

Dear Friends of ICIMOD

Mountain people are among the hardest hit by global warming, economic globalisation, and migration. These phenomena are particularly visible in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region (HKH) where glaciers are melting at unprecedented rates, habitats and ecosystem services are being eroded, and the mountain communities are being increasingly feminised as male family members migrate to the lowlands, and often beyond national borders, in search of employment. While mountain people are particularly vulnerable, these changes impact on entire river basins and beyond, regionally and globally. The need to adapt and enhance the resilience of the mountain people is perhaps nowhere more urgent than in the HKH region. The challenges mountain people are facing are unprecedented, and their traditional coping mechanisms are overstretched.

What is at stake are the vast reserves of water stored in the HKH region, which directly and indirectly support the water and food needs of the mountain people and an even larger number of people downstream; and the environmental services the region provides for the livelihoods of mountain people and benefits downstream to lowlanders in terms of water and climate regulation services and soil. Together these have made agriculture possible for thousands of years. Despite its strategic role, the HKH region continues to be marginalised in the global discourse on climate change and adaptation. Not only is the hard science and climate-related data in relation to the HKH missing (as was pointed out recently by the International Panel on Climate Change), but also information on socioeconomic issues facing mountain people in the context of the changes is lacking. Without these, it is difficult to understand the extent of the impacts of global change, or to develop adaptation and resilience mechanisms. ICIMOD wants to play an important role in bridging this gap and become more relevant to its regional member countries, thereby drawing the attention of the global community to the HKH people and their environment.

At this point in time, it is both appropriate for ICIMOD to look back, reflecting upon its past, and to look forward, considering the future, to assess where and how it can be of greater relevance to its regional stakeholders. This year marks ICIMOD's 25th birthday and the end of the strategic framework phase that began in 2003. Within the last five years, the region has experienced many changes. Some of the larger countries (China, India, and Pakistan) have been experiencing high economic growth, while others are working hard to adjust to political changes. In 2006, ICIMOD underwent an independent evaluation commissioned by its Board of Governors. In 2007, ICIMOD's Board of Governors appointed a new Director General to ICIMOD. All these internal and external factors prompted ICIMOD to develop a new pragmatic and forward-looking Strategic Framework that not only addresses emerging challenges, but also helps ICIMOD to enhance its relevance to its regional member countries.

Narendra Bajracharya



The Norwegian delegation visits ICIMOD

This issue of the newsletter is, therefore, dedicated to the new Strategic Framework and how ICIMOD is preparing itself to meet the changes and challenges by working together with regional and global partners. I would like to thank Dr Kamal Banskota and the editorial team for preparing it.

Sincerely,
Andreas Schild
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