

Sustainable Livelihoods in a Changing World

ICIMOD strives to build the resilience of mountain communities to adapt their livelihoods and diversify income opportunities. It aims to empower them, especially poor people and women, by supporting equitable institutional arrangements and innovations. ICIMOD facilitates evidence-based mountain policies for greater well-being, improved equity, and reduced poverty for mountain people.

In 2010, ICIMOD gave special emphasis to analysing the vulnerability of mountain communities to climate change and their capacity to adapt. Participatory action research, conducted jointly with partners, revealed community perspectives and recommendations for improved adaptation strategies and the design of appropriate support mechanisms. Other research on mechanisms to implement payment for environmental services in community forests in Nepal provided important lessons on the distribution of revenue to use in future initiatives.

ICIMOD focused on alternative livelihood options such as labour migration and remittances, and sustainable tourism. A regional study showed that labour migration and remittances have become increasingly important for mountain development and indicated options to leverage the positive effects of labour migration. A Himalayan Heritage Route was conceptualised and launched to strengthen the Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation Initiative. ICIMOD analysed tourism value chains and made recommendations for responsible tourism practices, now being implemented as a pilot project in Upper Mustang, Nepal.

The Centre has adapted the value chain approach to the mountain context, with a focus on high-value products and ways of increasing returns to farmers and producers. The results are being seen with Malta oranges in India, Indian bay leaves in Nepal and India, and honey in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. The governments of regional member countries have provided support in the form of land for constructing community facility centres that enable community groups to do sorting, processing, and value addition to mountain produce.

The knowledge of partner organisations, such as the Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC) in India and Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bio-resources (ANSAB) in Nepal, has improved with ICIMOD's capacity building and technical backstopping for value chain interventions. All the activities incorporate a gender focus, which has increased the integration of gender and social inclusion in the planning and operations of ICIMOD's partners.

One highlight in 2010 was a study on the linkages between labour migration and water stress. The recommendations have been shared with IFAD project partners, who initiated follow-up activities. Another was

Making candles, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, India



an analysis of mountain poverty, which showed that mountain poverty has specific characteristics that need to be incorporated in policy and development planning for mountain communities. We are sharing the data with regional and international researchers to raise awareness on the specificity of mountain poverty, and support the inclusion of the poverty dimension, which is important in the basin and landscape approaches. This work has led to a contribution from ICIMOD on the Human Dimension of Climate Change in Mountains for the upcoming Asia Pacific Human Development Report.

Increased livelihood options for orange growers

"The project has created livelihood options in this region. Now, we are getting Rs 10-12/kg (double from last year) for our oranges. We send our children to good schools and provide better facilities to them. The most important thing is that due to our association in cooperatives and self-help groups, the people of the region now recognise our work, so we have self-assurance," says **Usha Simalti**, a member of the Growers' Federation and Cooperative.

In Chamoli district of India, Malta oranges were being sold at prices that barely covered the production and transport costs. Many farmers were cutting down the poorly producing trees. With the Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC), ICIMOD has been implementing a project to develop the orange value chain and promote livelihood opportunities in the area. HARC representatives say,

"With the assistance of ICIMOD, we worked to build the capacities and skills of local people so they can make their development decisions themselves, and make optimum use of locally available resources and opportunities to ensure their livelihoods."

HARC worked among the growers to establish 27 self-help groups (SHGs), a cooperative, and seven common facility centres (CFC).

The project provided technical skill training and services to at least 600 Malta orange growers to manage the trees for increased production, diversify processing of the products, and develop better market linkages for better returns. By conducting 33 processing and value addition training events in the 7 village-level CFCs, growers came to understand that 'Malta fruit' could be a great source of income.

The adoption of processing and value addition techniques to make products like juice, dry peel, peel oil, and marmalade from Malta oranges created a large number of new employment opportunities for local households. In 2010, the self-help groups processed 50 tonnes of oranges at the CFCs and sold 10,000 litres of 'Malta squash'. The SHGs have converted a single product value chain into a multiple product value-chain venture. In the second year of this Ford Foundation-funded project, the investment of US\$ 125,000 has already achieved a business turnover of US\$ 68,000, with ample scope to increase many times more in the coming years. Now, Malta orange growers in other parts of Uttarakhand have stopped cutting down the orange trees and started seeing them as an economic opportunity.

A major impact of the project has been an increase in the confidence and business attitude among the rural women, who now have new sources of income generation.

"We never thought that with simple techniques the fruit could become the prime source of livelihood in the region. Now, we are aware of its uses, how to protect the trees, harvest, transport, and make and sell the produce. The middlemen used to play with us, but now we make decisions independently. SHGs are engaged, running self-reliant businesses," says **Usha Simalti**.

"Working with ICIMOD, we could also ensure better coordination at local and regional levels with businesses. We developed administrative skills especially for research with Malta fruits and bay leaf value chain mapping, which clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders and builds joint working and good practice in the region," says **Mahendra Kunwar** of HARC.

Revitalising ancient travel trails...

The Kailash-Humla-Himalayan-heritage-route

ICIMOD has launched a Himalayan Heritage route programme in collaboration with regional partner institutions and ViaStoria, a Swiss partner with almost 30 years of experience developing heritage routes in the European Alps. ICIMOD prioritised mountain tourism in 1989 as a promising adaptation strategy to provide mountain people with alternative livelihood options and build on the strengths of the region's highest peaks, rich biodiversity, and unique cultures.

The concept of heritage routes refers to historic and culturally important routes in unique landscapes. An attractive heritage route provides historic, cultural, and religious insights in a special and intact heritage landscape through easily available basic information and documentation. The Route is complemented by typical products and services from the region, such as local food and beverages, and basic accommodation, such as locally run and managed teahouses and mountain lodges.

ICIMOD launched the Himalayan Heritage Routes programme at a Himalayan Trails Regional workshop in March 2010, with key tourism stakeholders from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. ICIMOD and Eco-Himal organised the workshop, in collaboration with SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, University of Salzburg, and Eurasia Pacific Uninet. ICIMOD has set up a digital collaborative workspace and Himalayan Heritage Routes regional e-discussion group, to share knowledge and learning, maintain close contact across borders, raise common tourism issues, and discuss possibilities for further collaboration on the Himalayan Heritage routes vision and programme.

In July 2010, ICIMOD and the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) offered ViaStoria and partners in Nepal initial support to conduct an inception pilot study on a heritage route in the Kailash Sacred Landscape in Nepal. The study identified and assessed the main heritage sites and routes that would need to be conserved to maintain the integrity of the sacred landscape. It also identified other traditional travel routes in several poor districts of Far-Western Nepal and documented their historical significance.

Guy Schneider, of ViaStoria, underlined the significance:

"The revival and development of ancient heritage routes in the Hindu-Kush Himalayas would safeguard an immensely rich cultural heritage – currently at risk through insensitive road construction, strengthen the cultural identity of mountain people, and create substantial local income and employment opportunities."

"With its contacts and long experience in mountain tourism in the whole Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, ICIMOD is well placed to play a leading role in coordinating the innovative Himalayan Heritage Routes vision developed with ViaStoria. It is linking key stakeholders, organising knowledge sharing platforms, and convincing donors to invest in the promotion of heritage routes as basis for an attractive, sustainable mountain tourism sector."

Small monastery close to Mt Kailash, PR China





School in Nonglang village, West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, India