



# CULTURE, EQUITY, GENDER & GOVERNANCE (CEGG)

**T**he focus of the Culture, Equity, Gender, and Governance programme is on contributing to building sustainable mountain societies by promoting an enabling environment that enhances equity and empowers disadvantaged mountain people in the HKH. The programme is divided into three areas: Gender Mainstreaming; Equity and Rights; and, Community Institutions, Decentralisation, and Local Governance.

Arabian Sea

 River Basin Boundary  
 HKH Region Boundary



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Tibetan minority women: agro-pastoralists from Zhongdian, Yunnan Province

Myanmar

Salween  
River  
Basin

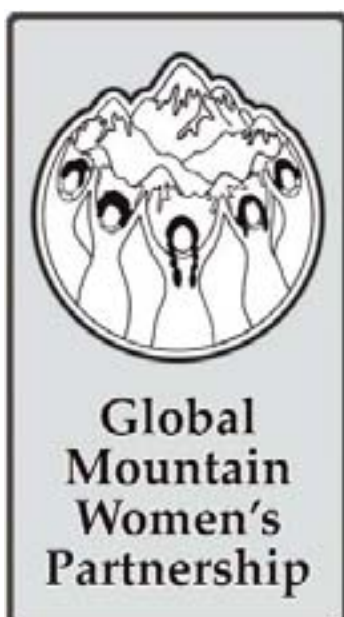
Mekong  
River Basin

Bay of Bengal

## Gender Mainstreaming

Mountain women, in particular, are constantly faced with the challenges of heavy workloads; little education, limited access to financial services, health services, and new technologies; and limited or no control over resources and decision-making processes. Women, the world over, are more undernourished, more under-compensated for their labour, and are more under-represented in formal decision-making bodies than men. In the HKH, state structures are dominated by patriarchal norms, values, and interests that often work to the detriment of women. A key aspect of women's empowerment is their participation in formal political structures. This was highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) as one of 12 critical areas of concern. As signatories to the Beijing PFA, all 180 governments agreed or committed to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures, as well as to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

During 2003, ICIMOD developed socioeconomic and political databases that profile information from a gender perspective on political participation, decision-making, and property rights' regimes of women. Studies have been launched in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China that will provide an update on the current status of the political rights of women. This will contribute to strengthening and influencing policies, strategies, and programmes that result in increased roles and enhanced participation of mountain women in decision-making structures at all levels and make them more 'visible', politically aware, and active.



Studies have shown that issues of access to and control over resources by women are critical in mountain areas. Lack of and unclear rights to property for women have often led to the deprivation of their basic human rights. For example, with increasing out-migration of men from mountain areas for non-farm employment, having full rights to property would motivate women and enable them to increase productivity of the land by adopting improved techniques and practices. A review of women's property rights in the HKH region has been launched to help identify strategies that will contribute to strengthening their tenure and property rights.

Under the ICIMOD-IFAD collaboration programme, a beginning has been made to mainstreaming gender and equity concerns in IFAD's project in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. A partnership has been established between the Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN), Pakistan, and ICIMOD. Under the arrangement, RSPN will backstop these projects to identify and address gender issues in Pukhtun societies, as there is inadequate access and information on women in the project areas.

## Equity and Rights

Equity is embedded in fairness that implies that people have equal opportunities for realising their full rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social, and cultural development and to benefit from the results. Conditions that lead to unfair outcomes result from external processes of globalisation that colonise local knowledge systems, development policies that co-opt local rights, and the presence of divisions in class, caste, power, and gender. The issue of how the aspirations of local

indigenous communities can be mainstreamed in development processes has become critical in the HKH. However, there is little clear data and information and no organised effort for advocating equity and rights for indigenous people.

With co-financing support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation, the Netherlands, ICIMOD initiated a programme on mainstreaming equity and poverty issues into the management of common property resources in the HKH. This programme aims to sensitise policy-makers to equity and poverty issues in the management of common property resources; empower communities regarding current policies for the management of common property resources; enhance the capacity of civil society organisations for policy advocacy on equitable policies; and explore the possibility of a network for policy advocacy on equity and poverty issues in the management of common property resources. During 2003, professionals within ICIMOD revised the first draft of 15 case studies on equity and poverty issues. In addition, eight case studies on equity issues and best practices in Nepal were shared with policy-makers and key stakeholders at a national workshop.

ICIMOD also runs a programme aimed at the promotion of secure tenure and property rights for indigenous peoples in the HKH. This programme will conduct case studies across the HKH to document and analyse real-life practices regarding ownership, control, access, and use of natural resources as well as carrying out a review and analysis of policies, legislation, and acts on tenure and property rights; and will produce policy papers on enhancing secure tenure and property rights for indigenous peoples and women in the HKH.

## Community Institutions, Decentralisation, and Local Governance

During 2003, preliminary activities such as partner identification, a regional planning workshop, a training of trainers' workshop on advocacy skills, and collection of successful experiences were completed. An annotated bibliography of literature on Advocacy Capacity Building in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas was prepared and disseminated. More than 100 documents on advocacy tools and techniques

in common property resources in the HKH region were reviewed and summarised. This initiative is co-funded by the Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO) in the Netherlands.



Resource persons and participants at a Regional Planning Workshop, Chittagong, Bangladesh