

# CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES

## Getting ready for the big year, International year of Mountains

In a sense ICIMOD has been getting ready for International Year of the Mountains (IYM) since the topic was first broached on campus at a MF Meeting 1996. Kyrgyz delegates fielded the idea which found enthusiastic support, particularly from the APMN group who went on to organise a meeting in Kyrgyzstan which resolved to take the issue to the UN. In the UN articles concerning IYM, the Asia Pacific Mountain Network is commended for its support for the Kyrgyz idea. Since APMN is, so to speak, born of ICIMOD's efforts, it was only natural that an enthusiasm for IYM should precede the inception of 2002.



Mountains taking centre stage during 2002

Events in 2001 included a Curtain Raiser; Press Conference on 8 November 2001 in Kathmandu, Nepal. ICIMOD, together with MF, FAO and the National Coordination Committee for IYM in Nepal, held a press conference as for IYM 2002 in Nepal and the HKH. The event took place at Hotel de l'Annapurna during a week-long photo exhibition on the Swiss Alps organised by the Government of Switzerland.

On the occasion, the media was briefed about the various initiatives planned at the global, regional, national and local levels, particularly those being led by the Nepal National Committee for the IYM and ICIMOD. Representatives in Nepal of national, regional and international media organisations attended the event.

### **United Nations global launch of the IYM 2002, 11 December 2002, New York, USA**

Before a gathering of nearly 100 people, the official IYM launch ceremony was held at the UN headquarters in New York during the 56th session of the General Assembly. Launch Chair, Adolf Ogi, former President of the Swiss Confederation, officially opened the event. FAO's Director-General, Acting President of the General Assembly, the UN Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, and the Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan were among the high profile speakers. Following the official opening ceremonies, TMI organised an informal launch, consisting of a week-long series of events, including a panel discussion with prominent mountain experts, including ICIMOD Director General J. Gabriel Campbell. A variety of cultural activities took place. More photo information can be found at: [www.iisd.ca/linkages/sd/mountains/index.html](http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/sd/mountains/index.html)

## Celebrating mountain women 🌍

A Secretariat was established at ICIMOD, 'Celebrating Mountain Women' (CMW), to launch a long-term programme for mountain women starting with the international conference. This conference is a chance to celebrate the drive, spirit and diversity of mountain women everywhere. The FAO and IFAD funded the Planning Meeting, which was held in May 2001 in Kathmandu. Financial support for the conference has also been committed by IFAD, the Japanese Government Overseas Development Agency (ODA), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, South Asia (UNIFEM, ROSA). However, although preparations are advanced, further support will be needed if the conference is indeed to become a reality.

The conference will try to facilitate much-needed face-to-face interactions by bringing together indigenous women, donor agencies, policy-makers and planners, entrepreneurs, and researchers to share the problems and progress of mountain women. It will provide a new beginning through interaction, participation, and expression. It will give mountain women a forum through which to articulate their concerns and share experiences and ideas about the future of mountain livelihoods and cultures. Such a gathering will enable the mountain women's networks to not only grow and strengthen as agents of change, but also to make a significant contribution to policies and practices that empower mountain women and their communities.



Ensuring that mountain women's voices are heard





Women threshing buckwheat, Upper Mustang, Nepal



Post-harvest: women separating wheat from husk using natural wind, Upper Mustang, Nepal



Women separating wheat from husk using wind power, Upper Mustang, Nepal

The first-of-its-kind global celebration of mountain women will focus on empowerment through innovation and entrepreneurship. It is unique in that it will facilitate face-to-face interaction of various actors in the development sectors that do not normally come together. The activities planned will put mountain women centre stage, mainstream their reality into the IYM discussions and Rio+10, and enable a major paradigm shift.

During the planning meeting of CMW, which was held in Kathmandu from May 8-10, 2001, the organising committee elected women representing various parts of the world to form the Steering Committee (SC). These members will have an instrumental role in planning and organising upcoming events. They will advise, guide, support, assist, and inform the Secretariat staff throughout the year. In addition, the SC members will organise regional meetings in their respective regions.

During the planning meeting the committee also proposed five theme areas around which activities will be planned. These theme areas include Natural Resources and Environment; Health and Well Being; Entrepreneurship; Legal, Political and Human Rights; and Culture and Indigenous Knowledge. These themes will be highlighted in the framework of research, policy, and practices through various presentations, songs, stories, theatre, videos and so on.

A strategic media plan is being developed to increase and improve public awareness through coverage of mountain women's issues and of the events being planned; it will include electronic networking and e-conferences. A series of specific preparatory activities will ensure appropriate dissemination and coverage of the event viz. identifying mountain women's groups and networks, documenting mountain women's initiatives, organising regional meetings between mountain women and policy-makers, building interactive databases, and locating mountain women's cultural resources such as songs, crafts, films, videos and stories. Throughout the conference, a bazaar of mountain women's products will be held. Stalls will be available for those wishing to participate.

It is envisioned that a gathering on an international scale like this one will help change the prevailing perceptions of mountain women. It will help create new coalitions, networks, and partnerships of women to influence policies and encourage mountain women and others to celebrate their champions, and give voice to their issues related to the future of mountain livelihoods and cultures. Finally, the role of women as agents of change and peacemakers in conflict in mountain areas will gain significance.