

From the Director General's desk...

Dear Friends of ICIMOD,

In June of this year one of ICIMOD's longest running projects came to a close. For the last nine-and-a-half years the 'People and Resource Dynamics in Mountain Watersheds of the Hindu Kush Himalayas' Project (PARDYP), supported by Swiss Development Cooperation and the International Development Research Centre of Canada, has provided a platform for our partners and ourselves to investigate and document processes and management issues in mountain watershed management. This issue is devoted to sharing some of the key findings from PARDYP and examining watershed issues in relation to other similar initiatives in the Himalaya.

Since ICIMOD's inception in 1983, watershed management activities have been central to our work. As an integrative framework, watershed management encompasses water flows, soil erosion, forest and pasture management, water quality, land use systems, and other aspects of mountain farm livelihoods. ICIMOD initially focused more on improving the understanding of physical processes related to soil erosion, hydrology, sedimentation, and soil fertility. This resulted in many internationally acknowledged papers, publications, and books. Over time, however, the importance of the human dimension in watershed management and the role of institutions governing the management of mountain commons were recognised as crucial to the livelihoods of the poor and the sustainable use of upland areas. From 1996 both resource dynamics and human dynamics were investigated together, rather than separately, under PARDYP and associated programmes.



Anupam Bhatia

Director General J. Gabriel Campbell with incoming Chairperson of the ICIMOD Board 2007, H. E. Ghulam Mostafa Jawad, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Afghanistan.

Currently, watershed management issues are being taken up with high priority by most of the countries in our Himalayan region. Demand for clean and more regulated water flow from mountain catchments is increasing for agricultural, domestic, energy, industrial, and urban uses, even as climate change and use of chemicals increase the rate of variability and pollution. Increased emphasis on biodiversity conservation and the landscape values of watersheds provide additional impetus for better watershed management. Although research in which ICIMOD has also been involved shows that the correlation between forest cover and downstream flooding is much more complicated than previously thought, the importance of the environmental services provided by upstream watersheds is increasing as impacts on the millions living downstream also increase. Improved understanding of these issues and assisting local residents to address them is at the core of ICIMOD's Natural Resource Management Programme – and remains a key challenge for the future.

I would like to thank all the partner institutions that have contributed to this volume. Special thanks go to Roger White, Regional Coordinator of the PARDYP project and coordinator of Watershed Management activities at ICIMOD, and Sanjeev Bhuchar, Assistant Coordinator PARDYP, who served as the thematic editors for this issue. I also thank all the authors who have contributed to this volume. We look forward to your feedback and suggestions on how to serve the mountain people better by contributing to securing their livelihoods and environment.

Sincerely,
J. Gabriel Campbell, Ph.D.