

From the Director General's desk....

Following the tumultuous Spring of 2006 in Kathmandu, there is now a new agreement and a reason to hope that a new path to lasting peace in Nepal will follow. The transitional phase ushered in by these events continues to be rocked by upheavals, and loud demands from those who have felt excluded from economic prosperity and decision-making. As with excluded and ignored or discriminated groups elsewhere in the Himalayan region, this assertiveness takes on either political or violent forms if not addressed to the satisfaction of the people concerned.

While the future of Nepal continues to remain uncertain in 2007, issues of social and economic exclusion that have come to the fore reinforce the new directions taken by ICIMOD and reported in this issue. Increasing access of marginalised mountain peoples to better and more sustainable livelihoods is central to ICIMOD's mission. Providing mountain peoples with better opportunities to voice their concerns and empowering them to play responsible roles in managing their resources through sound knowledge are some of ICIMOD's most important strategic objectives.

The articles in this issue provide examples of how ICIMOD is working with state and NGO partners throughout our Himalayan region to address these objectives. Building the knowledge base for wiser policies, strengthening institutions for grassroots learning and sharing, providing tools for more scientific and effective policy advocacy, and documenting the need and opportunities for marginalised communities to increase their access to – and control over – the natural resources are the major elements of our work with partners.

The task of building more inclusive societies and decision-making systems in these mountainous areas, containing hundreds of different ethnic and social groups with long histories of both cooperation and conflict, is huge. It is also never ending – as new configurations and opportunities also bring with them new winners and losers – and new needs to adapt to the rapidly growing and changing societies of China and South Asia. We are pleased that ICIMOD is working with a wide group of partners to help mountain peoples increase their resilience, integrate their livelihoods with new opportunities, and take their rightful roles in more equitable and inclusive decision making institutions.

I thank Dr. Michael Kollmair, our Programme Manager for Culture, Equity, Gender and Governance (CEGG) for putting together this issue. I also thank all the authors, our partners, and editors for their hard work.

As this will be my last issue as Director General, I also want to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to all of you for a full and satisfying two terms with ICIMOD. To our Board of Governors, our ICIMOD Support Group, our many wonderful research and development partners, I express my profound gratitude. I also thank particularly our regional member countries and our host country, Nepal, for all their support and assistance. Finally, I thank most of all my colleagues in ICIMOD for the opportunity to work together, become friends, and jointly serve the mountain people and environments of the magnificent Himalayan region.

Thank you all very much.

I look forward to continuing our cooperation and friendship in the future in other ways, and to your continuing support for ICIMOD and our shared mission.



J. Gabriel Campbell
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