





2011 Local People, Regional Efforts, Global Reach

The year 2011 brought opportunities and endeavours to link global technologies and resources with the village or on-the-ground realities of the Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH). It was also a year of consolidating linkages and knowledge within river basins and landscape corridors, across borders, from space to villages, from east to west, and among researchers and centres of expertise in the HKH region.

ICIMOD monitors ecological and socioeconomic changes, analyses the consequences for the livelihoods of mountain people and of downstream inhabitants, and facilitates the development of appropriate policies and innovative and equitable compensation mechanisms for ecosystem services, including freshwater, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration.

Through its projects and programmes, ICIMOD develops linkages to enhance science and technology in the HKH region, test new approaches in local settings, promote regional collaboration and cooperation, share research findings, and thus advocate for mountain issues.

In 2011, ICIMOD's work saw a greater consolidation of this linking role, for instance in the testing of approaches for implementing REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) – a global mechanism – and offering feedback to international environment and development related negotiations. To build regional capacity and exchange knowledge, this year ICIMOD organized 50 main events in which 1,274 people participated.

Advocating mountain issues in global forums

ICIMOD capitalized on opportunities to build greater international awareness of mountain issues in several global forums, from the 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 17) in Durban, South Africa, to World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, where ICIMOD was invited to present on upstream-downstream linkages as a complement to the week's focus on urban areas.

“Dr Sharma made an insightful, rigorous, and enjoyable presentation about the importance of mountain regions to urban areas. His presentation was in the wider context of climate change, water responses, governance, and approaches to development. Lively and enthusiastic discussion followed his talk, which really fired people up and generated a lot of good ideas.”

– Professor Xiaoliu Yang of Peking University, China, on World Water Week

In close collaboration with global and regional partners, ICIMOD organized the first Mountain Day event on the sidelines of COP 17 in December 2011. More than 100 participants from all regions of the globe attended. The event's two high-level panels called on COP 17 delegates and global development partners to protect mountain ecosystems from the threats presented by climate change, to support adaptation programmes in mountains for improved livelihoods and sustainability, and to create incentives to enhance the benefits mountain people derive from conserving their ecosystems. The event emphasized

Mountain Day at Durban, South Africa





Dr Ram Baran Yadav, President of the Republic of Nepal, inaugurating the Green Economy Conference, Kathmandu, Nepal

that mountain regions are different from lowlands and require specific measures for adaptation to climate change. In the climate change discourse, ICIMOD is finding a particular niche in adaptation (more than mitigation), drawing attention to the importance of assisting local communities to adapt.

ICIMOD also made a number of contributions to the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – more commonly known as Rio+20 – with an aim to raising the profile of mountain issues at this landmark conference in June 2012. ICIMOD prepared the Asia-Pacific Mountain Assessment Report, a synthesis of the case studies from the Asia-Pacific region, as a review for the Lucerne World Mountain Conference in October 2011 and the Rio+20 process. The report documents lessons learned in sustainable mountain development since 1992.

Sharing mountain information and knowledge for global policies

To shed light on what the Rio+20 theme of green economy means for mountain regions and people, in September 2011 ICIMOD, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), organized the International Conference on Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development which brought together about 150 participants from around the world. They included international and regional scientists, policy makers, development practitioners, and representatives of civil society and the private sector. The participants included several senior policy makers from the HKH region involved in national policy planning and international negotiations, including for Rio+20.

The conference examined the contribution of mountains to national, regional, and global economies and strategies for sustaining ecosystem services, strengthening resilience, and promoting low-carbon economic growth to reduce poverty. National, regional, and international media coverage of the conference helped enhance ICIMOD's role in promoting the mountain agenda. The outcome of the conference included a global-scale report on the green economy and the Kathmandu Declaration on Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development, which supported subsequent major global policy initiatives including the Lucerne World Mountain Conference, Mountain Day at UNFCCC COP 17, and the Rio+20 process.



Filling the gaps in information on the HKH region

In 2011, ICIMOD published (among others) four reports offering essential information to bridge knowledge gaps in the HKH region. Two reports deal with snow and glaciers, a third examines the effect of climate change on ecosystem services and biodiversity, and a fourth presents new findings on mountain poverty.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identified a serious data gap relating to the region's cryosphere, especially snow and ice, in 2007. The ICIMOD publications *The Status of Glaciers in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region* and *Snow-Cover Mapping and Monitoring in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas* provide notable contributions to filling that gap, presenting the first authoritative data on the number and extent of glaciers and the patterns of snowfall in the world's most mountainous region. Although the reports point out the limitations of current data and climate-related studies in the HKH, they provide a snapshot of changes occurring in the region. The findings highlight the region's extreme vulnerability to climate change, as rising temperatures disturb the balance of snow, ice, and water, threatening millions of mountain people and 1.3 billion people living downstream in Asia's major river basins.

The third report, *Climate Change in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas: The State of Current Knowledge*, gives state of the art information on climate change and its impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The report suggests responses and a way forward for filling data gaps and linking knowledge to policy at the national, regional, and global levels. ICIMOD released the three reports during Mountain Day, on the sidelines of the UN climate talks in Durban.



Dr Rajendra Pachauri, Chair, IPCC at ICIMOD

“These reports provide a new baseline and location-specific information for understanding climate change in one of the most vulnerable ecosystems in the world. They substantially deepen our understanding of this region – and of all mountain systems – while also pointing to the knowledge gaps yet to be filled and actions that must be taken to deal with the challenge of climate change globally and to minimize the risks from impacts locally.”

– Dr Rajendra Pachauri, Chair, IPCC

ICIMOD conducted a three-year study to fill the information gaps regarding mountain poverty in the HKH region. It produced evidence showing that poverty in the mountains is usually greater than in the plains and also has different causes, underlining a need for specialized policies and interventions to address poverty in mountain areas. India's Working Group on Mountain Eco-systems and Challenges Faced by the People Living in the Hilly Areas used results from the study as inputs to India's 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–2017).

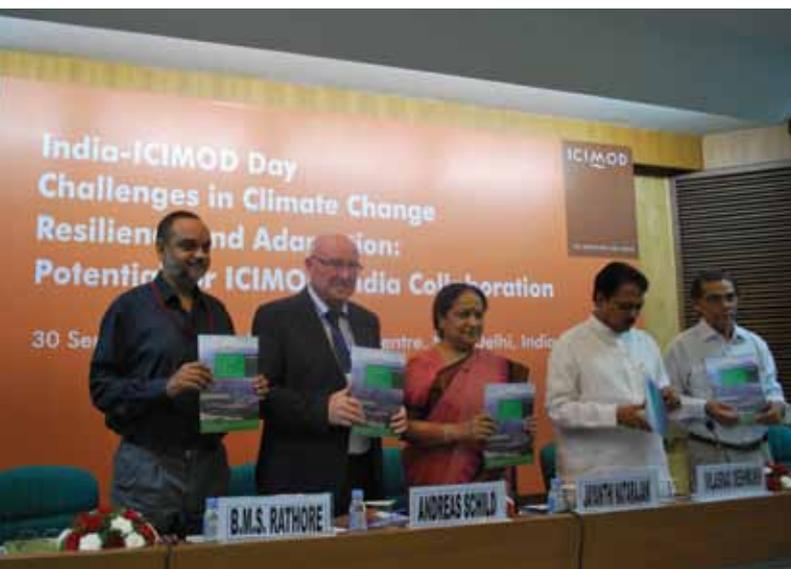
Contributions to regional cooperation and understanding

With growing interest in regional cooperation, several agencies and governments regard ICIMOD as a valuable partner and facilitator of exchanges and dialogue. In 2011, ICIMOD intensified its engagement with its regional member countries (RMCs) and partners through consultations and the organization of 'country days'. The overall feedback from these interactions was positive, and the resulting follow-up action plans in each country are expected to improve the Centre's communication with the regional countries and partners.



The India-ICIMOD Day, held for the first time in September 2011, had two ministers in attendance and they reiterated their commitment to ICIMOD's efforts. Country days were also held in China, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. These interactions helped to link country priorities with the regional agenda and increase country ownership in ICIMOD's programmes.

ICIMOD-India Day, New Delhi, India



“Indian assistance to ICIMOD should be increased corresponding to deeper engagement with this regional organization.”

– Dr R.S. Tolia, former Chief Secretary of State, Uttarakhand, India

A window to public-private partnerships

The ICIMOD Foundation was established as a not-for-profit organization to support the efforts of ICIMOD in public-private partnerships. The foundation explores joint projects between the private sector and ICIMOD and mobilizes funds from non-traditional sources. This enables private parties to contribute to upscaling and supporting the activities of ICIMOD. In November 2011, the Government of India, through the Ministry of Environment and Forests, pledged a US\$1 million contribution to the foundation. This contribution suggests that ICIMOD's new strategy to involve private companies to meet its overall objectives has been well received and is encouraged.

Strategic partnerships with global, national, and local partners

In 2011, ICIMOD engaged with numerous partners at different levels from local and national to global. Collaborative agreements were signed with 60 partners in the HKH region (32 government agencies and 28 non-governmental institutions) and 27 beyond the region.

“For WMO, ICIMOD has been a highly competent and reliable regional partner with strategic value in the implementation of programmes that are of high importance to WMO. With its good relations and connections with its member countries, ICIMOD has been valuable in widening the scope of cooperative activities of WMO in the region.”

– Dr Wolfgang Eric Grabs, Chief, Hydrological Forecasting and Water Resources Division, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Geneva, Switzerland

“As a regional platform, ICIMOD can bring together partners from different countries, which have quite different political, economic, and social dimensions. From the point of view of the outcomes of biodiversity conservation, there always exists a governance gap among those trans-country areas, whether in the HKH or other regions in the world.”

– Professor Yang Yongping, Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Beijing

“It has been a good partnership because ICIMOD brought technical skills and a global perspective, while ANSAB brought the experience of working in communities. We were able to learn and use the knowledge in our other programmes while ICIMOD will share our experience and knowledge with other countries of the region.”

– Shiva Shankar Pandey, former staff member of Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB), Kathmandu

“It is time that the expertise and linkages available with and through ICIMOD are made available to various ministries dealing with mountain and mountain related issues. Institutions like ICIMOD could play a vital role in activating mountain related initiatives and accessing the expertise which may be available with them or through their vast network of institutions and experts.”

– Dr R.S. Tolia, former Chief Secretary of State, Uttarakhand, India, in the report of India's Working Group on Mountain Eco-systems and Challenges Faced by the People living in the Hilly Areas