

# 1 Background and Objectives of the Meeting

Since its inception in 1983, ICIMOD has been engaged in developing appropriate approaches to sustainable development in mountain areas through research and demonstration, training, advice, and dissemination of knowledge, with a special focus on the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region. A central concern in devising strategies and programmes for development of mountain areas is the need to strike a judicious balance between development and environment in improving the livelihoods of mountain people without destroying the mountain ecology. The degree to which such a balance is achieved depends, to a great extent, upon the availability and use of methodologies that integrate environmental considerations with development planning and policies, and upon the selection of an interlinked structure of activities (infrastructural development included) that, in its entirety, maximises economic returns and minimises adverse environmental impacts.

Are such methodologies available? Are they used by national, regional, and local planners and/or programme formulators? Are there gaps in the available methodologies or limitations in terms of their practical use? How do planners in different countries and at different levels use them? These methodologies need to be further developed. It should also be determined whether research and training are needed to demonstrate how to use them. Seeking answers to these and related questions, ICIMOD introduced a programme on **Integrated Planning for Environmental and Economic Development in Mountain Areas** in 1996. Building upon the past work of ICIMOD, the programme was to consist of the following activities.

- i) Review studies on the methods of environment-development and intersectoral integration into planning exercises at national, regional, and local levels and the extent to which they are practised in different HKH countries and methodological studies on environmental impact and economic impact assessment and area planning
- ii) Consultative and advisory missions to different countries
- iii) Development of training materials and actual training for planners and development workers

As the first step towards the concretisation of the programme, a meeting of planning officials and area planning experts was

organised from 22 to 24 July, 1996. The main purpose of the meeting was to share the views and experiences of planning officials and experts from different ICIMOD member countries concerning approaches and methods for integrating environmental considerations into development planning for mountain areas, in order to improve the standards of living of the mountain people and preserve the mountain ecology. The meeting also aimed to elicit the views of participants on the usefulness and contents of the ICIMOD programme in this field and on a future course of action in this respect. The detailed programme of the meeting is given in Annex 1.

Participants, 24 in all, were high-level officials from national, provincial, and local planning and development agencies and scholars with expertise and experience in regional and area planning in the mountain areas of Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. In addition, over a dozen ICIMOD Professional Staff, including the Director General and the Director of Programmes, also participated in the meeting. A list of participants is given in Annex 2. Discussions at the meeting largely centred around the issues raised in the background paper '**Integrated Planning for Environmental and Economic Development in Mountain Areas**', prepared by Dr. T.S. Papola, Head Mountain Enterprise and Infrastructure Division, ICIMOD, which has since been issued as Discussion Paper No. MEI 96/2. Most of the discussion took place in the sessions on Country Presentations and in the Working Groups. Most country presentations were made verbally, but some participants also gave brief written papers. A list of the papers is given in Annex 3. For more detailed discussion of some key issues, three Working Groups were formed. The recommendations of these working groups are given in Section 6.