

Working for Greater Impact



Indawgyi Lake, Myanmar

The year 2012 gave ICIMOD the opportunity to reflect on the significant progress it has made over the last five years and to set a foundation for delivering greater impact. During the first half of the year, ICIMOD, in consultation with its regional member countries, the Board of Governors, donors, and Friends of ICIMOD, took the time to look back on achievements and lessons learned over the last five-year Medium Term Action Plan-II as well as anticipate emerging challenges and opportunities to strengthen its Strategic Framework. This laid out a roadmap for the next five years to come in the Centre's third Medium Term Action Plan.

Tackling the complex and evolving challenges of the region requires an integrated and collaborative approach. To facilitate this, ICIMOD has adopted a new way of working to consolidate and integrate efforts across disciplines to better help serve the people of the region. ICIMOD has identified six long-term, transdisciplinary regional programmes that work to deliver impacts on the ground. These programmes are supported by specialists with expertise in ICIMOD's core competency areas of livelihoods, ecosystem services, water and air, and geospatial solutions. All activities at ICIMOD are underpinned by a strong knowledge management and communication strategy to ensure that ICIMOD's knowledge is shared across the region and around the globe to improve the lives of mountain people.

Science approaches for responsive development

The use of evidence-based knowledge and high-quality science is crucial for developing strong recommendations for improved policy and practice in regional member countries. By further advancing the quality of its research, ICIMOD will ensure the use of current, state-of-the-art knowledge to address issues in the region as well as gain greater scientific credibility in the global arena. To do this, it has enhanced scientific exchange with research institutions and universities in the region and globally.

In the HKH region, there is insufficient understanding of the drivers of change, including how climate change is affecting water resources and people's livelihoods, and how these changes affect men and women differently and their varying responses.

ICIMOD is developing strategies to systematically fill critical data gaps, including on the cryosphere of the Hindu Kush Himalayas. Ground-breaking research on the region's snow and ice supported by a growing number of experts on related subjects working at the Centre has resulted in a number of strong outputs, including a paper on *The State and Fate of Himalayan Glaciers* coauthored by ICIMOD and published in 2012 in the top-ranking journal *Science*.

ICIMOD's growing expertise in all fields and heightened level of research is reflected in staff contributions to 70 publications, including over 25 peer-reviewed journal articles and 14 book chapters.

“The Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has a long history of partnership with ICIMOD and hosts the ICIMOD Pakistan Office. ICIMOD is helping PARC with the strategic planning of its Mountain Agriculture Research Centre in Gilgit. Workshops organized at PARC and regular exchange visits between technical staff of the two institutions has augmented the professional capacity of PARC scientists. ICIMOD has also helped train PARC scientists in GIS technology and honeybee production.”

– Dr Syed Ghazanfar Abbas, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, Islamabad

Sharing knowledge for positive change

Knowledge is the key to making positive change in the lives of people in the region. As ICIMOD's role as a source of reliable knowledge and data continues to grow, regional member countries are increasingly calling on ICIMOD for solutions to pressing issues.

In 2012, ICIMOD assisted the Government of Nepal in determining the cause of a catastrophic flash flood in the Seti River, which resulted in the death or disappearance of at least 72 people and caused great loss of property. Improving understanding of the source of devastating natural disasters will lead to ways to improve disaster risk reduction in the future. In Afghanistan, Nepal, and Pakistan partners are applying learning from customized national trainings on low-cost soil and water conservation.

In India, ICIMOD contributed to the development of the vision and strategy of the newly established Mountain Division within the Ministry of Environment and Forests. In addition, ICIMOD assessments of poverty and vulnerability and analysis of ecosystem services have been used as inputs to India's 12th Five Year Plan by the working group on Mountain Ecosystems and Concerns in Hill States, a subcommittee of the Indian Planning Commission.

In the global arena, ICIMOD is gaining credibility as a reliable source for information on the Hindu Kush Himalayas and mountains, in general. The Centre contributed knowledge to advocate for mountain issues at global forums such as Rio+20 and in publications such as UNDP's Asia-Pacific Human Development Report on Climate Change, which could influence national and international policies.

Bringing people together to bridge science, policy, and practice

To bridge the gap between good science and policy and on-the-ground practices, ICIMOD encourages discussion, evidence-based knowledge sharing, and cooperation between people across national boundaries. ICIMOD has a niche role in generating and sharing knowledge and facilitating discussion on transboundary issues by providing a platform where policy makers, experts, and practitioners can exchange ideas and perspectives towards the achievement of sustainable mountain development. In 2012, ICIMOD organized 74 events with the participation of 1,762 persons, of whom 23% were women.

Door-opening meetings for ideas and impact

“These summits and meets provide for the ‘silent’ churning of ideas and actions among several stakeholders.

“Science and climate change discourse and action is proving to be the best binder of nations, who find political and strategic differences too deep to be bridged in a short time frame. Member countries can now clearly see ICIMOD’s potential for joint action on issues that are transboundary in nature.

“Regional collaborative programmes like the Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative would have been unthinkable without the presence of ICIMOD in the region.

“When it comes to seeking solutions in the region I often hear ICIMOD’s name being mentioned, and that creates space for ICIMOD, or maybe it is that the Centre’s positive image is gradually building up.

“Excellent documentation and continuous sharing of reports and literature by ICIMOD has played a major role in creating this positive image for ICIMOD. Mind you this is not a small achievement in Asia.”

– Dr R.S. Tolia, former Chief Secretary of State, Uttarakhand, India describes the silent impact of ICIMOD through its participation in meetings, summits, and conferences

A goal within MTAP-III and the new strategic framework is to make the Centre more consolidated and integrated. Changes in the organizational structure to facilitate this vision, including the introduction of six long-term, transdisciplinary programmes, play a major role in making funding more effective. In conjunction with this, programme-level reporting provides greater value for money to donors as more comprehensive, synergetic results are achieved.

With support from the ICIMOD Support Group – the Centre’s donor coordinating function – progress was made during 2012 in the development of a joint financing arrangement. This arrangement aims to offset the need for specific project and programme reporting where possible to harmonize the funding approach among donors.

ICIMOD has begun to develop a broader range of partnerships in the public and private sectors for funding and implementation. ICIMOD is working to identify and reach out to new partners in regional member countries that can take ownership of initiative work and upscale it so project impacts can have a broader reach. This includes increasing engagement with the private sector to help improve the lives of mountain people.

Tracking the path to positive change

Over the past 30 years, action research has been an avenue for ICIMOD to investigate regional issues and generate knowledge to support evidence-based decision making and informed adaptation strategies. ICIMOD works to test options that partners and others can use and replicate. To better predict, monitor, and evaluate the steps of each project, as well as improve the positive impact of its work in mountain communities, the Centre has adopted a more stringent programme monitoring and evaluation regime. By mapping impact pathways – determining how knowledge is used, who uses it, and its potential to create ripples of change – ICIMOD’s work will have greater chance to create positive change in the region.

Making funding more effective

Over the past five years, ICIMOD’s funding has grown and the number of funding sources has expanded. At the same time, core funding remains a pivotal part of maintaining the Centre’s level of innovation and science quality.

Talking with the private sector for sustainable development

In September 2012, leaders of the private sector from the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and experts from ICIMOD came together to discuss links between private sector activities and sustainable mountain development.

Business leaders said ICIMOD could play a key role in sharing knowledge with politicians to help them better understand the needs of mountain communities and the private sector. This kind of collaboration could help both ICIMOD and the private sector influence policy and share knowledge that will make business more vibrant, relevant, and sustainable.

“By working with ICIMOD, the FNCCI can promote an understanding of business with a different, sustainable perspective – business sustaining business. Sustainable development is about meeting our needs today, but also thinking about the generations to come.”

– Sanjay Giri, Coordinator, Environment Forum of the FNCCI