

# introduction

## Background

The unstable nature of the Himalayas is well recognised worldwide. The topography and fragile geology combined with intense monsoon rains, makes the young mountain system one of the most hazard-prone areas in the world. In particular, the Himalayan region suffers from a range of water-induced disasters including debris flows, landslides, glacial lake outbursts, erosion, and sedimentation. These hazards create severe problems for water resources and other development projects and directly impact on people by destroying their environment for living and production, thereby seriously affecting social and economic development.

In order to promote mitigation of these hazards, ICIMOD over the years has developed and implemented a number of programmes related to mountain risk engineering, and landslide and instability management. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP/Nepal) and other national institutions in China, India, Nepal and Pakistan have also acquired substantial expertise in dealing with these problems. In January 2001 a new collaborative programme, the Participatory Disaster Management Programme (PDMP), was started by His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMGN) supported by UNDP, with contributions from the Japan Women in Development Fund (JWIDF), with ICIMOD as a collaborating partner. The objective of the programme is to improve Nepal's capacity at local and national levels in the areas of disaster preparedness and management, and to mainstream disaster management into regular development activities at both levels. ICIMOD's main responsibility is to conduct community hazard mapping and vulnerability assessments and to organise regional exchange of information on project experiences.

Towards the end of the first year of the programme, ICIMOD and PDMP organised a regional workshop on 'Water-Induced Disasters in the Hindu-Kush Himalayan Region' with support from JWIDF with the aim of sharing and disseminating the knowledge and information generated during the first year of the project and of gathering together other important experience, information, and knowledge from the region. It was hoped that the workshop would provide a basis for developing an information and knowledge-sharing network.

Thirty-nine participants attended the workshop. They included senior government officials engaged in disaster management and academic experts from ICIMOD's member countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and

Pakistan); resource persons from Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand; and representatives of international development organisations and universities including IUCN, ADRC, ADPC, JICA, and the US Embassy.

## **Objectives and Outcomes**

The specific objectives of the workshop were

- to share information on disaster preparedness management, and
- to facilitate understanding and implementation of disaster mitigation activities based on a community disaster management approach, including the integration of gender into disaster mitigation.

The aim was to achieve a shared vision of regional cooperation and to create the basis for an information and knowledge-sharing network for disaster mitigation in the HKH region.

The themes of the workshop were

- risk and vulnerability analysis and hazard mapping;
- flash flooding, flood forecasting, and landslide hazard assessment;
- community awareness and disaster response preparedness;
- natural hazard, poverty, and development;
- disaster management information systems; and
- gender aspects of disaster management.

Twenty-four presentations were given at the workshop. Intensive discussions were then held on types of regional level hazards, national and community approaches to mitigate disasters, replication of new techniques, exchange of information at national and regional level, and regional/international cooperation.

The workshop arrived at a number of conclusions and made some detailed recommendations related to effective disaster management in the region. These were summarised in the 'Kathmandu Recommendations' given at the end of this report.