

Valuing Cultural Services of the Kailash Sacred Landscape for Sustainable Management

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Abstract

Hindu Kush Himalaya is home to many cultural and religious sites. The literature on the valuation of cultural sites in the mountain terrains is thin. Hence, their development and sustainability are often ignored. Using primary survey data from three different sites in the Kailash Sacred Landscape of India and Nepal, the cultural value of religious sites to the visitors and households living in the surrounding areas was estimated using a modified travel cost method. As visitors travel by foot and offer donations at the religious sites, the estimations account for these aspects in travel cost calculations. For the sample sites, the per year average use value of cultural services was estimated to be USD 2.9 million. Excluding the use value to the outside visitors, the annual estimated use value of cultural services to the approximately 200,000 households of the entire KSL area, which covers 31,252 km², is over USD 22.6 million, which is over 7% and 15% of the per capita income of Indian and Nepali households, respectively, indicating the importance of the natural-cultural environments in rural livelihoods. The estimated values will help planners manage these cultural sites sustainably for improving the livelihoods of the people living in the area.