# Session IV
# Strengthening Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing

*Chair: Dr J Gabriel Campbell*

# Keynote Paper – Strengthening Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing

*Lyonpo Dr Kinzang Dorji, Honourable Minister for Works and Human Settlement, Royal Government of Bhutan*

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Panel Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me extend my hearty congratulations to ICIMOD for the successful completion of their new headquarters and for organising this important international symposium that accentuates the reality of regional inter-dependence and cooperation in achieving sustainable development. The presence of so many eminent personalities from a wide spectrum of professional and institutional backgrounds bodes well for the future of ICIMOD.

Having had the privilege to serve on ICIMOD's Board of Governors from 1991 to 2000, it gives me great pleasure to join you and share my thoughts on the past as well as the future of this Centre. During my tenure as a Board Member, I not only saw ICIMOD's stature grow from year to year, but I also came to recognise its unique position and the challenges and opportunities that it has as the first mountain development centre focused on the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region. I have witnessed the transition of two senior management teams during the period, from Dr Frank Tacke to Mr Egbert Pelinck in 1994, and from Mr Pelinck to Dr Gabriel Campbell in 1999. Incidentally, on both these occasions Bhutan happened to be the Chairman of the ICIMOD Board of Governors.

I have now moved to the Ministry of Works and Human Settlement, away from the Ministry of Agriculture, which continues to be the lead partner for ICIMOD in Bhutan and represented here by my colleague the Secretary of Agriculture, Dasho Sangay Thinley. However, my interest in ICIMOD and my assessment of its relevance to Bhutan have not diminished in the least. On the contrary, having to deal with building roads and settlements in the steep and fragile terrain of the country, I have begun to appreciate the relevance to us of ICIMOD's work such as mountain risk engineering even more. In Bhutan, we call it environmentally friendly road construction.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, the topic that I have been asked to dwell upon – strengthening cooperation and knowledge sharing – lies at the core of ICIMOD's mandate. As already mentioned, the primary motivation behind ICIMOD's creation was to foster regional cooperation by facilitating the sharing of information and knowledge and the exchange of scientific know-how and technical expertise in mountain development among its member countries – in essence, working hand-in-hand to address our common challenges and objectives.

This mandate has become even more relevant today than it was twenty years ago. With the challenges as well as opportunities ushered in by global warming and climate change, by globalisation of trade and the free market economy, cooperation at all levels

– local, bilateral, regional, and global – has indeed become a necessity rather than a matter of choice. These changes are the stark reality and the critical issue is how we concertedly manage these forces. Without cooperation, we cannot expect to effectively face up to the challenges, nor to realise the opportunities brought about by these global events.

For mountainous regions like the HKH, regional cooperation is even more pertinent than in other regions. We are observing significant rises in temperature, experiencing erratic climates, suffering from floods in some areas and severe droughts in others at the same time, and losing lives and property to natural disasters on an ever-increasing scale. These effects of global warming and climate change have no boundaries. Often the cause lies in one part and the effect in another. What is undeniable is that the solution lies in linking this cause and effect. This year, no country in our region was spared from nature's wrath.

We have recorded some of the worst monsoon floods in recent history, causing the loss of thousands of human lives and property worth millions of dollars. Landslides and flash floods have further aggravated the vulnerability of the fragile landscapes and destroyed roads, bridges, and other vital infrastructure built painstakingly over the years. In my own country, the damage to life and property from the heavy monsoon rains and resulting landslides and flash floods was unprecedented in recent memory. Entire communities in our eastern region were cut-off for weeks from communication, food supplies, and other essentials.

The damage done downstream of the Himalayan mountains, in the flood plains of India and Bangladesh, was even more severe. As demonstrated by the exchange of information on the weather, the formation of artificial lakes, and the behaviour of rivers in their upstream areas, damage to life and property can be mitigated considerably. A shining example of this was the establishment of a monitoring and warning system on the artificial lake upstream from the Kurichu Hydropower Plant and the exchange of information between Bhutanese and Indian officials. I was also told that similar cooperation between China and India in the Western Himalayas on the Parechu River has helped to prepare for imminent disaster downstream along the Sutlej River.

Unfortunately, such exchanges are few and far between. We must build on the positive lessons learned in the past and consciously make an effort to establish a regional flood forecasting and disaster mitigation system. Important initiatives towards this have already been taken by ICIMOD in the form of studies and publications on glacial lake outburst floods, a regional meeting on establishing a network for flood forecasting, and Hindu Kush-Himalayan Flow Regimes from International Experimental and Network Data (HKH-FRIEND). In the coming years, it is likely that floods and other disasters like hailstorms and droughts will only increase and, without an effective regional collaborative mechanism, the cost to individual countries will be high and the impact on the region as a whole devastating.

On the other front, regional cooperation is equally important if we are to derive any tangible benefit from economic liberalisation and free trade regimes. Within our fold, we have the largest and fastest growing markets, yet this has not translated into economic benefits for the people living in mountainous regions. Non-tariff barriers, including inaccessibility, transit regulations, and lack of information sharing, mean that the supply ends of goods and services are not linked to the demand ends. By and large, the niche opportunities and comparative advantages that the HKH has have yet to be exploited for the benefit of the nations and people concerned.

The HKH region is the water tower of Asia with many major rivers originating from it. There are many rivers that flow across boundaries and their use, or misuse, by one country inevitably affects the others along its course. We need to work together at both bilateral and regional levels to harness the enormous potential for hydropower generation. An equitable system needs to be evolved between upstream and downstream nations to share the benefits that will accrue from this renewable energy resource. With such a high population of consumers within the region, there is bound to be a system of collaboration that would bring about a win-win situation for all of us.

Tourism is another important avenue for economic cooperation between the member countries of ICIMOD. We have tremendous potential for a wide variety of tourism products. These include adventure tourism such as mountaineering, trekking, mountain biking, white water rafting, wind gliding, and rock climbing; cultural tourism such as pilgrimages to holy sites, festivals, and to observe lifestyles; and nature watch tourism such as bird watching, flower watching, and wildlife safaris. We also have the potential to promote recreational tourism such as mineral hot spring baths, meditation centres, fly-fishing, and traditional sports. There is so much to be gained from engaging in transboundary cooperation in terms of packaging and promoting these products within the region, and beyond.

Like the rivers, biodiversity species are not confined to national boundaries. Many mammals and birds have specific seasonal migratory routes and habitats. Some plants require the free flow of their genes through various means of conveyance for their survival. Therefore, the conservation of biodiversity must be a collaborative effort by the nations concerned if we are to ensure the survival of some of the rare species of wildlife. Both their habitats and their routes of migration, which often lie in different countries, need to be protected. This calls for a coherent conservation policy and programme that transcends geographical boundaries. I understand that ICIMOD is already working towards developing such cooperation in the Kangchenjunga Landscape Complex involving the linking of parks and protected areas in Nepal, India, and Bhutan. Many more such initiatives involving other countries and partners and focusing on the conservation of endangered species should be encouraged and fully supported.

Bio-prospecting and utilisation must be integral elements of our conservation efforts. Firstly, it is imperative that benefits flow to local mountain communities, without whose participation, support, and commitment, conservation would have little success. Very

often these communities are at the receiving end of prohibitive and authoritarian conservation polices and programmes that they have little incentive to participate in. Similarly, the national exchequers must see some tangible flow of revenue from biological products. For this to happen, more liberal and community friendly conservation policies need to be in place, supported by an active collaboration among regional countries. Knowledge and technologies required for bio-prospecting and processing, as well as potential markets for bio-products, are available within the region, particularly in China and India. Access to this knowledge, technology, and markets would go a long way not only in promoting conservation, but also in alleviating poverty among mountain communities.

In keeping with its mandate, ICIMOD has been very successful in collecting and documenting progressive policies and practices in various fields of mountain development. I understand that it has published and distributed over 800 documents, technical and general, covering a range of issues in mountain development. While it is very important to continue this activity, ICIMOD should work towards a more focused approach both in terms of subject matter and target groups. The initiatives already taken to use alternative media to reach the various clientele, ranging from farmers to policy makers, need to be further strengthened.

There is a growing awareness of the need to have networks of policy makers, professionals, and practitioners in various fields to share information, knowledge, and expertise using various print and electronic media, as well as face-to-face contacts. Concerted efforts need to be made to expand these networks to include various groups and interests, including private firms and development agencies involved in mountain development. The formal and informal networks established or supported by ICIMOD such as the Asia-Pacific Mountain Network (APMN), HIMAWANTI, SAWTEE (South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment) and others have contributed significantly to developing understanding and cooperation among the Regional Member Countries.

There is considerable scope for collaboration in capacity building among the Regional Member Countries. A network of institutes of excellence around the region could be identified and each assigned a specific area of responsibility for providing training and education. Innovative funding mechanisms such as scholarships from third parties, cost sharing between countries, student exchange programmes among institutes, and self-financing schemes, could be explored. Such a programme would not only be relevant to mountain development but would also be highly cost effective. Some preliminary areas could be natural resources management, mountain risk engineering, water harvesting, renewable energy sources, rural income generation, and the processing and marketing of mountain products. These could be supported through training in GIS and remote sensing applications, participatory planning and management tools, and policy development and advocacy skills.

Finally, it is time for the HKH region to start thinking about a convention to promote collaboration on a more intensive scale in the priority areas of disaster management and economic development that I talked about earlier. With the recent positive and

encouraging trends in geo-political relations among our member countries, I feel confident that we could start working towards such a convention. We could study the Alpine Convention formed among countries of the European Alps, learn from its experiences, and develop a convention that meets our specific requirements.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman, networks of institutions and broad cooperation in the region and beyond foster the sharing of knowledge. The solution to development problems and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals requires the effective use of existing knowledge and the generation of new knowledge relevant to development.

Knowledge is one of the key factors in solving development problems. At all levels, from rural communities, through to extension workers and local administrators, to policy makers and top government officials, problem solving depends, to a great extent, on access to knowledge – individual and institutional knowledge, local and global knowledge, and, often overlooked, knowledge from local experts or 'indigenous' knowledge.

The need for information and knowledge is huge – by the farmer trying to understand what is needed for a new crop that he is growing for the market, by development workers who want to know about the results of similar initiatives in other areas, by donor agencies who want to be sure that a new proposal is not just a duplication, and by policy makers trying to develop a new policy for the efficient management of resources. However, there is no easy way for those who need information and knowledge to find out what exists that is relevant, where it is, or how to access it.

There is a common belief that the HKH region is 'information poor', and that the lack of appropriate solutions to development problems is the result of insufficient knowledge being available. This is not actually true; there is a large amount of information and knowledge in the region relevant to sustainable development. The problem lies in knowing where to find it, knowing that it exists, and knowing how to access it. This information and knowledge is contained in a diverse array of places: libraries, monastery records, oral testimonies, publications, films, training manuals, project reports, government departments and local authority records, NGO observations, research theses, and many more. The forms in which information and knowledge are recorded are equally diverse: from electronic media to paper, as well as in tacit indigenous knowledge.

ICIMOD and its partners need to address the issue of how we can get available knowledge and information to the people who need and can use it. This is a challenge around the world, and nowhere more so than in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region where the need is so great and communication pathways mostly underdeveloped, or even nonexistent.

The HKH region spans populaces speaking a wide variety of languages, and their knowledge is also described in many languages. Local specialists, farmers, craftsmen,

business men, and the public at large – in short, all knowledge seekers – should be able to obtain, in their major local language, the information that the knowledge that they seek exists, and where possible, obtain it in a language and format appropriate for their use.

In an extremely diverse region like the HKH, the geographical context of information can play an important role in determining its relevance for a particular user and use, as can the location of contacts and institutions. Such information of geographical context should be part of the delivered knowledge.

ICIMOD, as an international centre dedicated to integrated mountain development in the HKH region and cooperating with over 300 organisations in eight member countries, is well positioned to lead a partnership and find innovative solutions for knowledge sharing and knowledge delivery to remote rural communities, so as to reduce environmental degradation and poverty in the region.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman, let me conclude by re-emphasising the importance of regional cooperation and knowledge sharing in our common pursuit of the sustainable livelihoods of our mountain communities. Whether we talk of reducing physical vulnerability or social and economic vulnerabilities, regional cooperation offers us the best hope to address these issues effectively. In an increasingly regionalised and globalised world, we should work towards the consolidation of our unity, our strengths, and our solidarity, so that we can achieve our common goal of Gross National Happiness for our people, regional prosperity, regional peace, and stability.

Before I stop, let me once again extend a very hearty congratulations to the Board, the Support Group, and the Director General and Staff of ICIMOD on holding this Symposium on the occasion of the inauguration of their new headquarters building. Let me also extend my heartfelt thanks to His Majesty's Government and the friendly people of Nepal for their hospitality and wish them a speedy return to peace and prosperity.

# Panel Topic – Learning from Global Knowledge Initiatives

*Synopsis prepared from the presentation and panel commentaries given by Dr Anne Whyte, Mestor Associates Canada, Vice-Chair ICIMOD Board of Governors and Chair of Programme Advisory Committee*

## Introduction

Networks like the Mountain Forum are part of a growing body of experience of global and regional knowledge networks, which are different from information networks in that they create added value and new knowledge. Formal knowledge networks are networks that are purpose driven and deal with problems or issues, and create and aggregate, and thus transfer knowledge, rather than just sharing or moving information around.

Some knowledge networks have operated for decades such as the Commissions of IUCN. Others, like the World Bank's Global Development Network or the Canadian hosted 'Bellanet' are more recent. Bellanet is an example of a network which successfully created new tasks for itself from those originally envisaged by its founders.

Dr Whyte outlined the ten characteristics of a successful knowledge network based on her experience and involvement in a number of global knowledge networks, including the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment; a task oriented, five-year process, in which 1,360 scientists, 91 governments, and 4 international environment convention secretariats were involved in assessing the state of the environment.

## Characteristics of a successful knowledge network

1. Knowledge networks are most effective when they are purpose driven. The narrower the purpose, the greater the chance of success, or uptake of the output of the network by the end user.

2. Knowledge networks should be <u>working</u> networks. They should have clear outputs and target groups. Members should work together on solutions, such as doing research. There should be as much 'work' as 'net', although people often like to 'net' more than 'work'.

3. Knowledge networks should be built on expertise rather than just an interest in the topic. This has important implications for the identification and selection of networks. Sometimes this means saying 'no' to important individuals or organisations that want to be members. Knowledge networks have to be <u>merit-based</u> in terms of membership. A very important question to be asked is: "what is the value of this member to the network?". In the IUCN commissions this has been a real challenge; IUCN is on a growth trend and has experienced dilution of expertise over the last four decades in some of its commissions.

4. Knowledge networks need to be managed to make them effective and efficient. They should have network goals and objectives and clear membership criteria, governance, and decision-making mechanisms. They require a network manager to keep the focus on the goal and to manage the flow of communication more freely.

5. Knowledge networks should try to cut across organisational and sectoral boundaries and capture as much diversity in terms of organisations and sectors as they can possibly manage including government organisations, university research, private organisations, and NGOs. However, at the same time diversity makes it more difficult to manage the network.

6. Knowledge networks should be task driven, but are more successful where they increase the capacity of most members. Capacity building should be encouraged.

The learning of new things and ideas is very important to encourage members to participate.

7.  Knowledge networks need institutional commitment, even if they are made up of individuals. The implementation or transfer of knowledge is much more likely if the institutions involved are committed to the networks. Institutions facilitate continuity, as staff come and go but institutions remain. For sustainability of a network, institutional commitment is necessary. It is valuable to have institutional commitment from the top, and to build on it. Ideally, knowledge networks should be integrated throughout the organisations involved, but this is difficult to achieve.

8.  Knowledge networks have to be first and foremost <u>communicating</u> networks. Effective communication across the network is its life blood. Vertical communication, both top down and bottom up, are essential communication pathways. Along with vertical channels, horizontal communication is also very important. Horizontal communication between network members should be encouraged and developed. This is where creativity and innovation play key roles, but achieving sustained and vigorous interchange between members rather than just up and down the hierarchy has been a difficult task for many organisations. Knowledge networks, in their communications, need to be both structured and democratic, and to be successful all members should have access to the same information. A good rule of thumb in managing networks is that 2% of the time should be invested in technological aspects, and 98% in human relationships.

9.  Another important characteristic to note for successful knowledge management is that 'what you can't measure you can't manage'. Networking needs to be monitored and evaluated. But most evaluation tools are for measuring projects, programmes, and organisations rather than networks.

10. Finally, knowledge networks can only succeed if they also engage the end users of the knowledge that they are creating. In a knowledge economy, information can be freely available so that if the network is to be successful in its task, there should be a process of engagement with the end users, which in some cases may mean that they are brought within the knowledge network itself.

## Conclusion

Together these ten characteristics can constitute what is sometimes called 'the network advantage'. It would be a useful exercise for ICIMOD to review its own knowledge networks in the context of the ten characteristics to see where they might be strengthened and what strengths already exist to build on. This information will help not only ICIMOD but also its regional and country partner organisations, many of which are working with ICIMOD in regional and global knowledge networks.

# Panel Topic – Identifying and Upscaling Successful Development Approaches

*Synopsis prepared from the presentation and panel commentaries given by Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN), Pakistan*

## Establishment of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) was established in 1982 in Northern Pakistan with the strong interest of His Highness Aga Khan as a part of the Aga Khan Development Network. His Highness provided every kind of support for the programme and gave the responsibility for its commencement to Mr Khan. AKRSP was developed with the objective of poverty alleviation involving grassroots communities.

## Introduction to the AKRSP

The AKRSP is an internationally recognised community-based development organisation that works in partnership with local communities living in the high mountain ranges of Northern Pakistan in the field of integrated rural development. AKRSP's mission is to alleviate poverty through the promotion of sustainable livelihoods.

AKRSP's work in northern Pakistan has had a significant influence on development policy and practice, nationally as well as internationally. The development model adopted by AKRSP has itself been widely replicated. A network of Rural Support Programmes now exists all over the country with the mandate to design and implement strategies for the alleviation of rural poverty. In South Asia and other parts of the world, programmes based on this model have been set up to promote grassroots development through the involvement of local communities.

Both external evaluations of AKRSP and internal assessments provide evidence of the substantial impact of the Programme on economic and social development in the region. A network of about 2,400 village organisations and 1,400 women's organisations, with about 85% of the total households in the area as members, has made possible the broad-based participation of villagers in managing their own development.

It is in recognition of this fact that the present government of Pakistan has allocated more than Rs.45 billion for rural development, which will be used through rural support programmes in the country. Beside this, the Government of Pakistan has also created a pool fund called the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, which also supports rural development initiatives in Pakistan.

## The Rural Support Programmes: Replication of AKRSP

The AKRSP programme was assessed and evaluated independently by the World Bank; it was found that the income of the population had doubled and that the programme

had proven successful. Thus, the Government of Pakistan replicated the rural support programme (RSP) model in other areas of the country.

The objective of the RSPs is to foster a framework of grassroots institutions through a process of social mobilisation in the villages of Pakistan by harnessing people's potential to help themselves and enabling communities to identify and undertake development activities that are needs-based, effective, and genuinely sustainable. The RSPs that are currently operating in Pakistan are listed in Table 1.

| Table 1: RSPs currently operating in Pakistan | | |
|---|---|---|
| **RSP** | **Presence In** | **Start Up Year** |
| AKRSP | Northern Areas, NWFP | 1983 |
| SRSP | NWFP | 1989 |
| NRSP | National | 1992 |
| GBTI | NWFP, Punjab | 1995 |
| LPRP | NWFP | 1997 |
| PRSP | Punjab | 1998 |
| BRSP | Balochistan | 2001 |
| SRSO | Sindh | 2003 |

The philosophy behind this programme is that development comes from the bottom, not the top. In Pakistan, there are 40 million poor people, and in South Asia there are over 400 million poor people, including some 120 million in mountain regions. To have a countrywide programme along the lines of poverty alleviation is not possible without government help. The challenge for such a programme is to get the requisite resources from the government while retaining programme autonomy.

In Mr Khan's experience, programmes like the RSPs can only be achieved successfully by remaining outside the government. This was the success of the AKRSP. A National Rural Support Programme was set up to replicate the success of the AKRSP with an endowment of US $20 million, mainly to facilitate institutions in poverty alleviation. The RSP programme was followed by the Bank, which persuaded the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) to set up a similar institution to take care of the effects of the Ghaziboradha Hydropower project. Likewise, other states within the Pakistan also came forward to extend and establish RSPs in their areas.

## Conceptual package of social mobilisation

Social mobilisation is based on the assumption that the poor, landless, and assetless have the capacity and are willing to undertake development activities to improve their livelihood. The RSPs, as support organisations, enable this potential to be harnessed through a process of social guidance. This entails the following:

- social organisation – bringing the poor into an organised fold;
- human resource development – upgrading the human skills of the poor, such as managerial, productive, and cooperative skills to enable them to make the best use of available resources; and
- capital formation – the generation of capital through the discipline of saving, as capital is power, without which the poor can never hope to be self reliant.

*The process*

The main steps in the process are as follow.

1. A series of dialogues with communities to ascertain their willingness to enter into a partnership with the RSP.
2. Acceptance of a Terms of Partnership offer from the RSP agreeing, for example, to identify activities that they can undertake, to form a community organisation (CO), to meet regularly, to save regularly, and to select genuine activists. The community then does a poverty ranking of all households in the locality.
4. A CO is then formed ensuring the inclusion of the poor households in the community.
5. The CO starts meeting and saving and identifies office bearers and activists.
6. The CO prepares micro-investment plans at the household, group, and community levels, identifying the support required from RSP, commonly such things as credit, technical assistance, input supply, and skills training (see example in Table 2).
7. The RSP responds accordingly, providing access to technological packages to increase productivity.
8. The RSP facilitates linkages with government departments, district governments, NGOs, and others.

| Table 2: Example of micro -investment plan outline | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Level** | **Plans Identified** | **Support** |
| Household | • income generation | • line of credit<br>• training |
| Group Level | • land development<br>• enterprises<br>• input supply and marketing | • line of credit<br>• training<br>• technical assistance |
| Community Level | • social sector services such as:<br>  – water supply and sanitation<br>  – health and family planning<br>  – education<br>  – infrastructure needs | • productive infrastructure<br>• linkages with government, donors, NGOs, and others |

*Including the poor in community organisations*

The involvement of the poor in community organisations is very important to make the programme effective. For that, a village profile must first be developed to provide a benchmark, then poverty assessments need to be performed to identify the well-to-do; better off; poor; very poor; and destitute.

## RSPs and the government

*RSPs — complementing the role of government*

The RSPs complement the role of government at the village, community, and mohalla level by
- creating a network of COs through which the government works;
- facilitating bottom-up planning through a needs identification for village and inter-village schemes;

- development of low-cost village infrastructure models that ensure community involvement, contribution, and responsibility for operation and maintenance; and
- implementation of inter-village infrastructure schemes through cluster organisations like farm to market roads, culverts, and water courses.

## Potential linkages between RSPs and government

The potential linkages between RSPs and government at the inter-village and union council level include

- linkages between government extension agents and COs, e.g., village health workers, family planning workers, and agriculture extension;
- improving the quality of primary education by increasing enrolment, reducing dropouts, and curbing teacher absenteeism through community organisation managed school management committees; and
- improving service delivery of basic health units, family welfare centres, and other government facilities by involving cluster organisations in their management.

## South Asia Social Mobilization Network (SASMON)

The South Asia Social Mobilization Network (SASMON) is housed in the RSP network and is managed by 26 member organisations in eight countries in South Asia. The goal is to facilitate member organisations in their objective of improving sustainable livelihoods through

- web-based sharing of experiences and best practices, and
- encouraging on-line debate between members on critical issues of social mobilisation.

The achievements of SASMON to date are as follow.

- SASMON website designed and hosted.
- Free email facility, web calendar, and discussion forum online provided.
- The SASMON website linked to 30 other major development sites.
- Data from country focal points and member organisations collected and uploaded onto the website.
- Reports, notes for the record, and publications from members and other organisations are collected and uploaded on the website.
- RSP Network Pakistan website designed and hosted.
- HRDN Pakistan website designed and hosted.
- Training programme on social mobilisation for 28 participants from the Maldives arranged through the National Rural Support Programme-Institute of Rural Management.
- Training programme on social mobilisation and micro-credit for 11 participants from the Maldives arranged through the National Rural Support Programme-Institute of Rural Management.
- Assisted National Rural Support Programme in international IFAD workshop on Gender.

## Conclusion

Experience suggests that the time for 'feel-good' projects is over – good projects have already been developed. The problem or main issue for ICIMOD in the current context is to scale up its existing programmes that have a potential to enhance the livelihood of mountain people in the HKH.

For ICIMOD, the time has come to show the contribution that it has made, and can still make, to the lives of mountain people in the HKH, as per the objective of the founders 21 years ago. What has been achieved at the Godavari Demonstration and Training Centre site should be demonstrated to the neighbours; this is very important to gain their goodwill.

# Panel Topic – Linking Knowledge Providers and Users

*Dr Zbigniew Mikolajuk, Programme Manager, IKM/IMCO, ICIMOD*

## Introduction

Knowledge is retained, encoded, transferred, and described. As knowledge providers, people and institutions create and retain knowledge; as knowledge users, they also need and seek knowledge. I will examine how knowledge providers and knowledge users relate to knowledge dissemination and knowledge sharing systems, and how, and why, we approach the following questions, which we try to answer in our development work.
- Who are the knowledge seekers?
- What knowledge do they seek and need?
- Who are the knowledge providers?
- How can providers and seekers be linked?
- How can the right knowledge be provided?

### The problem

To solve any problem, people need knowledge. The right knowledge is there somewhere, described in some way, but it is often unavailable to those who need it most, at the time and the place that they need it.

A farmer needs to know about climate changes and plant types to produce new and better crops. An extension worker needs knowledge of new agricultural technologies. An administrator needs to know about new legislation and governance. A decision maker needs knowledge relevant to the development of new policies.

### Definition

Defined practically, knowledge is the ability to take effective action [Dave Snowden]. This means that just making information available is not enough. To become knowledge, information has to have some kind of effect. For example, unless a farmer understands information about fertilisers and uses it to gain a tangible effect, the information is not knowledge.

Knowledge can be delivered in many ways. Whatever method is used, absorbing knowledge implies internalising information and being able to use it to solve problems and answer questions. We will not dwell on the theoretical definitions of knowledge, but from a pragmatic point of view, we will look at how knowledge is described (factually – what? and procedurally – how?), and how to connect the right people or institutions that possess the right knowledge with those who need this knowledge.

ICIMOD and its partners are both knowledge providers and knowledge users. We will concentrate in this paper on their role as knowledge providers and how they are linked to knowledge users.

## Making knowledge available

The main issue is how to make knowledge available to those who really need it. In this age of great scientific advances we appear to possess information on just about everything. This includes technical issues, social and political sciences, and expertise in financial matters. If there is so much sophisticated and advanced information, why is it so difficult to solve such basic problems as the provision of clean drinking water, effective health care and education for everyone, and the elimination of hunger and poverty?

Over the last 20 years, ICIMOD and its partners have created, collected, and described knowledge in many disciplines relevant to mountain development. We all know about ICIMOD's excellent publications on social, environmental, and natural resources and other issues vital to improving life in mountainous regions, and ICIMOD's continuous efforts in capacity building. We also know about the efforts made to share knowledge with rural communities and policy makers. Have we done enough? Have we made a positive impact on knowledge sharing?

People and communities may need the knowledge accumulated by our organisation to make a real difference in solving development problems, so our knowledge resources need to be shared. A short note from the profile of Professor Anil Gupta says: "Prof Gupta realised that the resource in which poor people were rich was their knowledge, values, and institutions. Unless we build upon their creativity and innovative potential, the development process cannot become dignified." Thus, the answer to why all this knowledge has not been translated into poverty reduction, appears to lie in the knowledge sharing process.

## Knowledge sharing

At all levels of human activity, people look for knowledge that will help them to achieve their goals. Collecting, describing, and transferring knowledge involves the use of emerging technologies and organisational structures, from the simple oral tradition, through to printed materials, and the latest advances of the Internet.

The issue remains the same: how can the people who possess the right knowledge share it with the people who need it, and what makes people share their knowledge? How do we link knowledge providers and knowledge seekers?

Access to the knowledge that is needed, or in many cases, just knowing that information actually is available, is one of the critical issues for development initiatives. Linking knowledge providers and knowledge seekers effectively means sharing the information about the available knowledge resources (making people know that the information that they need exists somewhere and can help them), and establishing communication and delivery channels.

For example, an organisation that develops a new method for the prevention of soil erosion produces the results of its work as a collection of documents (case studies), research reports, and audiovisual materials. The knowledge encoded in these objects is needed by farmers and extension workers, as well as policy makers. What needs to be done to make this knowledge useful to different users?

Linking knowledge providers and users requires answering the following questions:
- How can a potential user know that the knowledge he needs actually exists?
- Is the information in a form that can be absorbed by the knowledge seeker?
- How can the seeker access the knowledge?
- How can the user give feedback on the relevancy and usefulness of the knowledge provided to him?
- How can we make the process of knowledge packaging and delivery more efficient?
- Is it feasible to provide universal access to knowledge to remote and poor communities?

## On packaging and access

A short story about a farmer in Mindanao is an example of the importance of knowledge delivery. The farmer visited a village that had just established a telecentre. A group of people were looking at the computer screen. He joined them to watch a presentation on how to raise ducklings. He liked the story very much and applied the newly acquired knowledge. Now, he is one of the richest farmers in his village.

The story is not about the telecentre but about accessing relevant knowledge that was presented in an effective format. Perhaps a brochure, or radio broadcast, or a lecture from an extension worker wouldn't have had that effect, but it is likely that if there were other duckling breeders around, the farmer would have learned from them and not the telecentre. In this situation, entirely new knowledge was delivered effectively. This required someone with the knowledge packaging it and the knowledge reaching the farmer.

## On knowledge making other provisions effective

Another crucial need is to ensure that resources are accompanied by the information needed to make the resources useful. For example, with the decentralisation of water supply management, provinces in one country were given the legal and financial resources to plan and manage the residential and industrial water supply. However, the provinces did not have sufficient knowledge to forecast the demand for water, maintain the facilities, or allocate funds. Relatively simple computer programs to support

planning and data collection would be an immediate answer to the problem, but a whole programme of capacity building would be necessary to make the decentralisation effective and help the provinces manage their water supply systems well.

## On expectations

In some development projects, people are asked to do tasks that they do not have the knowledge to perform. Although we provide the resources, it is essential not to overlook the equally important issue of providing the knowledge that will make these resources useful. We are doing more than just giving a fish, but we also can't just give a fishing rod and bait; we have to teach them to fish.

## On the factors that help knowledge sharing

Linking knowledge providers and knowledge users in an effective knowledge sharing system is a complex undertaking that includes technical, organisational, financial, and social elements. An effective knowledge sharing system also needs consent at the political level.

## Main Issues

The main issues for knowledge sharing are summarised in the following.

a. A political will and popular understanding of the value of knowledge sharing must exist at all levels of society and administration. A knowledge sharing system is not a replacement for an educational system, but rather a tool that is used to deliver needed knowledge at the right time and place.

b. Knowledge is a human faculty and ultimately resides in people, not in machines and books. In a knowledge sharing system we are dealing with knowledge descriptions or representations such as written documents, maps, pictures, stories, audio, and video clips, as well as direct communication between experts and knowledge seekers.

c. The analysis of needed knowledge for diverse users is a continuous process. We should know what knowledge is needed, in what format it can or should be delivered, and how effective the knowledge acquired with the assistance of the system was.

d. Solving the problem of intellectual property rights and creating financial arrangements for the contribution of knowledge are necessary for an effective operational system. We must ensure that an equitable part of any wealth, generated from the shared knowledge contributed by poor communities is shared with the knowledge providers.

e. In order to reach remote and poor communities with large illiterate and semi-literate populations, we must design appropriate knowledge delivery methods, like interactive theatre and visual presentations. Knowledge objects must depict very specific local issues and be delivered in local languages. Information delivery must be customised and personalised. We need a feedback mechanism that allows providers to know if the delivery methods are effective and if the information was

understood. We must also keep in mind that the poorest and least educated users, who are often those that have the most to gain, have little if any experience in seeking knowledge in a larger system that goes beyond their community.

f. Developing knowledge sharing in a society is a long-term process that needs to be embedded in other social and developmental initiatives. It requires commitment from political powers, civic organisations, and technical and research establishments interested in the empowerment of all social groups. We should regard knowledge sharing as a public good.

Knowledge sharing is not a solution to development problems, but it is an important factor in finding effective ways to deal with such issues as natural resource management, health and child care, employment, governance, and ultimately poverty reduction.

## Conclusion

ICIMOD and its partners are in a unique position to foster the region-wide sharing of knowledge pertinent to mountain development. Cooperation between knowledge providers at national and regional levels needs a driving force and the application of adequate technologies.

The role of ICIMOD is to build awareness about the benefits of knowledge sharing, to investigate and promote new technologies and methods supporting knowledge sharing, and to assist its partners in capacity building. Practical steps need to be taken to use better the wealth of knowledge objects produced and accumulated by ICIMOD and its partners (books, manuals, posters, brochures, films), and in particular to develop effective means for knowledge delivery to remote communities and less privileged groups in society.

# Panel Topic – Lessons from the Alpine Convention Experience for the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region

*Dr Eklabya Sharma, Programme Manager, NRM, ICIMOD*

Mountain regions are a source of vast reserves of valuable resources including water, energy, and biological diversity; and they are important in terms of their vital ecological, economic, recreational, social, and cultural functions. Mountain regions are home to a unique heritage of human kind. Because most mountain regions include transboundary ranges, mountains are politically sensitive systems, and therefore require careful attention. There is a deep concern that, due to increasing human activity, climatic variation, and other external and internal factors, many mountain ecosystems are in decline in terms of their valuable functions and services, and that poverty is on the increase in mountain regions. We see a disproportionate number of armed conflicts and migrations from mountain areas. Major immediate challenges facing mountain regions include poverty reduction, sustainable natural resource use, and the containment of regional conflicts.

There are many great mountain systems and cultures in the world. The Alps, Andes, Carpathians, Caucasus, Central Asian Mountains, and Hindu Kush-Himalayas are some examples of transboundary mountain systems. Such transboundary mountains face many more challenges as they are governed by different political systems. There is a strong need for cooperation among the countries sharing these mountain systems towards their development and in sustenance of the flow of goods and services from them. One such example of cooperation between the countries sharing a transboundary mountain system is the Alpine Convention.

The Alpine Convention was agreed upon in 1989, signed in 1991, and came into force from the year 1995[1]. All eight Alpine countries and the European Union are signatories to it. Experiences with the Alpine Convention are new and evolving. Some of the agreed areas of cooperation of immediate benefit are in nature and landscape protection, mountain forests, mountain farming, tourism, soil conservation, and energy and transport-related infrastructure.

Lessons provided by the Alpine Process have a global significance as the only example worldwide of a legally binding inter-governmental mountain agreement. Despite some difficulties, it has evolved into a successful platform for regional exchange and negotiation, and for sustainable development. Lessons from the Alpine Process and experience were drawn for other mountain systems of the world during the International Year of Mountains at Berchtesgaden in Germany, and were put together in the form of a declaration and recommendations[2]. This paper summarises the lessons from the Alpine Process and the workshop for regional conventions in other mountain areas, and their relevance to the Hindu Kush-Himalayas and ICIMOD.

## Learning from the Alpine Process

The experience of the Alpine Process has many key elements. First, the Alpine Process demonstrates that regional cooperation, as a process, owes its success to the participation and support of local populations and local governments right from the earliest planning stages, rather than to a legal framework alone. Second, NGOs have played a key role in the formulation and promotion of the framework agreement, and in the actual implementation and projects. Community networks and committed citizens have fostered the acceptance of the Convention among Alpine populations, and have enabled related measures at the local level. Third, the Alpine Process lives through locally implemented programmes and projects, as well as through regional exchanges of experiences. Non-government organisations in the Alps have been instrumental in ensuring the existence of the framework convention and in the implementation of concrete activities and projects. A network of local governments and other citizen networks have facilitated the acceptance of the Convention and provided continuous support for the required changes at the local level. Fourth, the key to the success of the Alpine Process is transparency and continuous communication among governments at

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[1]  The Convention on the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention), URL: www.conventionalpine.org/ page2_en.htm

[2]  The Alpine Experience - An Approach for Other Mountain Regions? Berchtesgaden Declaration 2002. URL: www.cipra.de/berchtesgaden/hauptseite%20englisch/index.htm

all levels and with local civil society. The exchange of region and location-specific information at the regional level is a precondition for fruitful cooperation. Fifth, many of the principles, as well as the implementation experiences, of the Alpine Process are likely to prove relevant and helpful. These principles are to hold governments accountable; keep a regional focus; foster equality and equity; decentralise; set clear objectives; encourage the participation of local communities and civil society organisations; establish networks; build capacity and share knowledge; encourage partnerships; and engage the international community.

## Lessons for regional conventions for mountain areas

The Berchtesgaden Recommendations[3] deal with key structural and legal factors involved in the development of international conventions in mountain regions. Some of the lessons from the Alpine Convention for other transboundary mountain areas of the world are summarised below.

1) The conditions in mountain areas vary widely, and the Alpine Process and Convention are not simplistically transferable. Creative use should, however, be made by other mountain regions of the lessons learned in the context of the Alpine Convention and Protocols. This becomes especially meaningful when lessons are applied more narrowly with regard to specific sub-topics and themes.

2) The points of departure for elaboration of any regional convention should be the specific regional needs and circumstances, the regional state of development, and the degree to which there is a tangible commonality of objectives. An essential precondition for the elaboration of a convention is at least a partial political convergence of the participating states, and a shared determination to overcome obstacles by way of collaboration.

3) Regional cooperation does not necessarily require a convention. Rather, case-by-case there may be useful instruments (strategies, programmes, or charters) below the level of a convention proper, which can serve as useful stepping-stones.

4) The quality of the process matters. In the elaboration of draft agreements aiming at regional cooperation and/or a convention, the involvement of offices outside the central government, at regional and local levels, is strongly recommended. A 'bottom-up' approach is also recommended. A dynamic convention process is unlikely to succeed in the absence of local participation and general public support. In order to enlarge the basis for a convention process, the strengthening of regional networks, e.g., in the area of nature protection or of communities, is recommended.

5) Targets must be achievable. Good cooperation depends on success. Therefore, states should define truly achievable goals, which can realistically result from their cooperation. In this sense, an exceedingly tight copy of the Alpine Convention might not be recommendable, as it could stand in the way of carefully tailored, situation specific approaches.

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[3] The Alpine Experience – An Approach for Other Mountain Regions? Berchtesgaden Recommendations 2002. URL: www. cipra.de/berchtesgaden/hauptseite%20englisch/index.htm

## HKH relevance

The Hindu Kush-Himalayas (HKH) comprise eight countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. Participants from all of these countries except Myanmar were involved in the Berchtesgaden Conference 2002. These participants converged to a regional workshop for the HKH region, representing governments (ICIMOD Board Members), non-government organisations, academia, and international institutions. They noted that a considerable history of cooperation on mountain issues and joint concerns already exists in the HKH region. Examples include the establishment of ICIMOD, and many strands of cooperation in relation to information sharing, technology sharing, joint research, vibrant networks, and policy initiatives.

It was realised that the HKH region is different in many significant ways from the Alps. All of the countries in the HKH region are 'developing' lower income countries, while in the Alps all the countries are comparatively affluent. In terms of environment and geology, the HKH region is a more fragile and much larger scale mountain system of more recent geological origin. It is highly populated, people are poor, and resource degradation rates are very high. The political situation is difficult and very sensitive. The HKH region needs a long-range vision for cooperation, and building trust among member countries is a key initial step. Regional cooperation and integrated approaches would be very valuable in solving current, intricate problems.

The workshop recognised that within the HKH region, increased cooperation is needed, primarily to improve the livelihoods of mountain people. Measures recommended for cooperation include information sharing, establishing networks, and collaborative actions within identified policies. Areas for possible cooperation were prioritised as (a) biodiversity, where transboundary conservation through a system of contiguous protected areas can be strengthened or initiated as applicable; (b) technology and information sharing on agricultural practices, natural resource management, and hazards; (c) watershed management and water resources; (d) the promotion and exchange of cultural indigenous knowledge; (e) cooperation on early warning systems, mitigation, and control of hazards; (f) economic activities with people-centred approaches aimed at environmental sustainability within a regional vision; and (g) areas of ecotourism and the development of hydro-electric power.

In addition, some ideas on the parallel pursuit of like-minded policies and strategies were contemplated at the workshop. They are (a) increase the comprehensive understanding of natural capital; (b) integrate mountain specific policies within national governments; (c) increase public awareness of mountain issues; (d) capacity building of stakeholders; (e) exchange of technological solutions and skills; (f) regional institutional linkages; (g) develop and implement poverty reduction strategies for mountains; (h) develop joint programmes at the national level interlinked by a regional umbrella; and (i) regional exchanges that have great potential for building trust and cooperation.

ICIMOD's current Strategic Plan and Medium Term Action Plan deal with most of the thematic areas that were identified during the Berchtesgaden Conference for cooperation in the HKH region[4]. ICIMOD's experience shows that regional cooperation does not necessarily require a convention and can be done at a lower level. One good example in our recent programme is transboundary biodiversity management in a landscape in the Eastern Himalayas where Bhutan, India, and Nepal are cooperating. However, our experience shows that there has to be more political commitment and stewardship from regional countries to foster such cooperation. Stronger cooperation may lead to a greater Himalayan convention in the future. In that case ICIMOD could be an implementation institution for technical exchange and cooperation under the convention.

The most important lesson from the Alpine Convention for the HKH region is to generate political commitment among member countries for cooperation on mountain specific sustainable development.

# Discussion and Recommendations: Session IV

The plenary discussions after the presentations in Working Session IV focused mainly on the need for, and ways to, scale up existing projects. Mr Khan outlined what he had found, through his extensive work, to be the key qualities for upscaling, which included:
- having a quality product and a clear theoretical framework and methodologies (something that has been time tested and proven),
- champions to promote the approach,
- independence and autonomy,
- willingness of the community to come out of poverty, and
- genuine leaders from within the community.

Another issue raised was language, as all of the deliberations and presentations here were in English. It would be good if information could be made available in local languages and in a way that is useful to grassroots organisations. Moreover, questions were raised about the provision of continual support, both financial and technical, to the networks set up by ICIMOD.

At the end of each presentation and discussion, recommendations were also made that would help set the future direction of ICIMOD. Some of the most important made during Working Session IV are listed below.
- To deal with the challenges posed by global developments such as global warming, institutions like ICIMOD can play a role through the continuous development of early warning and monitoring systems.
- ICIMOD should scale up projects to show it is reaching the over 120 million poor people in the region more effectively. It was suggested that demonstration sites like Godavari be introduced in the Regional Member Countries and that ICIMOD's

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[4] *Partnerships for Sustainable Mountain Development: Securing the Future of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, Strategic and Medium Term Action Plans, 2003-2007.* Kathmandu: ICIMOD

documents be published in regional languages, to help disseminate information and facilitate scaling up.

- In relation to knowledge management, there is a need to find an effective means of delivering knowledge including how best to package knowledge for different audiences and needs.
- Lessons learned from the Alpine Convention need to be promoted among the Regional Member Countries and there need to be policies and strategies for parallel pursuit. There is also a need for joint programmes at the national level, interlinked by a regional umbrella, and a need for capacity building and trust building. The mountain states play a key role in promoting this type of cooperation.