal funding is allocated to operational expenses and a few core programs (often outside of the transboundary program). The external grants for programs are often tied to specific outcomes that the funder requires of ICIMOD. The reason that funding is a relevant factor for ICIMOD is that many of the grants they receive are not directly related to the organization's objectives, meaning that their short-term goals must diverge from the strategy ICIMOD had previously developed. Though this is a challenge that many organizations face, the requirements of external funding can often enable or constrain progress towards an organization's objectives.

Both EcoPeace and ICIMOD operate within complex geopolitical regions, which requires each organization to make *staffing decisions* with the pursuit of legitimacy and effectiveness in mind. How each organization selects its employees is particularly relevant in the governmental liaison position. Due to regional norms, EcoPeace often pursues government liaisons and policy staff that are well connected to the governments in each country. Family ties, friendships, and other connections to government officials are all helpful when trying to influence high-level policy. ICIMOD's government specialists and liaisons are hired to ensure that programs, strategies, and activities remain apolitical in the eyes of each member country. An important objective for ICIMOD is ensuring government officials come to the table when it is time to work on an agreement. Government specialists work within ICIMOD as liaisons to government officials to build strong relationships and connections with those officials to make the collaborative process easier.

The staff perceptions of the organization's *short-term and long-term progress* can result in a difference of opinion between the leadership of the organization and program staff. An inability to interview EcoPeace staff members means that there is no analysis of EcoPeace on this factor, but it was a relevant factor for ICIMOD's staff. At ICIMOD, most of the disconnect between short-term and long-term goals appeared to stem from the struggles faced in achieving short-term goals. For example, the staff at ICIMOD seemed to support the long-term goal of developing a regional framework in the HKH, but the short-

term goal of achieving a multilateral agreement has faced continuous complications. At times, the staff perception is that they should consider pursuing other short-term goals that could lead to the same long-term goal.

Contextual Factors

The sense of urgency about the issues, the scope of the conflict, the geography of the region, and existing international policy are contextual factors that both organizations must acknowledge as objectives are pursued.

The *sense of urgency* factor relates to the belief of relevant stakeholders that the objectives that each organization is pursuing are relevant and important. If there is no sense of urgency in a community or a government, progress can be slow. For EcoPeace, the international community and the local communities both seem to feel a sense of urgency for EcoPeace's work. For the international community, the ongoing conflict and the geopolitical context of the region are more than enough for international funders and policy makers to feel that environmental peacebuilding is an urgent matter. At the community level, the issues that EcoPeace is trying to resolve are deteriorating the livelihoods of people on both sides of the Jordan River, so they are looking for solutions. At the national government level, though, the governments seem to have differing opinions on the urgency of environmental peacebuilding. Jordan and Palestine have actively and openly pursued the protection of the Jordan River but Israel has not been as open to the idea, likely due to the significant power it holds over the region. For ICIMOD, the overall sense of urgency is not as strong. National governments in the HKH region are perceived to understand the significance of climate change, but are less convinced of the importance of transboundary agreements and regional frameworks. Regional partners like local governments and organizations might feel that transboundary collaboration is urgent, but their mandate likely does not support the pursuit of an agreement. In the HKH region, the communities and local populations seem to have a high sense of urgency, likely because they deal with natural resource trade between communities and the degradation of ecosystems every day. Transboundary agreements could significantly improve their livelihoods, so communities feel ICIMOD's work is important.

The *scope of the conflict* and the *geography of the region* in which each organization operates significantly influences its progress. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a seemingly intractable conflict taking place in a relatively small region. The ongoing conflict affects

almost all aspects of daily life on either side of the borders. With the Jordan River being used as a tool in the conflict, environmental peacebuilding is particularly relevant in this region. In contrast, the HKH region is vast and diverse in both population and biodiversity. The power in the region is held primarily by China and India, but any conflicts that arise elsewhere tend to be less violent in nature. Protection of the natural resources in the HKH might not benefit from an environmental peacebuilding strategy in the same way that it might in the Middle East.

The existing *international policies* that exist within each region can predetermine how funding is allocated, what objectives are deemed necessary, and how organizations are perceived by communities. International policies have severely influenced EcoPeace's operations since its formation. When U.S.-led peace negotiations in the 1990s were unsuccessful and violence once again broke out, EcoPeace's legitimacy was harmed as they were viewed as complicit. The ongoing international debate over Palestine's statehood and changes in U.S. foreign policy has resulted in lost funding for EcoPeace. EcoPeace continues to pursue its objectives, despite the volatility in international policy. For ICIMOD, recent international attention to the HKH has spurred the inception of research programs and dialogue between member countries that has even led to increased funding for programs at ICIMOD. While funding can often be attached to existing policies like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, ICIMOD has benefitted from increased international attention to the region.

Strategic Factors

Finally, strategic factors include the organizations' broad strategy, data-sharing, and collaboration with private industry.

The *broad strategy* that each organization pursues relates to how EcoPeace and ICIMOD approach their objectives from a strategic point of view. Along the Jordan River, EcoPeace engages in both top-down and bottom-up work which allows it to build strong relationships with government officials to influence policy (top-down) while also working with communities to build the foundation for local peace and resource management efforts (bottom-up). Generally, though, EcoPeace's efforts have primarily focused on the bottom-up strategy as they have pursued transboundary projects by engaging many communities along the Jordan River which has, in turn, created community support. In contrast, ICIMOD has

focused almost exclusively on the top-down approach. The workshops, trainings, and other activities that the staff pursue are heavily focused on bringing relevant local officials, land managers, and organizations together to build transboundary agreements. The perception at ICIMOD is that high-level, top-down policy will be the most effective method for change in the HKH region due to existing power dynamics. For example, China's control over every aspect of local and national government requires ICIMOD to engage with government officials rather than communities, unless permission is given by the national government. ICIMOD does work with partner organizations in the HKH region that are more likely to pursue a bottom-up strategy.

Data-sharing is an activity pursued by both organizations to create relationships with other stakeholders and to build legitimacy with governments and communities. Data-sharing relates to how each organization develops and distributes research to achieve its objectives. For EcoPeace, data-sharing is used at both the policy and the community levels. EcoPeace uses programs like their Water and Energy Nexus to develop research that justifies continued governmental support of EcoPeace and its programs. Data that is developed out of these programs is shared with the national governments to demonstrate the need for continued collaboration. At the community level, EcoPeace operates programs that enable communities to interact with the river and other resources, collect data on those resources, and better understand how the resources are used by other communities. These efforts fit in to the environmental peacebuilding model by showing each community that despite an ongoing conflict, they share a connection to the river with communities on the other side of the border. ICIMOD's data-sharing efforts focus heavily on the importance of creating trust between member countries in the HKH region. Standardized data collection methods and data-sharing helps ensure that government officials can discuss transboundary agreements and resource protection with a foundational set of trusted data. Involving everyone in the data collection and sharing process can resulted in a stronger dialogue.

Finally, collaboration with private industry is a strategy that both organizations use to enhance progress toward their objectives. Collaboration often comes in the form of project or training support. For EcoPeace, collaboration with private industry is best showcased by the work it has done with local farmers to implement sustainable farming techniques and the reduction of plastic pollution from agriculture. EcoPeace's intentional engagement with

private farms supports their overall objectives by creating a goal that farmers on both sides of the river can pursue which will, in turn, help protect the health of the Jordan River. EcoPeace's collaboration with private industry is largely project-based. ICIMOD often collaborates with private industry to enhance existing ecosystem management efforts through training programs. For example, to reduce the trade of medicinal plants, ICIMOD might work with private industry to train business owners in other countries how to grow their own plants. Additionally, ICIMOD might work with business owners from a city with a lot of tourism to teach other business owners how to create a tourism-friendly market.

How ICIMOD and its staff perceive the work being done and the factors that influence that work can provide valuable insight to the possible incompatibilities EcoPeace might encounter in trying to transfer their model to other regions in the world. EcoPeace must consider what factors enable or constrain the organizations within a prospective region and whether or not the environmental peacebuilding model fits the organizational and geopolitical context. This study has found that the organizational, contextual, and strategic differences between EcoPeace and ICIMOD could limit the full implementation of EcoPeace's model in the HKH region.

Objective 2: Considerations in assessing transferability of the EcoPeace model

This case study, which was limited to a comparison of EcoPeace and ICIMOD, observed that there are four key limiting factors that should be recognized when assessing the transferability of the environmental peacebuilding model to the HKH region. These factors should also be considered when identifying other regions and conflicts where EcoPeace's model might be transferred.

1. Organization's Genesis

First, the genesis of each organization is an organizational factor that plays a strong role in decision-making within each organization and can provide flexibility or legitimacy depending on how the organization was founded. For EcoPeace, the adherence to the mission statement and goals of environmental peacebuilding has allowed it to remain flexible and to pursue the projects deemed important, with limited political constraints. ICIMOD's mandate requires its efforts to remain apolitical, which has inhibited staff's ability to pursue certain projects, but has provided ICIMOD with more legitimacy due to its governmental ties.

Hence, working at the community level in a collaborative resource management process is physically, politically, and organizationally challenging.

2. Conflict Scope and Geography

Second, the scope of each conflict and the geography of the regions produce vastly different realities that each organization must respond to. The Jordan River Valley, where EcoPeace operates, is a densely populated region with significant natural resource constraints and a long-standing, seemingly intractable conflict. ICIMOD must operate within a much larger territory that has far more ecosystem variability and natural resource base. It is home to a much less densely populated region. EcoPeace's model might be manageable in the Middle East, but the vast HKH region limits its application. The lower population density over a larger region makes community-based programs far more difficult and inefficient to implement in the HKH region.

3. International Policies and Politics

The existing international policies in each region make the context within which EcoPeace and ICIMOD operate particularly difficult. Multiple failed attempts at creating peace in the Middle East have only exacerbated the tensions between Palestine and Israel, while China and India have a strong influence over all of the HKH region. Resource conflicts around the world often draw the attention of the international community, so the regions that could benefit from EcoPeace's model could already be steeped in complex, international politics.

4. Broad Organizational Strategies

Finally, the broad strategy of EcoPeace and ICIMOD will limit the transferability of EcoPeace's model to the HKH, though it could lead to an exchange of lessons learned by EcoPeace. EcoPeace has largely focused on a "bottom-up" approach which works at the community level to bring cross-border populations together to build the relationships and conditions for peace at that level. Application of the EcoPeace bottom-up, relationship-building model by ICIMOD in HKH is incompatible with the realities of that region and organization. ICIMOD has exclusively worked with policymakers from the "top-down" to try to develop multi-lateral agreements that could help protect the HKH. Each organization has excelled in their use of each strategy, and could likely teach the other the lessons learned.

This comparative analysis of the programs and approaches of EcoPeace and ICIMOD has highlighted many of the key factors influencing an organization's choice of strategies. While this study was limited in scope given the number of individuals able to be interviewed at ICIMOD and its reliance on secondary sources for EcoPeace, it nonetheless clearly identifies some of the major distinguishing characteristics of organizations and regions that should be recognized when considering the potential feasibility of transferring a model – such as environmental peacebuilding – that works in one region to an entirely different region.

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