

Workshop Conclusions :

Outline of a Collaborative Programme

The major purpose of the Workshop was to establish a foundation for a collaborative work programme in the field of rural-urban linkages. The participants felt that there were many approaches to this problem. In the past, urban centres were treated like islands of physical space. Emphasis was put only on internal urban links without considering relations with the rural sector: an important condition for economic growth in a country where a majority of the labour force is engaged in low-productivity agriculture. Now there is a need to focus on questions such as to what extent urban investments promote rural development, and on a more advantageous collaborative programme on regional economic, environmental, and institutional aspects rather than on urban centres alone.

The Workshop emphasised that one way of approaching the issue of rural - urban linkages is to undertake coordinated implementation of a collaborative programme linking six Hindu Kush - Himalaya Valleys (Thimpu, Lhasa, Dun, Srinagar, Kathmandu, and Peshawar) on a cooperative basis by linked national planning teams. This, however, does not imply that other urban towns in the mountains located in Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan are precluded for future collaboration.

This programme would provide an opportunity for professionals to exchange knowledge and expertise. Great potential exists for shared learning in these valleys, especially as activities in the valleys are at various stages of development. For example, limestone deposits in Dun Valley have been the centre of controversy over resource utilisation at the local as well as national level for more than a decade. Srinagar has been facing the pollution problem of Dal Lake. The problem of competing demands for, or pollution of, water is found in almost all valleys. This information could be utilised to reinforce results of programmes in other valleys which have not had the same experiences, leading to further development of valleys of this Region.

Participants from five countries of the Region agreed to formulate a common but flexible methodology for a collaborative and comparative Planning and Action Programme in the field of rural-urban linkages by integrating appropriate conclusions already presented in the report. The details of the proposed programme, while yet to be finalised, are expected to be included within some of these broad headings raised at the Workshop :

- Design of draft comparable methodologies for action plans through consultation with planners from the Region and ICIMOD staff
- Data Collection, analysis and forecasting
 - Analysis of the impact of urbanisation on rural areas from socio-economic and environmental perspectives
 - Analysis of the role of urban and regional institutions
 - Preparation of an integrated urbanisation and regional development strategy
- Complement developmental activities
- Provide input into the National Planning Commission
- Review of planned development over a number of years
- Manpower and budget required

Although the detailed organisational arrangements for such a programme have not yet been formulated, it is intended that a separate Action Planning Team will be set up in each of the valleys, and a core team, based at ICIMOD, will have the function of promoting this programme by bringing together the findings of the teams, and encouraging and enabling exchange between them.

The success of such a programme would be greatly enhanced by establishing, at an early stage, the methodology to be adopted in each valley. Clearly there would be some variation, primarily because of the range of different institutional arrangements in the valleys. As far as possible, however, a shared approach will be encouraged.

During the initial phase of the Workshop follow-up programme, three-year proposals have been received for collaboration from the Peshawar and Dun Valleys and requests for more details about the proposed methodology have been made by Lhasa, Srinagar, and Kathmandu. This early reaction to the Workshop held at ICIMOD shows great interest generated in the field of rural-urban linkages among planners in this Region.

Results of such a programme could be :

- Sharing of experience already gained in other valleys such as environmental consequences of urbanisation
- Systematic information exchange concerning rural-urban linkages in mountain regions
- Regional cooperation through exchange of expertise
- Preparation and implementation of modern development plans
- Development of training programmes in ecological and environmental aspects

With external financial support, collaborative studies of rural-urban linkages will be implemented, with ICIMOD, in cooperation with planners from the Region, defining a comparative methodology as its basis. It is hoped that the discussions held at this Workshop, summarised in the preceding pages, will contribute to establishing a basis for a comparative Planning and Action Programme.