

# Knowledge and Communication for Effective Development in the Himalayas

**Daan Boom**, Programme Manager, ICIMOD, [dboom@icimod.org](mailto:dboom@icimod.org)

**Madhav Karki**, Deputy Director General, ICIMOD, [mkarki@icimod.org](mailto:mkarki@icimod.org)

**Joyce M Mendez**, KM Communication Specialist, ICIMOD, [jmendez@icimod.org](mailto:jmendez@icimod.org)

As a mountain knowledge learning and enabling centre, knowledge management and communication are at the core of everything ICIMOD does. We develop, synthesise, package, and exchange information and knowledge using innovations, technology transfer, and effective communication pathways. We deliver data and information to our regional member countries and

local partners, ensuring that they are shared proactively and applied or reused in local or regional contexts. As described in ICIMOD's Strategic Framework (2008-2012), the Centre's programme staff work in a complex development environment with local partners as implementers. Partnerships are formed through various processes to generate fresh knowledge to solve mountain issues: concomitantly, ways of linking

knowledge to effective action for sustainable mountain development become essential.

Knowledge, in this context, is a key element in effective development. The generation, use, and application of knowledge by stakeholders contribute directly or indirectly to the design and outcomes of a programme. Whether they are young people, mountain farmers, women, disadvantaged groups, or local, national, or regional policymakers, politicians, or development practitioners, they all need sound knowledge to work effectively. Mountain farmers can be helped by providing

essential information about crop production, post-harvest technologies, technologies about water storage, or market information in real time. Similarly, providing policy makers and governments with critical data analysing the effects of climate change will help them make informed decisions on needs from the national to the community level. Arming local implementers with tools to adapt to the effects of climate change will help them prepare their constituents at the grass roots.

Managing knowledge and finding effective communication pathways for its diffusion have become essential for many small and large development organisations. With global climate and socioeconomic changes taking place rapidly, knowledge generation and management have gained in importance and face complex challenges. ICIMOD, serving the member countries of the complex Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, faces increasing demands for new and more relevant knowledge because of the changing conditions and climate. Therefore, ICIMOD is devising and implementing knowledge management strategies and actions to respond to emerging challenges.

## ICIMOD's role

ICIMOD serves as an open house for knowledge initiatives on sustainable mountain development with a regional focus and global reach. It serves as a regional knowledge platform where policy makers, scientists, experts, planners, and development practitioners meet and exchange experiences, access data, and learn good practices and ideas that promote or support sustainable mountain development.

The Centre facilitates knowledge brokering and transfer throughout the region and from knowledge providers

Knowledge management is a broad term encompassing social and technical processes that support communication and information management along with organisational innovation. The developing world is undergoing profound economic, technological, and social changes, and the use of science, communication, and information are changing rapidly as more multidisciplinary teams address complex problems.

– Dr Warwick Easdown, *World Vegetable Centre, 2010*

and users with value addition as much as possible. It serves as a facilitator with regional data base resources for its partners and stakeholders. The Centre improves the capacity of its staff and partners to manage and apply knowledge and provides a basis for making its learning and experience available to others and for consolidating knowledge generated by others.

ICIMOD provides knowledge support to increase potential for the success and efficiency of its strategic programmes. It analyses partners' demands, constantly seeks out and evaluates knowledge, and, using modern ICT tools, technologies, and approaches, links scientists, farmers, policy makers, policy advocates, and others as well as improving communication and exchange both internally and through national partners in the region.

ICIMOD's knowledge management strategy

- facilitates rapid responses to emerging issues by key resource persons;
- provides timely, accurate, and relevant data/information to partners and stakeholders;
- captures, synthesises, packages, and shares regional data and global experiences, simple technologies, good practices, policy initiatives, and others in the context of sustainable mountain development and

distributes these along various pathways including the website and information centre;

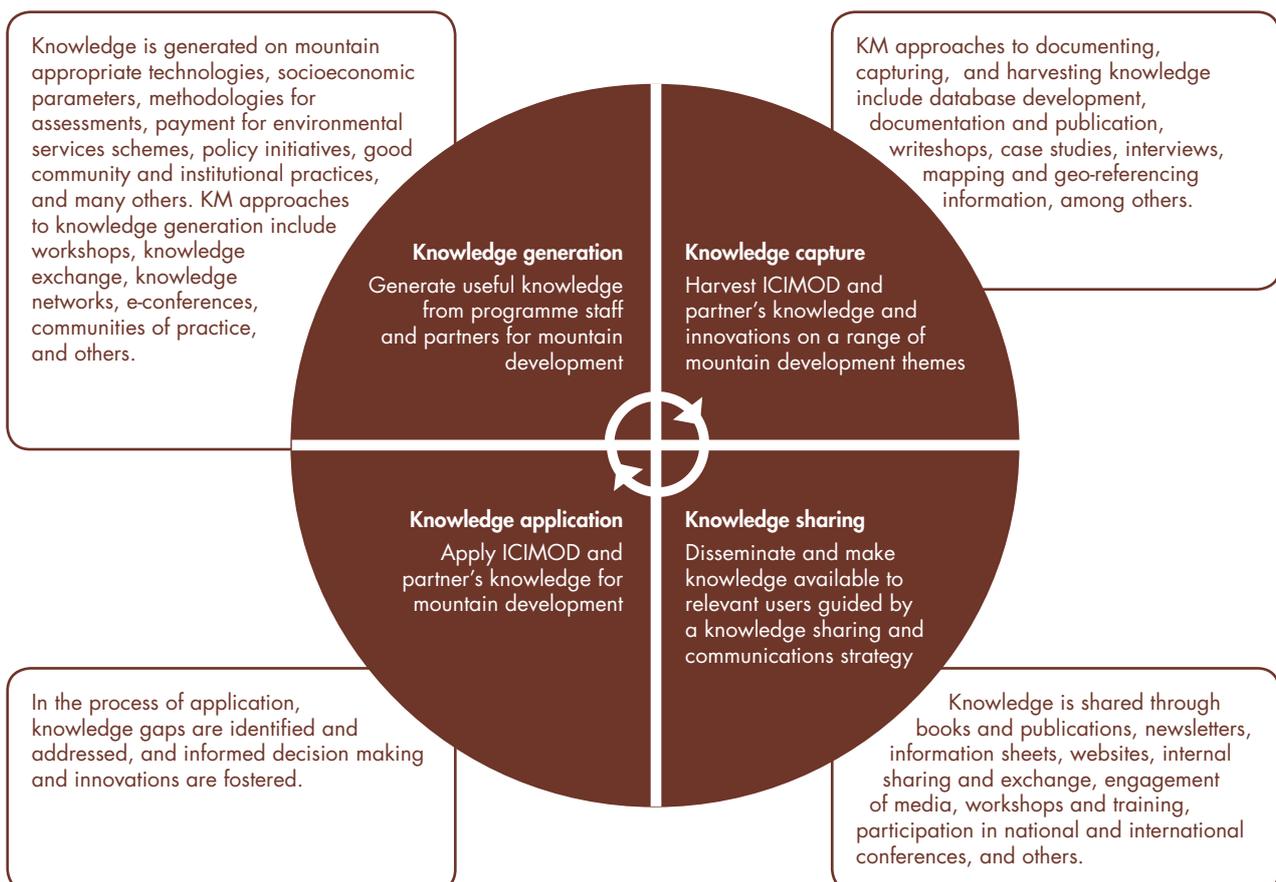
- acts as a clearing house for knowledge and geo-data available on the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region; and
- applies lessons and replicates successes to achieve development results effectively and efficiently.

ICIMOD's knowledge management framework provides a platform for exchange and learning as well as an enabling environment for the generation, exchange, and synthesis of knowledge which includes useful technologies, experiences gained, lessons learned at various stages of the development cycle, and good practices which feed into the review and fine-tuning of its programmes. It stimulates the development of new interventions and supports informed recommendations for policies.

This framework fosters exchange and cross learning, innovation, and technology transfer, and provides mechanisms for consolidating useful experiences into development learning.

ICIMOD is developing appropriate institutional mechanisms, instruments, and tools to support understanding and application of knowledge

### The knowledge development cycle





management. Among Centre staff and with partners, these will support activities that will make us more effective in fulfilling our mission to develop an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem and improve the living standards of mountain populations. The approaches used include the following:

- Integration of knowledge management in all Centre and programme activities supported by a common framework, appropriate infrastructure, and optimal institutional mechanisms, thus developing a supportive knowledge sharing and learning culture
- Sharing the results of research initiatives and application in strategic focus areas using communication methods and channels appropriate to their intended audience and, where appropriate, an innovation systems' approach
- Creating a consolidated knowledge base encompassing information relevant to and developed by the ICIMOD programmes together with other information of interest to stakeholders

- Developing a platform for relevant socioeconomic, biodiversity, and hydrometeorological data
- Creating interactive platforms for dialogue and a knowledge hub for regional communication and exchange
- Carrying out activities to intensify and expand innovation systems in the region and beyond and to raise public awareness

Among the knowledge management activities are forums on relevant topics and themes, programme-driven e-discussions on mountain development subjects, a visiting scientist programme, and transformation of the ICIMOD library into a Mountain Learning Centre connected to centres of excellence in the region in partnership with the Himalayan University Consortium and the Mountain Partnership Consortium. A new branding policy and its implementation have raised awareness about ICIMOD and its work in the region. A knowledge sharing platform for internal collaboration (iDNA) supports virtual collaboration in performing ICIMOD's work for its staff, document exchanges, online meetings, and discussions to support KM in-house. Furthermore, we have developed a knowledge toolkit to improve knowledge-sharing skills. It includes writeshops to document field-based experiences, how to use and apply social media tools to create communities or share experiences and lessons learned, impact pathway approaches, and so on. We have knowledge focal points in all the programmes and subject matter experts in new multidisciplinary areas such as payment for ecosystem services (PES), water storage, value chains, transboundary transects, poverty alleviation, and adaptation to climate change, ensuring that KM is incorporated in all programme activities from planning to implementation.

## How ICIMOD is using knowledge management for outreach

### Regional needs

- Global insights, trends, innovations, and international learning
- Global and regional views and cross-learning with member countries
- Customising international knowledge and scaling up of local, national, and country-level learning and practices for regional benefit
- Knowledge relevant to resilient livelihoods, adaptation to climate change, and disaster risk reduction, among others
- Findings of the most recent research

### ICIMOD programme needs

- Access to information, knowledge, and knowledge management approaches and tools
- Collaboration with partners and networking
- External sector and developments in certain themes
- Capture and harvesting of valuable lessons, workable technologies, and policy instruments
- Improved project impacts
- Replication of usable knowledge
- Improved collaboration within ICIMOD and with partners, cross-learning, and innovation

### Organisational needs

- Efficient and effective operations
- Knowledge management as an 'organisational way of life'
- Improved collaboration, programme integration, and cross learning
- Return on investment of Centre's and staff's knowledge

### Staff needs

- Knowledge available in a variety of appropriate formats
- Disseminated through a variety of channels
- Documentation and use of staff's tacit knowledge