

# 1. BACKGROUND

The Environment Information and Assessment Project (EIAP) was the result of collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme, Environment Assessment Programme–Asia Pacific (UNEP/EAP-AP), Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) and International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The primary objective was to facilitate institutionalisation of the newly-established Ministry on the use of modern information-based technologies for environmental data and information management in Nepal. The Mountain Environment and Natural Resources' Information Service (MENRIS) of ICIMOD facilitated the implementation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) project at the Ministry.

As a result of this project, the Ministry is now equipped with an Internet communication system based on UNEP's system, UnepNET. It has a Mercure satellite earth station (MENRIS/ICIMOD 1998), and the EIA Unit is also furnished with hardware and software to carry out work with Geographical Information Systems (GIS). One of the components of the EIA project involved a study of the Kathmandu Valley to prepare a core GIS Database of the Valley. This study was carried out as a pilot study to demonstrate the potential of GIS and related technologies and their usefulness for planning and for management of infrastructure and services in the Kathmandu Valley.

The Mountain Environment and Natural Resources' Information Service (MENRIS) of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) serves as a resource centre for the HKH Region for the study and application of geo-information technologies. Close collaboration with research institutions, space agencies, and vendors has led to the establishment of nodal agencies in ICIMOD's participating Regional Member Countries (RMCs) as part of a GIS network to serve a vast region of immense diversity. The network encourages dialogue between professionals working in the HKH Region on a mutually compatible, integrated GIS platform. Sharing public domain data and information on analytical problems is encouraged as a means of bridging the data gap. A regional mechanism for pooling resources, expertise, and facilities for and work on common problems in the HKH region for the mutual benefit of regional member countries is encouraged through a network of collaborative institutions.