

Director General's Introduction

The year 2000 was one of both change and continuity. The change started as ICIMOD bid grateful farewell to the outgoing Director General, Mr. Egbert Pelinck, and Dr. Mahesh Banskota, Deputy Director and Director of Programmes, upon successfully completing their appointed terms. Dr. Binayak Bhadra, the new Director of Programmes, and myself assumed our responsibilities as the new management team along with Mr. Milan Tuladhar, Head of Finance and Administration, from March 2000.

Continuity was maintained through the programmes and projects ICIMOD is carrying out through its four-year Regional Collaborative Programme (RCP-II/1999-2002), Mountains 2000 and Beyond. This framework was approved by the Board of Directors in 1998 following extensive consultations with partners from regional member countries and donors, and built upon the strengths of ICIMOD's previous work. Its five thematic focal areas have broad goals for improving threatened mountain ecosystems and the livelihoods of the poor of the Hindu Kush-Himalaya:

- poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods,
- gender balanced mountain development,
- sustainable management of mountain commons,
- capacity building for sustainable mountain development, and
- information and outreach.

Twenty-eight activities translate these larger goals into specific activities that were identified during a collaborative planning process. With modifications and additions, it is these activities that constitute ICIMOD's work programme and determine the extent to which the Centre has been making significant contributions to reach larger programmatic goals.

In an on-going effort to assess the effectiveness of these contributions, in 2000 ICIMOD introduced a process to define the nature of the results anticipated by each activity more clearly and to determine the means to assess their impact.

Nevertheless, the impact of ICIMOD's work in these activities is still difficult to measure. ICIMOD is a mountain knowledge generating, testing, documenting, and disseminating Centre that does not directly apply the knowledge generated through policy or field programmes on its own. In accordance with its mandate,

ICIMOD works with its collaborating partners in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region to identify solutions that can be effectively applied in member countries. The Centre necessarily relies on these partners, as well as ICIMOD's own extensive dissemination efforts, to foster the changes it helps to identify. These changes are not usually monitored on a systematic basis and are, of course, also the result of many other forces at work in the dynamic HKH region. We are convinced that, despite these difficulties, ICIMOD can work towards greater clarity in identifying the value of its contributions and develop its future programmes on this basis. Notwithstanding, many contributions of our current work can only be documented indirectly.

This annual report thus presents highlights and accounts of a representative selection of ICIMOD's activities during 2000 that depict, to a certain extent, the nature and scope of the Centre's activities. While using quantitative measurements wherever available, it focuses on ICIMOD's regional mandate and comparative advantage in assembling and sharing knowledge on a regional basis through formal and informal networks of scientists, development workers, decision-makers, and leaders from the grass roots' level.

As these accounts of regional activities demonstrate, ICIMOD has played an important role in the advancement and spread of knowledge about the critical issues facing the people and ecosystems of the HKH.





Mohi - the festival of colour

Examples from the report are cited here.

- ICIMOD's work with partners on sloping agricultural land hedgerow technologies has led to their adoption by thousands of farmers and a number of local governments in China and Bangladesh with the potential of even greater impact in future.
- The knowledge generated from the initial inventory of glacial lakes and their outburst floods has helped move policy-makers in Nepal and Bhutan to support measures to identify and mitigate mountain hazards that endanger the lives and investments of downstream farmers and has encouraged other HKH countries to join the effort.
- Networks of communities managing forests, a regional network of grass roots' women involved in resource management, and a regional network of lawyers working on environmental rights are now working, with only minimal support, to develop and advocate their own agendas for policy change and capacity building.
- Intensive training of both women and men from key partner institutions and ICIMOD in gender issues has resulted in a number of action plans for each of the institutions involved.
- Action research with nomadic users and decision makers is introducing new participatory approaches to pasture and

livestock management in the vast range-land areas of China and Pakistan, as well as in smaller areas in northern Nepal, India, and Bhutan.

- Capacity to use and apply and to train people in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and related Remote Sensing (RS) technologies continued to be developed in research and educational institutions in almost all the countries of the region.
- Multidisciplinary, applied research in watershed sites in four HKH countries is exploring new standards for integrated natural and social sciences on field sites while simultaneously searching for ways to make research results in hydrology, agriculture, and local institutions immediately relevant to the local populations.
- Participatory approaches are also being combined with rigorous scientific studies to document and develop the role of indigenous honeybees for income and the pollination of new mountain crops.
- Appreciable progress has been made in sharing information and technologies for simple, cost-effective water harvesting. These technologies can be modified for wide-scale use in the HKH region; all technologies can be used on different scales. Training on site in the construction of roof-top water-harvesting tanks and plastic lined ponds has been in demand, as they demonstrate the potentials for improved livelihoods and health as well as reducing the drudgery of women. This endeavour has facilitated formulation of national water-harvesting policies, for example, through the Water and Energy Commission Secretariat in Nepal. Partners in Pakistan and India are also interested in ICIMOD's training, research, and demonstration inputs.
- Participatory action research on community-based energy planning, management, and implementation in Nepal, India, and Bhutan has demonstrated that Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs) (micro-hydro, biogas, improved cooking stoves, photovoltaic panels) can provide mountain communities the means to earn income (micro-hydro), reduce drudgery (improved cooking stoves), and improve the quality of life (electric lighting, telecommunications, and television). Communities are made aware of the potentials for food processing and rural industries, rural communications, and others.

In addition to these examples, regional research, documentation, and networking continued on marginal farms, livestock in farming systems, participatory forestry, macro policy options, sustainable tourism, hydrological research, mountain hazards, household and small-scale enterprises, mountain tourism, GIS applications, and eco-regional differences in agricultural systems.

All of these activities have led to a number of technical publications, manuals, and instructional CD ROMs. In fact, ICIMOD has continued to increase its dissemination and outreach through a variety of publications, including widely read newsletters and briefs on mountain issues. It has also worked to communicate results and build capacity in the region through a variety of training courses, workshops, and conferences, and on-site technical assistance. Radio programmes and a 'Mountains and Media Workshop' organised together with Panos South Asia, broadened the audience to the general public throughout the region.

As a result of its successful bid to host the global Mountain Forum Secretariat, ICIMOD has augmented its support for electronic networking and sharing knowledge, which was implemented through the Asia Pacific Mountain Network node run by ICIMOD. This augmentation, which brought the newly recruited Executive Secretary, Alejandro Camino, to Nepal from Peru, has given ICIMOD a global synergy. Access to these internet facilities was directly supported by strengthening internet skills and capacities in five Central Asian Republics along with those in Northern Pakistan and Bhutan.

In financial terms, the Centre has received the anticipated income committed by core and project donors. Unfortunately, the sharp decline in the value of donor country currencies vis-a-vis the US dollar, in which ICIMOD operates, has had a negative impact on income. Except for Switzerland, China and Myanmar, the remaining core programme donors maintained their contributions in their respective currencies - some of which have declined over 10 - 15 % in 2000. The result has been a significant decrease in revenues forecast for the year.

This decreased realisation of core and project funds has had some impact on the pace and scale of activities implemented. Some activities have had to be slowed down and others without separate project funding had to reduce their scale.

Although resources were constrained, ICIMOD also embarked on a process of internal organisational change to improve management and increase its effectiveness. An intensive retreat of all staff, renamed an 'Advance', was held to assess ICIMOD's strengths, weaknesses, future potential and institutional culture in order to initiate concrete action plans for organisational renewal and the ability to deliver meaningful results. As a result, task forces were mobilised to develop new initiatives in communication, planning and monitoring, teamwork, partner collaboration, and financial sustainability and plan for on-going organisational development.

With less funding than planned, this process also resulted in a reduction in staff whose contracts had been completed after serving multiple terms with the Centre at the end of the year. Although it was painful to bid farewell to these outstanding colleagues, most of them have successfully relocated into challenging positions outside ICIMOD which will allow them to continue their service to the region and beyond. New financing and new categories of exchange scientists are anticipated to enable ICIMOD to fill these gaps and inject a fresh interchange of knowledge and skills in the coming years.

As ICIMOD enters the new millennium, we face a number of old and new challenges. Foremost among these is the fact that mountain people need new solutions, new advocates, and increased ability to cope with the enormous barriers they face in finding a way out of poverty and marginalisation. As frustration with poverty and exclusion grow along with the pace of change, violent conflicts continue to simmer or expand explosively to the detriment of all. The answers lie not only in identifying and changing policies and programmes affecting mountain people, but in helping them find technological and institutional solutions that can make substantial differences in their livelihoods, their environment, and their confidence in the future.

The best source for the answers to these mountain challenges is other mountain people - mountain scientists, farmers, and development workers-who are dedicating their lives to help mountain people thrive. Many solutions, both institutional and technological, are already available for adaptation, if only they were known and trusted by those who seek them. Others have yet to be identified; and yet others require new forms of regional collaboration, including the crucial upstream-downstream cooperation in which the future of mountain peoples well being could be found.

ICIMOD is working with its partners to help find and foster these solutions. But given the scope of the challenges, it must seek to use its limited resources as a mountain knowledge centre more effectively, and selectively, to truly address the sustainable livelihood needs of this troubled and beautiful mountain region. We seek your collaboration and support in this crucial and urgent mission.

J. Gabriel Campbell
 Director General