



ICIMOD

Strengths and Comparative Advantages

Over the two decades of its existence, ICIMOD has accumulated a range of professional expertise and functional competence giving it a comparative advantage in undertaking research and development work in mountain areas, particularly the HKH region. It has inherent strengths in a number of areas that could be used to steer the course of its future work more efficiently and effectively to assist the regional member countries to address current and emerging challenges of mountain development. It has also built credibility as a non-political regional centre for learning and knowledge by its regional member countries and has established lasting partnerships with relevant institutes in all the countries. Because of its location in the HKH region – a region of immense geological, ecological, biological, social, economic, and cultural diversity – there is no dearth of opportunities for applying its accumulated knowledge and experience to address a wide variety of issues.

ICIMOD has built credibility as a non-political regional centre for learning and knowledge sharing.

The Centre's comparative advantages include the following.

- i) **Focal agency for developing a regional identity and solidarity** – The most visible and appreciated competency of ICIMOD lies in its ability to bring together representatives at various levels, from policy makers at the central government level to practitioners and beneficiaries at the grassroots, to discuss and build consensus around issues of common interest. At this stage, it is the only centre that engages the eight countries of the HKH region to come to the table to discuss non-political, but nevertheless sensitive, issues like transboundary biodiversity and water management. The understanding developed through this people-to-people contact may also have a significant bearing on the solution to some of the ongoing conflicts in the region. ICIMOD should build on this niche position and further strengthen its capacity as a nodal centre for building alliances among mountain development agencies and individuals and among the mountain people themselves.

The Centre's ability to bring together both policy makers at central government levels and the grassroots to build consensus on issues of common interest is one of ICIMOD's valued competencies.

- ii) **Information and knowledge management in mountain development** - This will continue to be ICIMOD's core area of competence as envisioned in its original Statutes. The Centre has researched, documented, and published a large body of literature on mountains, and mountain environment and livelihood issues. It has not only been a key source of reference materials on these subjects, but has also developed a chain of information and knowledge dissemination channels, including electronic and alternative media. This is an area where few other institutes can compete with ICIMOD either in scope or content because of its unique mandate and geographical area.
- iii) **Research and development in natural resources and ecosystems** – One of the Centre's key competencies based on its past work is in the area of community-based management of common natural resources, such as forests, watersheds, rangelands, biodiversity, and water. The Centre has a rich data and information base on these natural resources and in developing innovative means of involving communities in managing them. Functional partnership arrangements already exist with reputed institutions in the host countries working with ICIMOD's programme staff, as do vibrant grassroots networks and organisations.
- iv) **Training and advisory service centre** – ICIMOD's comparative advantage in this area lies in having accumulated a range of expertise in cutting edge technologies for improving the livelihood of poor mountain people, particularly marginal upland farm households, such as renewable energy and water harvesting technologies, vegetable and medicinal plant cultivation, high value fruit and nut production, fish farming, soil conservation, and farming on slopes. This is supported by the Centre's Demonstration and Training Centre at Godavari, and its premier GIS/RS facility, where hands-on training is provided for different categories of clients. ICIMOD can package several training modules by combining these technologies with social components like gender mainstreaming and equity elements, and economic components like marketing and quality control. Policy development support along with advisory services, on demand, can be provided in a range of these areas of its competence.
- v) **Regional catalyst and facilitator for moving forward the global agenda on climate change and the Millennium Development Goals** – ICIMOD is ideally placed to assist the regional member countries to take a regional approach to

addressing the challenges as well as harnessing the potential benefits of global warming and climate change, the WTO and economic liberalisation, and to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on poverty reduction and environmental protection. It has a sufficient information, knowledge, and partnership base to embark on this route. Since many of the emerging issues transcend national boundaries, such as glacial melting and glacial lake outburst floods, flash floods and droughts, conservation of biodiversity, and development of ecotourism and hydropower, there is a growing awareness of the benefits of a regional approach and the interest and motivation to do so. The recent positive improvement in the relations between regional member countries augurs well for such a development.



ICIMOD Director General meets with Afghan officials

ICIMOD Archive



Women's group meeting in the Women and Energy Project

Women and Energy file photo

