

## **PART III SPECIAL EVENTS**

# Children's Painting Exhibition ICIMOD Symposium and Inauguration

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On the occasion of its First International Symposium and Inauguration, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development in co-operation with His Majesty's Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, and the Curriculum, Textbook, and Supervision Development Centre (CTSDC), presented an exhibition of paintings by school children based on the theme, "Man and His Environment." The exhibition featured one hundred paintings submitted by children between the ages of eleven and seventeen from lower-secondary and secondary schools of eight districts in the Central Region of Nepal.

Using a variety of media—coloured pens and pencils, water colours, charcoal and showing a wide range of skills from very simple to quite sophisticated, these children eloquently expressed their perceptions of the environments in which they lived, played, and worked every day. If some paintings spoke of the joys of man living in an idealized harmony with nature, then others spoke of the sorrows and misfortunes that can happen when man falls out of harmony with nature.

The Children's Painting Exhibition was the surprise "hit" of the entire ICIMOD conference. The organizers knew that these illustrations would draw interest when they saw the quality of the contributions. What was gratifying was the pleased reaction and intense interest of the Symposium and Inauguration participants from around the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region and the world when they had the opportunity to view the children's works. People returned many times to look once again and would remark often over the imagery and perceptions of these young artist/observers. Strong interest was expressed in finding ways to preserve and reproduce many of these illustrations.

The Exhibition began as an idea of the Interim Committee of ICIMOD in March 1983 as a way of highlighting the relationship of man and his environment, one of the themes of the Symposium and Inauguration. In July of 1983, ICIMOD Committee members and officials of the Ministry of Education and the CTSDC met with the District Education officers of the eight districts to agree on the organizational details of a competition leading to the Exhibition.

Slide shows focussing on environmental problems were organized in all eight districts through the Watershed Management and Sanitation Department to familiarize the students to the contest theme. The movie, *Fragile Mountain*, was also shown.

ICIMOD and CTSDC representatives visited the districts to help explain the details of the competition and to supply drawing paper, coloured pencils, water-colours, and other art supplies.

Each school requested to select the best five paintings or drawings produced by their student artists and submit them to CTSDC by mid-September. The schools were informed that the best paintings would be selected by a jury of ICIMOD and HMG officials and professional artists to exhibit at the ICIMOD conference. The top fifteen child artists would each receive special prizes of medals and certificates to reward their efforts. In addition, the fifteen winners would receive an invitation and

expense-paid transportation to attend the opening of the Exhibition and to receive their prizes in an awards ceremony on the evening of December 2 at the Nepal Royal Academy of Science and Technology.

The competition generated a great deal of interest and in all, 244 paintings were submitted, of which 100 were selected for the exhibition.

The ICIMOD Children's Painting Exhibition added significantly to the success of the Centre's First International Symposium and Inauguration. ICIMOD reproduced one of the paintings as a postcard and is exploring ways to have a 1985 calendar made. In the meantime, the fifteen prize winners were framed and placed on permanent display at ICIMOD headquarters in Kathmandu.

## A DRAMATIC PRESENTATION ON INTEGRATED MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

On the second day of the Symposium, in a unique departure from the more customary practice of giving papers or lectures, Dr. Rudolf Hoegger, Vice Director of the Swiss Directorate of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid and Board Member of ICIMOD, presented a live dramatic performance dealing with the concept of integrated mountain development, its necessity, possibilities and its many constraints.

The idea of using a play was born earlier in 1983 as result of conversations between Dr. Hoegger and his colleagues and staff of the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA). The Interim Committee of ICIMOD had asked SATA and the Swiss to prepare a paper based on their twenty-five years of experience in mountain development in Nepal. Dr. Hoegger and his colleagues decided that they could most effectively express their ideas and concerns through a drama.

The group defined the key problems of integrated mountain development—and the subject for the proposed play—as lying not in the planning, technical, or academic fields, but among the affected people and groups themselves and their institutions.

Improved communications between all parties is of the highest necessity if the whole society is to work together in solving ecological problems. The deep gulf separating the donor and recipient, officers and farmers, national authorities and local agents, men and women, and low and high castes is characteristic of a fundamental breakdown of communication.

A priority in mountain development is to improve the flow of communication and decision-making. In many cases, this means reversing the usual flow and devising better ways to listen more to what farmers are saying and less to outside or foreign wisdom.

It was agreed that for effective presentation, the drama should demonstrate communication between various groups through a sequence of scenes beginning with a village setting. In addition, an introduction and a running commentary should be presented by a commentator.

The sponsors of the play felt that theatre groups and other organizations in Nepal should be given the opportunity to design

and perform a play dramatizing these ideas. An open competition was announced in *The Rising Nepal* inviting interested groups to submit entries.

Five plays were submitted and SATA appointed a jury to judge the entries. Mr. V.B. Malla, a leading dramatic authority and member secretary of the Nepal Royal Academy, looked at the dramatic organization and qualities; Mrs. G. Rana, a well-known writer, examined the effective use of language; and Dr. K K. Panday, an agricultural engineer and rural development specialist, judges the plays on development content and message.

The panel selected two plays for trial performances and the one entitled, *The Chandragiri Hills*, written by Steve Tamang, was finally selected.

The play was presented at the Symposium by Dr. Hoegger. The message of the play is a story of poverty, over-population, competition for alternative employment as the forest is lost as a safety valve or emergency resource in times of need, ignorance, underdevelopment, exploitation by the powerful, and man's shortsightedness and indifference towards his fellow man and the natural environment in which they all live.

The following is a summary of the main points and action of the play.

### **The Chandragiri Hills**

#### **Setting**

It is the twilight hours in Chandragiri village. The villagers, bone weary from their day's hard work in the fields or the forest, are returning home. Many of the village people are gathered around the village tea stalls. These tea stalls serve as an excellent fora for the villagers to come and share their ideas and exchange information. Woodcutters and charcoal burners, together with women carrying loads of grass and dry twigs, come down to the tea shops and rest for a while before retiring to their huts for the evening meals.

#### **The Village Life**

In one such tea stall, a worried looking woodcutter greets the rest of his colleagues and enquires whether the rest of them have heard about the latest announcement on the radio about the Chandragiri Hills being chosen as a protected forest in order to facilitate an integrated watershed management project. On hearing this news the rest of the villagers are eager to hear more about it. Urged to carry on about the latest development this confused and angry woodcutter elaborates more on the radio announcement, made all the more lively by his limited perception and his arguments against such a project.

The idea of a receding forest, the extinction of flora and fauna, the loss of soil cover, the drying up of water sources, the frequent landslides, and the inter-relationship of all these phenomena to the felling of trees is beyond the grasp and imagination of the poor villagers. Many of them suspect trickery by development workers and "change agents". To these poor villagers, whose main preoccupation is to earn enough money to feed themselves and their families by selling wood or charcoal in the bazaar or digging stones in the quarries for the contractors, it appears for certain that this project and such others will "snatch the last bit of bread from their mouths."

#### **The Villager's Plight**

If the villagers think that any measures to protect the forest from encroachment and pilferage is an act of hostility against

them, then they are not too far wrong! To the villagers the forest is the last resort to which they can go for help. A family in a tight financial situation goes to the forest, takes the wood, and sells it in the bazaar for its survival. The farmer uses the forest for his fuelwood, for fodder and forage, to graze his animals, to collect roots and berries and tubers for his family's sustenance, and gathers dried leaves for manuring and for his animal stalls.

Being so dependent on the forest, having little or no land, and without other skills or training for alternative or off-farm employment, what else can these mountain dwellers do? They are living the same isolated lives shaped by the sheer magnitude of the mountains and high hills, as did their forebears a thousand years ago. The only exception being perhaps the occasional drone of the jet-planes overhead, heralding an era of space age technology. But they are indifferent to such symbols of modernity. They have learned through experience that such modern inputs as electricity, safe water, high yielding seeds, and fertilizers arrive too infrequently. Little wonder that they are so immune to new ideas, innovations, or change. It is this crisis in confidence that is the challenge of mountain development.

#### **The Village Ruling Order**

The village ruling order is always present to counsel and advise the simple villagers on the dangers that accompany development. These village elites often have their own vested interests in the timber and construction sectors and try to prevent any development works designed to uplift the living conditions of the masses. Education, awareness, economic, and social development of the simple villagers will destabilize the prevailing power structure in the village. This is too real a threat to be ignored by the village elites. Mountain development will always have to reckon with such forces when implementing programmes.

#### **The Government**

The government and its administrative bureaucracy is generally concentrated in the capitals, or big cities and towns. Its extension arms and field activities are severely constricted because of limited skills, lack of technical and managerial personnel, or the motivation and incentives that are required for individuals to work in remote and hazardous mountain areas. The bureaucracy is unwieldy and usually lethargic.

#### **The Politicians**

Politicians are generally well informed about the precarious state of environment in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya regions. They also manage the affairs of the nations. The politicians are therefore an important category through which legal and institutional arrangements can be made for mountain development. Many decisions taken on political expediency, however, have harmed the healthy development of forests and the environment.

#### **International Aid**

The countries in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya regions have received tremendous goodwill through international aid. Financial and technical assistance is usually readily forthcoming. However, it is the duty of the host nation to guide the diverse components that make up international aid. This, of course, would be ideal but not all nations have reached a point of development which allows for guiding this diverse composition of donors. In the absence of a firm strategy, mountain development, even with the help of the international community, may not achieve its desired results. International aid, therefore, must transcend its individual characteristics and work

together with others to reach the goals of mountain development.

**The Moral**

The moral of the play is that no one individual, no matter how good, has a panacea for mountain development. The establishment of ICIMOD must be seen in this light. Its central aim is to co-ordinate and bring the pool of resources in the regions

together. The answer to mountain development lies in the ability of the nations, the institutions, and the people in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region to work together. The measure of success of mountain development now and in future will be gauged when hostile yet simple villagers like those of the Chandragiri Hills can plant some trees for themselves. That will signal the beginning of an era heralding a change in the minds of the people!