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Integrated Planning for Environment and Economic Development in Mountain Areas Concepts, Issues and Approaches

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Preface

Development of mountain areas requires the simultaneous pursuit of two objectives: environmental sustainability and poverty alleviation. Mountain areas suffer from inaccessibility, fragility, and marginality, which place serious constraints on diversified and all-round development. Conventional approaches to development, commonly evolved with the plains as the geophysical space in mind, are, therefore, highly inadequate and unsuitable for mountain areas. The mountain perspective, with its specificities, both negative and positive, and sustainable management of the environment are essential ingredients of an appropriate development strategy for these areas.

In spite of recognising the need for a different approach, planning for mountain area development, particularly in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region, has not yet adequately internalised the basic ingredients of such an approach. Incorporation of environmental considerations into development planning, policies, and programmes has been only partial and project-specific; linkage between infrastructure and development and among different sectors and activities are not fully reflected in the formulation and implementation of development plans; the specific roles and significance of the potentials and contributions of women in mountain economies are not adequately recognised in planning for socioeconomic development; and the physical, social, and cultural characteristics of different mountain areas are often ignored in determining spatial units for planning in these areas. Most often these deficiencies are a result of the lack of appropriate methodologies and their inadequate use in planning and policy-making.

ICIMOD endeavours to develop and disseminate sustainable development approaches for mountain areas, with the objectives of conserving the mountain environment and alleviating poverty among mountain people. In that context, this paper attempts to raise various issues and come up with proposals relating to environment-development integration and intersectoral linkages, human resources' development and gender dimensions, and integrated area planning in mountain areas. It is hoped that it will generate awareness, concern, and discussion among planners, policy-makers, development workers, and experts interested in and concerned with the development of mountain areas.

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