

Director General's Overview

ICIMOD commenced implementing its new strategy, **Partnerships in Mountain Development: Securing the Future of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas**, in 2003. This strategy is designed to increase impacts on mountain poverty and environmental sustainability through focused and integrated programmes. The strategy places greater reliance on strategic partnerships and regional cooperation to promote adoption of better policy and technological options in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas (HKH) to reduce mountain people's social, economic, and physical vulnerabilities.

The key **strategic outcomes** ICIMOD seeks through implementation of its strategy with its regional and global partners are the following.

- Productive and sustainable community-based management of vulnerable mountain resources
- Improved and diversified incomes for vulnerable and marginalised mountain peoples
- Increased regional and local conservation of mountain biological and cultural heritage
- Greater voice and influence, dignity, social security, and equity for all mountain peoples
- Decreased physical vulnerability within watersheds and regional river basins

ICIMOD's *Medium-Term Action Plan*, finalised during 2003, translates this strategy into specific programme outcomes for the next five years. The programmes are based on using ICIMOD's comparative advantages as a regionally endorsed **mountain learning and knowledge centre** to add value and seek potentials for large-scale impacts on the region's poor and vulnerable peoples. These criteria underpin the focus that has been developed for each of the new integrated programmes.

The systematic and integrated framework in which the programmes have been developed builds on the Centre's previous work over two decades. This framework, along with some of the new strategic approaches, is also a direct response to the external evaluations and guidance received from the Board and the Support Group to further improve ICIMOD's focus and effectiveness. This programmatic framework thus provides a more defined basis for focusing individual action initiatives/projects and for measuring programmatic results with our partners.

To implement this strategy and internalise the new directions, ICIMOD undertook a reorganisation that aligned staffing and budgets with programme structure, held workshops, and recruited new staff for vacant positions. This annual report summarises the progress achieved in 2003 in starting these new programme initiatives with our partners.

On both the regional and global scales, 2003 has been a year of follow-up to both the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and the International Year of Mountains and the development of new partnership programmes. The International Mountain Partnership held its initial high-level meeting in Merano, Italy. A major decision-support-system partnership that will strongly support ICIMOD's work, also announced in Johannesburg, was formulated and approved. To follow-up on these partnerships, ICIMOD will take a major leadership role in implementing both regional and specific thematic content actions.

The Director General was elected Chairperson of the global Mountain Forum Board of Directors, and the Board accepted The Mountain Institute and ICIMOD's joint proposal to transfer the main information and server functions from The Mountain Institute in the USA to ICIMOD-hosted premises in Kathmandu. This

transfer was successfully completed and four additional staff members from each continent have been recruited and trained to take up this global responsibility and provide direct support for the International Partnership.

Most importantly, effects of the increase in awareness brought about through the International Year of Mountains, and ICIMOD's strong support for these activities, are to be seen within the statements and actions of policy-makers in the HKH region. Particularly at the state, province, and district level – but also at the national level – there is evidence of greater concern with mountain issues and perspectives developed by ICIMOD. There is also increased interest in regional cooperation for sharing information and for technological exchange.

These regional impacts are ICIMOD's primary mandate, and provide an opportunity for the increased focus on improved mountain policies and regional collaboration to fall on more receptive ears. This goal of regional cooperation on mountain issues, including the critical upstream-downstream linkages involved, will be pursued through the development of a joint policy support strategy with regional partners, and through its implementation during 2004 and the coming years.

After 20 years, ICIMOD is building its own Headquarters in Kathmandu on 1.5 hectares of land generously provided by His Majesty's Government of Nepal. The land is in Khumaltar, still within Lalitpur (Patan) municipality approximately 4 km away from the present complex of rented buildings in Jawalakhel. The total cost of the building is budgeted at US\$ 1.23 million, as approved by the Board in 2002. Out of this, US\$ 530,000 has been met from the internal building reserve fund, while up to US\$ 700,000 has been authorised as a loan if not obtained from other external sources. Strong support and enthusiasm have been received from the Regional Member Countries for the headquarters' construction by way of making financial contributions and building country pavilions.

These generous Regional Member Country commitments are strong testaments to the increasing and enduring value of ICIMOD to the region. This value is unfortunately reinforced by the continuing – and sometimes increasing – vulnerability of mountain peoples to disasters, violent conflict, economic deprivation, and social exclusion in the HKH region.

The need for the Centre and its partners to increase mountain people's ability to build more secure and sustainable futures has never been greater in the region. ICIMOD is extremely grateful to its regional member countries, its core programme donors, and its co-financing project donors for enabling the Centre to re-dedicate itself to contributing to this goal.

Thank you.
J. Gabriel Campbell
Director General

