

ICIMOD

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE

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International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

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Published by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

GPO Box 3226, Kathmandu, Nepal

ISSN 1019 1356

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ICIMOD Archive: Pages 24, 30, 44, 48b, 48c, 52

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DOI

<https://doi.org/10.53055/ICIMOD.1085>

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Contents

PAGE 4–5

Foreword – by the Director General

PAGE 6–7

Introduction – by the Deputy Director General

PAGE 8–13 | **STRATEGIC GROUP 1**

Climate and Environmental Risks

ICIMOD's landmark report charts cryosphere change impacts on society and ecosystems

ICIMOD's Clean Air Prize showcases region's top solutions to pollution

PAGE 16–23 | **STRATEGIC GROUP 2**

Mountain Economies and Landscapes

Benefits flow through rural village with gender-responsive springshed management

Climate-resilient agriculture in the curriculum

Developing entrepreneurship ecosystems and engaging with policymakers to make Nepal a startup-friendly nation

PAGE 24–33 | **STRATEGIC GROUP 3**

Regional Action and Global Advocacy

ICIMOD at COP28: Amplifying the mountain call

High-level diplomacy and advocacy for mountains, glaciers, and poles

SERVIR: Charting the rise of women in geospatial information technology

From the mountains to the world: the Himalayan University Consortium

Environmental economics: building skills and resilience in South Asian economies

PAGE 34–41

Cross-cutting

ICIMOD's GESI commitment: Bridging gaps, driving change

Boosting biodiversity in the HKH: strengthening conservation with Indigenous communities

Climate change: high-level meetings and science-policy forums

PAGE 42–45

Communications

#SAVEOURSNOW: ICIMOD's global advocacy campaign

PAGE 46–51

Institutional updates

40 years of ICIMOD: Commemorating, taking stock and moving forward in a time of crisis

Celebrating our resilience champions

PAGE 52–63

Annexes

Communications metrics

Staff

Financial reports

Partners

Board of Governors

Members, sponsors, and funding partners

Foreword



Pema Gyamtsho
Director General

2023 was a year filled with challenges, action and change.

In many ways, ‘Moving Mountains’, the theme for our 2030 Strategy, also encapsulates the overarching motif of our work for the past year.

In the first place, ‘moving mountains’ signifies work that is often seen as insurmountable, a huge feat that we are undertaking against the odds. Indeed, the challenges that we work on increased in both intensity and speed during 2023: especially in terms of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – which batter the region relentlessly. 2023 brought more devastating floods, droughts, heatwaves, and landslides, more pollution of the air, water and land, more lost biodiversity and degraded ecosystems.

Secondly, we continued ‘moving mountains’ – denoting the actions we are taking through our work, organised through our three Strategic Groups: Climate and Environmental Risks, Resilient Economies and Landscapes, and Regional Action and Global Advocacy. This is part of our new streamlined structure to deliver work that is commensurate with the scale of the crises. A particular highlight of the year was the launch of our flagship assessment report, ‘Water, Ice, Society, and Ecosystems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya’, known as HI-WISE, which charts cryosphere change in our region and its impacts on society and ecosystems – read more about this on page 10.

To obtain first-hand impressions of the relevance of what we do for mountain communities, we initiated the ‘walkshop’ approach to our pilot sites in Bhutan and Nepal. The ‘walkshop’ is an ICIMOD initiative to connect and interact with mountain communities to understand their urgent needs and issues from their perspective in the face of climate change. I led a team to Lantgtang, Nepal, and our Deputy Director General, Izabella Koziell, led another to Laya in Bhutan. These visits provided us with vivid examples of our work on the ground from the valleys where we work on climate-

resilient agriculture practices to the base of the mountain peaks where we monitor the trends in glacier melt and assess the risks from glacial lake outburst floods.

Lastly, and by no means least, ‘moving mountains’ for me signifies the emotional connection we have with our mountain landscapes and communities. In this regard, the beginning of the year was marked by sadness as we tragically lost our ICIMOD colleague, Yuvraj Sharma, in the crash of Yeti Airlines Flight 691 on 15 January, who was flying to Pokhara in Nepal with his mother, daughter, and son. We continue to mourn his passing and remember his contributions to our work.

I am confident that our ICIMOD colleagues and partners harness these strong emotions to continue the drive to work for mountains and people.

We finished off the year with a commemoration of ICIMOD’s 40 years working with and for the people and mountains of the Hindu Kush Himalaya. We were graced with the presence of the Right Honourable Mr Ramchandra Paudel, President of Nepal, as the Chief Guest, who stated in his inaugural address, “ICIMOD has been a vital force in promoting regional cooperation and sustainable development. The 40th anniversary is a moment to recognise its impact and renew our commitment to the shared vision for the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region.”

I concur with this sentiment, and ask our ICIMOD community to redouble our work as we build a robust pathway towards a greener, more resilient and inclusive development of the HKH.

I invite our readers to dive deeply into in this Annual Report – which gives a snapshot of the work we feel so passionately about.

Introduction



Izabella Koziell
Deputy Director General

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report. I echo the words of our Director General, and invite you to enjoy the stories laid out here – offering a glimpse of our work.

In addition to the stories describing work in our Strategic Groups, our cross-cutting issues – gender equality and social inclusion, climate change, and biodiversity – showcase our work tackling challenges in these areas.

In gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) I am enormously proud that ICIMOD is not only implementing GESI policies in its Strategic Groups and projects, but is taking concrete steps to integrate GESI at the institutional level. In 2023, we established a Women's Circle and rolled out mandatory training for all staff on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. This enormously important work embodies our spirit of positive change and action. Crucially, ICIMOD aims to transition from gender-responsive to gender-transformative practices and approaches. Read more on page 36.

As biodiversity lies at the interface of people and nature, our focus on this cross-cutting issue runs through much of our work. Our story about our work on 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECMs) in the HKH is especially important as it details how Indigenous peoples and local communities effectively and equitably manage and learn from the land, which can also provide diverse opportunities for conservation and development. Read more on page 38.

Lastly – the HKH continues to be at the frontline of climate change. Our work in 2023 focused on cooperation and advocacy, especially through high-level meetings and science-policy forums. Communication is central to this work, and we have worked hard to build a collective mountain voice to highlight the deepening climate crisis in

the HKH with domestic, regional, and global audiences – to influence investments in resilience, and solutions.

In addition to our action at the UN climate change global conference, COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (read more on page ##), through our flagship communications campaigns, in 2023:

- we launched the #HIWISE report, with unprecedented media coverage – read more on page 10.
- we launched #SaveOurSnow, ICIMOD's global advocacy campaign to mobilise mountain communities, mountain athletes and guides, mountain champions and mountain scientists to protect Earth's frozen zones – read more on page 44.
- through our #HealTheMountains campaign, ICIMOD stressed the urgent need for global cooperation to address the rapid and irreversible changes occurring in the HKH – read more on page 27.

Happy reading! Join our campaigns on social media and follow us.





STRATEGIC GROUP 1

Climate and Environmental Risks

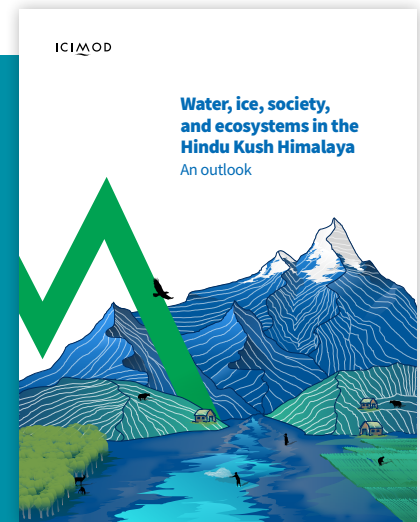
ADDRESSING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS ON WATER, AND AIR POLLUTION

Unprecedented and accelerating changes to water, cryosphere, land and air across the Hindu Kush Himalaya pose a major threat to people, nature and economies in Asia. We are setting out to build greater understanding of these risks locally, nationally, regionally and globally, and to increase communities' and governments' resilience, and capacity to respond.

Floods, landslides, avalanches and droughts are increasing in frequency and ferocity across the Hindu Kush Himalaya, and billions in the region routinely breathe air that exceeds safe limits. ICIMOD's Strategic Group on Climate and Environmental Risks sets out to reduce the human, natural and economic impacts of these risks, many of which are transboundary in both cause and effect. We work by developing knowledge and tools to inform policies and by building the capacities of local and national partners to increase the region's resilience. We do this by assessing and harmonising approaches to risks related to water, cryosphere and air, promoting regional collaboration on transboundary issues; improving understanding and communication of risks, testing and piloting solutions and building regionally consistent and informed risk management strategies.

ICIMOD's landmark report charts cryosphere change impacts on society and ecosystems

The Hindu Kush Himalayan cryosphere – glaciers, snow and permafrost – is changing fast. Glaciers shrank 65% more in 2011–2020 compared with the previous decade. This is one of the key findings in ICIMOD's comprehensive assessment report, '[Water, Ice, Society, and Ecosystems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya](#)' (HI-WISE), published in June 2023.



Drawing on recent scientific advances, the report maps for the first time the links between changes to the cryosphere and their impacts on water, biodiversity and societies in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). Building on ICIMOD's assessment report, 'Hindu Kush Himalaya assessment: Mountains, climate change, sustainability and people' (Wester et al., 2019), HI-WISE explores the impact of climate change on the cryosphere, water resources, disasters, and how this affects people and ecosystems in the region. Importantly, the report also sets out projections of what could happen to the cryosphere in the coming decades, under a range of climate scenarios.

Other key findings

- On current emissions pathways, 80% of glaciers' current volume will be gone by 2100
- With variations in different areas, availability of water is expected to peak in mid-century and then decline
- Vulnerable mountain communities are already experiencing major adverse impacts: loss and damage to lives, property, heritage and infrastructure
- Floods and landslides are projected to increase
- Impacts on fragile mountain habitats are particularly acute

Co-authored by 35 researchers and scientists, from 12 different countries, and 23 institutions, HI-WISE incorporates expertise from glaciology, to hydrology, earth science, ecosystems, biodiversity, migration, adaptation, climate change, water resources management and remote sensing. In line with UN IPCC reports, the assessment went through a comprehensive, peer-review process from established external experts.

The online launch of HI-WISE, through a targeted media campaign spearheaded by ICIMOD Communications Unit, garnered considerable media attention, with over 6,000 media mentions in most donor countries and articles translated into over 30 languages.

Endorsements of HI-WISE include from Professor John Pomeroy, UNESCO Chair in Mountain Water Sustainability, Distinguished Professor, University of Saskatchewan, Canada, who said, “[The HI-WISE report] authoritatively pulls together the state of knowledge, identifies the unknowns and weaves knowledge together from societies and science across this complex region that is the source of water for 2 billion people. More than just reviewing the available knowledge, the report points a way forward for the types of actions and policies that are needed to adapt to these changes and to achieve sustainability in the region. This impressive synthesis is a model for how assessments of climate change impacts and possible adaptations should be done.”

HI-WISE - GLOBAL MEDIA COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS



International Mount Everest Day: Mountain communities call to urgently decarbonise Everest

DOWN TO EARTH



As Everest shows action on climate is critical

THE TIMES



The Climate Show with Tom Heap

SKY NEWS



Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa interviewed for BBC World Service's Newshour

BBC NEWSHOUR

ICIMOD's messaging around the Everest anniversary featured in **leading media outlets** such as the Times, Sky News, and the BBC.

Specialised outlets, such as **Down to Earth**, also covered the campaign, ensuring pick-up by **climate scientists** and **other experts**.

Interviews with ICIMOD spokespeople featured on **television channels**, such as **Sky News' The Climate Show** and the **BBC News Channel** and an opinion piece by former Prime Minister of New Zealand Helen Clark featured in **The Times' Thunderer column**.

The campaign had significant coverage across **BBC radio stations**, including BBC Radio 4's PM programme, and the World Service flagship programme Newshour.

The campaign also had significant **social presence**, especially through mountaineering athlete **Kilian Jornet** who shared the campaign with his network of 1.4 million followers on Instagram.

ICIMOD's Clean Air Prize

showcases region's top solutions to pollution



Air pollution across the HKH is often amongst the worst in the world, with levels of harmful particulate matter surpassing the World Health Organization's safe levels. The factors for this are many, including emissions from transportation, industry, burning of rubbish, agricultural practices including the burning of crop residues in fields, and forest fires – coupled with the meteorological and geographical conditions of the zone which exacerbate the effects.

Across cities, towns and rural areas in the region, the population is breathing in air that has a negative impact on their health; a recent report by the Energy Policy Institute shows that in HKH countries including Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, people could lose up to 5 years of life expectancy due to poor air quality. Health impacts lead to further impacts on the economy; the same air severely impacts the region's biodiversity and ecosystems. Action to improve the air quality of the

region is paramount, needing collaboration across boundaries. To bring attention to innovators from across the region who are already developing context-specific solutions to the problem, and with a view to scaling these solutions to different polluting sectors, ICIMOD launched the Clean Air Prize in November 2023.



Action to improve the air quality of the region is paramount, needing collaboration across boundaries.

ICIMOD promoted the Clean Air Prize throughout the region through digital channels, with content translated into Bengali, Dari, Dzongkha, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepali and Urdu. To spread awareness of the prize, the team collaborated with representatives from organisations with experience in air pollution mitigation, including think-tanks, research institutions, citizen interest groups and the private sector.

In total, 25 submissions were received, successfully identifying individuals and institutions from across the HKH that contribute to the mitigation of air pollution. [Three winners and three honourable mentions](#) from a range of sectors across the HKH were selected: individuals and companies using a combination of technology, simple practices and high-quality research in mitigating the spread of particulate matter. Agri to Power India (A2P) took the first prize for tackling crop burning on the Indo-Gangetic plain ([smoke crosses borders](#)). Second was Steamhouse

India, for pioneering community boilers to reduce air pollution and fossil fuel use. Third was Daira Sabs Afghanistan, for emission-reducing filters on heating systems in Kabul. Honourable mentions: AgroStubble Management (India), Prof. Dr Zhiyuan Cong (China) and Prasesh Pote Shrestha/China Communications Construction Company, Nepal. The prizes were announced online on International Mountain Day, 11th December 2023.





STRATEGIC GROUP 2

Resilient economies and landscapes

TRANSFORMING LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIES, AND REGENERATING CRITICAL ECOSYSTEMS

Wildlife, rivers and springs, rangelands and forests across the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) are in crisis, compounding the existing socio-economic vulnerability of millions of people in the mountains. ICIMOD's Strategic Group on mountain economies and landscapes works with governments and communities to encourage and sustain low-carbon mountain livelihoods, enterprises and settlements, and to regenerate and restore biodiversity and ecosystems with and for the mountain peoples who rely on nature.

People across the HKH are frontline to the impacts of not just global temperature rise, but also rapid socioeconomic changes and loss of nature. Many people's livelihoods are at risk from both climate and environmental shocks, while the pivotal roles many local communities and Indigenous People play in conservation often go unrecognised and unrewarded. This Strategic Group sets out to accelerate the transition to green, low-carbon, and adaptive livelihoods, energy systems, and sustainable human settlements – while safeguarding communities' well-being. We build political support for Indigenous, locally led Nature-based Solutions to climate and environment losses and test and scale financial incentives for ecological stewardship and the reversal of species, nature and habitat loss.

Benefits flow through rural village with **gender-responsive springshed management**



Agricultural terraces around the village of Moldhar in northern India would normally be bustling with activity – with farming families who have worked these lands for generations – preparing the soil, sowing, weeding, harvesting and watering. But many terraces, though productive, remain alone, silent, uncultivated. Of 116 households in this remote village, nearly 100 have abandoned large tracts of their agricultural lands. Many have outmigrated – to larger urban areas in the region, such as Dehradun, the capital of Uttarakhand state, or to cities further afield, including Delhi. This is a reality across many villages of the Hindu Kush Himalaya: families have been forced to move as climate change brings erratic precipitation and depletion of springs and spring-fed streams.

But there is hope: this situation can be reversed through sustainable water use, and by following the protocols of ‘Science-based springshed management’, as exemplified in ICIMOD’s project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), India. This project has focused on enhancing the capacity of communities in Moldhar and empowered women to revive one of their critical springs, *Upla Shivani Dhara*.

Building on last year’s progress, where women-led spring revival activities included constructing 700 ‘toe trenches’ to enhance spring flow in the terraces, work in 2023

focused on sensitising men in the community to take on implementation management work alongside the women. The project has contributed to changing the perception of men in the community, who had thought that springs cannot be revived with women taking charge of spring revival activities. The community was further inspired by another community whose women members successfully revived their springs. Furthermore, the village's women-led Water User Group, with 29 members, has directed the operation and maintenance of springshed management measures since the project's inception in 2021.

Together with our implementing partners, the Advanced Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (ACWADAM), People's Science Institute (PSI) and the Center for Business and Entrepreneurial Development (CBED), we have continued to implement the [six-step protocol for springshed management](#). With our partner, the Indian Institute of Technology (Roorkee), we have carried out hydrological studies, which include taking measurements of daily rainfall, the volume of water flowing from a spring per minute, and water quality, including salinity, total dissolved solids, electrical conductivity, pH, temperature, and E. coli bacteria.

Analysis of these studies confirms the observations of the community – that spring flow has increased in the *Upla Shivani Dhara* during the lean season – and builds understanding about the change in spring flows before and after springshed management intervention. The spring flow data collected through manual and automatic monitoring systems validates the claims of the villagers, who have more water due to increased spring flow, and women and girls are saving time in fetching water.

The project's isotope studies confirmed that the 'recharge areas' identified through the hydrogeology studies were correct. Recharge areas are those through which water infiltrates and reaches the aquifers, where groundwater is stored and emerges at the surface as a spring.

Impacts include a doubling of fodder and grass yield in the recharge areas, due to an increase in soil moisture; grass height increased from 2.5–3 feet to 5–6 feet. As a result, 29 families are no longer buying fodder from outside, which saves them up to INR 2500 (approximately USD 30) per year, and means that women do not have to make the daily four–five-hour walk to fetch extra fodder from the jungle, as the grass they grew before was insufficient for feeding their cattle. Women feel empowered and men have been sensitised to implement springshed management and revive their terraces for the coming years.

The team plans to scale up these solutions through other projects, including with support from the Himalaya Resilience Enabling Action Programme (HI-REAP) an ICIMOD project working to promote Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for socio-ecological resilience, low-carbon economies, and improved air quality in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, and building on knowledge and learning from China. HI-REAP is funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), under the Climate Action for a Resilient Asia (CARA) programme. They also intend to make Moldhar into a 'learning hub' for large programmes such as the watershed management programmes which include springshed management.

Climate-resilient agriculture in the curriculum



Garlic, chilli, onion, ginger...this could be the recipe for a tasty dish prepared in many locations in the Hindu Kush Himalaya. However, when mixed with other ingredients – such as animal dung or urine – and following a specific recipe, this concoction becomes a homemade fertiliser or pesticide for farmers' crops. Made with natural products and processes, these mixtures are known as biofertilisers or biopesticides, or 'jholmol', which are sustainable, easy to make, environmentally friendly, using easily available ingredients, and reduce the need for farmers to use harmful and expensive chemical products. Coupled with water-efficient drip irrigation, this demonstrates climate-resilient agriculture (CRA) practices that are becoming indispensable for farmers as climate change impacts become ever more severe across the HKH, with unpredictable precipitation, extreme weather events, changing wet and dry seasons, and a warming climate bringing new pests. But how do we ensure that CRA is rolled out across the region?

Under the Green Resilience Agricultural Productive Ecosystems (GRAPE) project – Field of Action 2, ICIMOD has been working with one of Nepal's top agricultural universities, Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU), to integrate CRA content into their undergraduate programmes. In Nepal, AFU plays a significant role in training the next generation of professionals in the agriculture sector; as such, it was crucial that the agricultural science content of their programmes included an emphasis

on climate resilience. To ensure this, during a recent revision of their academic programmes, AFU requested ICIMOD's guidance on incorporating CRA into their new undergraduate course curricula.

Through a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ICIMOD and AFU, the ICIMOD team has cooperated with research, education and extension on emerging issues including springshed management, promoting local crop genetic resources, and CRA.

Over the past year, ICIMOD conducted collaborative 'action research' on various CRA practices and technologies. Action research emphasises participatory research conducted with, for, and by people. It involves cycles of action and reflection, and aims to enable change through innovation and demonstrating proven solutions. ICIMOD partnered with AFU to provide a platform for university staff and student researchers to collaborate with farmers in the field in Karnali and far western provinces of Nepal,



Climate-resilient agriculture (CRA) practices are becoming indispensable for farmers as climate change impacts become ever more severe across the HKH

engaging in action research to develop and demonstrate climate-resilient technologies in collaboration with local NGOs and farmers' groups. This hands-on involvement in action research proved instrumental in sensitising all stakeholders to the critical intersection of climate change and agriculture.

The team also ran a [workshop on integrating CRA into curricula](#), with experts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar and Nepal. These mentors came from the [Himalayan University Consortium's](#) (HUC) member institutions across the region. The experts shared their experiences of integrating CRA components into their respective university curricula, which oriented AFU staff on the pedagogic and practical aspects of the integration. After the curriculum workshop, the Curriculum Development Centre at AFU conducted several workshop sessions for identification, and prioritisation of CRA content.

The AFU undergraduate curriculum now includes CRA components such as springshed management, nature-based pest control, gender studies, and digital agro advisory – which plays an integral role in building CRA systems by providing timely and tailored guidance to farmers. This technology utilises data analytics, satellite imagery, weather forecasts, and agronomic expertise to offer farmers actionable insights on crop selection, planting schedules, irrigation management, pest and disease control, and more. By leveraging digital agro-advisory services, farmers can make informed decisions that enhance their resilience to climate variability and extreme weather events, ultimately leading to improved agricultural productivity and sustainability. The revised course content has been endorsed by the University and is being implemented with the latest cohort of undergraduates.

Developing **entrepreneurship ecosystems and engaging with policymakers** to make Nepal a startup-friendly nation



The ecosystem of the Hindu Kush Himalaya encompasses the complex web of plants, animals, and other organisms found in this mountainous region, and the processes and interactions between them. In a similar way, an ‘entrepreneurship ecosystem’ weaves together the elements, factors and resources affecting the creation and likelihood of success of an enterprise or business. An ‘incubation’ ecosystem aims to provide a nurturing environment for fledgling enterprises, including startups.

Nepal’s startup ecosystem, though promising, is still in its nascent stages, signalling potential for expansion and innovation. The growing number of startups reflects a thirst for innovation and economic advancement, yet the pace of growth remains slower compared to more established ecosystems. This indicated a need for strategic policy measures to foster a more rapid evolution.

In 2023, ICIMOD, along with other consortium partners, conducted a national event entitled the ‘[Startup Nation 2030 Conference](#)’, declaring a need for clear-cut



policy to support entrepreneurship and startups. Following on from this, ICIMOD supported the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supply (MOICS) in the policymaking process to ensure its comprehensiveness and efficacy, with the aim of defining startups, revisiting policies, and strengthening institutional capacity to make Nepal a startup-friendly nation and encourage innovation in green, resilient and inclusive development. Policymaking aimed to simplify procedures, provide financial support, and create a conducive environment for startups to thrive.

After signing an MoU between MOICS and ICIMOD, the ICIMOD team conducted a series of business incubation studies which showed the feasible areas and prospects of establishing incubation centres at the provincial level. ICIMOD facilitated the establishment of a national-level consortium, convening MOICS, the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), PUM Netherlands, a non-profit organisation that advises businesses and aims to enable the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries and emerging markets, and Antarprrerana, a pioneer business incubation hub in Nepal.

ICIMOD commenced a study for MOICS to develop a green, resilient, and inclusive [entrepreneurship policy framework](#) aimed at fostering startup growth at the national, provincial and local levels and recommended a strategy and way forward, combining lessons and best practices from various countries. Together with the consortium, ICIMOD developed this joint strategy with collective targets of creating 10,000 startups and generating 100,000 jobs in Nepal by 2030, in order to propel Nepal into a startup-friendly nation.

Upon the request of the government, ICIMOD organised a [cross-learning visit to India](#), where representatives engaged with initiatives like Start-up India under the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Ministry of Skill and Entrepreneurship, and the Government of Telangana State.

This has resulted in a [new start-up policy for Nepal](#) that has been forwarded to the Cabinet for approval, and a new government-approved ‘[rulebook](#)’ to facilitate start-up loans at a low rate of interest. MOICS appointed IEDI (Industrial Enterprise Development Institute) a government-owned autonomous body, to be an authorised institution to roll out startup-related activities and policy in a more robust and efficient manner. This presents abundant opportunities to bolster and fortify the start-up ecosystem at the national, regional, and local levels in Nepal. These milestones signify the government’s acknowledgment of the significance of startups and underscores its commitment to fostering a conducive and supportive environment for their development in Nepal.





STRATEGIC GROUP 3

Regional action and global advocacy

ACCELERATING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTION FOR THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA

With scientists predicting devastating near-term impacts of climate change on people's water and food security, livelihoods and energy sources, and nature already in rapid decline across the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), urgent international action, financial support and regional cooperation is needed to help communities and governments prepare and adapt. We are working to ensure the crises faced by the HKH are met with the commensurate urgency nationally, regionally and globally.

Only drastic cuts in global emissions can slow and limit the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of temperature rise in the HKH. Global adaptation funds and programmes, loss and damage finance, and ecosystem restoration need to be urgently scaled up. The region needs greater coordination, higher levels of political commitment and deeper collaboration to meet accelerating impacts. In the light of unprecedented threats, this Strategic Group sets out to drive closer coordination among key players within the region and to accelerate global action on mitigation and funding for adaptation, loss and damage and investments. We do this by increasing understanding of the significance and vulnerability of the HKH regionally and globally, advocating for the region, advocating for action and investment to address shared challenges in global fora and multilateral processes, and by building data about the region and enhancing collaboration among our member countries.

ICIMOD at COP28: Amplifying the mountain call



The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region, home to over 270 million people, is experiencing some of the most severe and rapid climate impacts globally. As the foremost institute working on the HKH, ICIMOD's participation at the UN's global climate change conference, COP28, was essential for mobilising international action to protect both the people and ecosystems dependent on the region's glaciers, rivers, and other natural resources.

The 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November–December 2023, took place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where ICIMOD played a significant role in raising awareness about the urgent climate challenges the HKH is facing.

ICIMOD's engagement at COP28 was centred around our #HKH2UAE campaign, with a focus on promoting the mountain agenda, ambitious climate action and the need for investment in the HKH. We engaged with key stakeholders from the HKH countries, policymakers, scientists, and development partners. Specifically, the campaign aimed to:

- Promote a unified voice of mountains and the need for regional and inter-regional cooperation
- Ensure strategic engagements with negotiators to promote the mountain agenda
- Strengthen partnerships and identify potential collaborations with stakeholders
- Promote action and investment in the HKH on climate adaptation and resilience

OUR KEY MESSAGES AT COP28

With our #HKH2UAE campaign, we built interest around three key messages from the HKH region, around three key strands: Knowledge-Investment-Cooperation

Elevate the crisis of the Cryosphere: Positioning the HKH region for compensation and investment

Invest in the mountains and people: Investing in mountain-specific climate priorities to limit global warming to 1.5°C

Cooperate at scale: Promoting the need to strengthen regional and inter-regional cooperation



High-level diplomacy and advocacy for mountains, glaciers and poles



In 2023, ICIMOD representatives were involved in a number of international high-level diplomacy and advocacy events and actions, helping to bring the reality of planetary challenges in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) to a global audience and sounding a clarion call for the urgent support needed in our mountain regions.

In November, ICIMOD representatives played a key role at the first One Planet Polar Summit in Paris, France. The Summit, convened by France's President, Emmanuel Macron, brought together researchers and scientists from over 40 glacial and polar nations. It was also attended by the heads of international institutions, NGOs, representatives of Indigenous peoples and local communities, the private sector involved in these regions, and the political leaders of countries present in the Arctic, Antarctic and terrestrial glaciers.

ICIMOD, a member of the summit's partners committee alongside the World Meteorological Society and UNESCO, played a key role by bringing the perspective of the countries of the HKH, whose mountains hold the third largest volume of frozen water after the Arctic and the Antarctic. ICIMOD's delegation in Paris included the Director General, Pema Gyamtsho, Glaciologist, Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa, Ecosystem Specialist, Sunita Chaudhary and Climate Change Adaptation and Governance Analyst, Pradyumna JB Rana.



“

Given its extraordinary level of exposure to climate impacts, this region simply must be prioritised for investment: to support the millions that will be forced to move as we hit the hard limits to adaptation, to fund the fight to reverse nature loss and species extinction, and to turbo-charge the transition to renewables.

Ahead of the summit, Pema Gyamtsho said, “The cryosphere of the HKH is a critically important water source for one of the world’s most populous and most biodiverse regions. We need immediate action from world leaders to make good on their commitments to limit temperature rise from fossil fuels and deforestation.” He continued, “Given its extraordinary level of exposure to climate impacts, this region simply must be prioritised for investment: to support the millions that will be forced to move as we hit the hard limits to adaptation, to fund the fight to reverse nature loss and species extinction, and to turbo-charge the transition to renewables.”

The focus on high mountain areas and the polar regions at the One Planet Polar Summit was a pivotal moment for the international cryosphere community to call on global leaders to enshrine 1.5°C in the Cover Decision, ahead of the UN climate change conference, COP28.

ICIMOD’s attendance at the One Planet Polar Summit followed the visit of the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, to Nepal at the end of October. During his visit, he met with Nepal’s President, Prime Minister, members of the

government, and with communities in the high Himalayas, where he witnessed the rapid melting of the cryosphere. The Secretary General highlighted the crisis facing the cryosphere, noting that Nepal had lost close to one-third of its ice in the last 30 years. He warned that the rapid melting of the glaciers is causing floods, landslides, and dramatic impacts on communities, and issued an emotional call to the world to “stop the madness” of continued fossil fuel use, in order to protect glaciers in the Himalayas and around the world. He said, “We must act now to...limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C, to avert the worst of climate chaos. The world can’t wait.”

SERVIR: Charting the rise of women in geospatial information technology across the HKH



A joint initiative of NASA, USAID, and leading geospatial organisations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, SERVIR uses satellite data and geospatial technology to co-develop innovative solutions through a network of regional hubs to improve resilience and sustainable resource management at local, national and regional scales. SERVIR partners with countries in these regions to address critical challenges in climate change, food security, water and related disasters, land use, and air quality.

ICIMOD implements the SERVIR Hindu Kush Himalaya (SERVIR-HKH) Initiative – one of five regional hubs of the SERVIR network – in its regional member countries. Over the past year, SERVIR-HKH developed several novel methods and tools with partners. Some examples of the tools are land cover analysis, crop monitoring, flash flood warnings, and other critical applications.

In 2023, SERVIR-HKH championed women's engagement with Earth observation (EO) and geospatial information technology (GIT) – which encompasses using technologies to collect, store, analyse, and visualise spatial or geographic data about observing the Earth's surface and human activity. In Asia, especially in the countries of the HKH

region, women's participation in EO and GIT has traditionally been very low.



To combat this, and as part of ICIMOD's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, the SERVIR HKH team organised a training programme in 2023 to equip women with the knowledge and skills required to use advanced GIT tools.

Upon completion of the training, the impact on the participants' scientific knowledge of Earth observation and geospatial information technology and their applications revealed a transformative shift in their understanding of the subject matter.

The 'Empowering women in geospatial information technology' event, which trains women from across the HKH region in the use of GIT tools and methodologies, has been organised since 2018 for young and early-career women working in GIT.

Continuing the legacy, the 2023 edition, which took place in June, successfully built the capacity of over 642 women from across the HKH region on the use of EO data and GIT for different applications. The idea was to bridge the gender gap in the EO/GIT sector and foster women's leadership in this field across HKH countries. The participants were of varied academic backgrounds and came from 234 distinct institutes.

Upon completion of the training, the impact on the participants' scientific knowledge

of EO and GIT and their applications revealed a transformative shift in their understanding of the subject matter. Before the training, most participants needed foundational knowledge on concepts of EO and GIT and various applications – 12% for intermediate, 30% for basic knowledge, 55% expressed no knowledge, and only 3% claimed advanced knowledge. The most notable transformation was the significant shift of 51% of participants from no knowledge to intermediate and advanced levels.

From the mountains to the world: the **Himalayan University Consortium**



Beyond the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, researchers, practitioners and communities across the globe are calling urgent attention to further severe crises, including the humanitarian crisis, and the data/knowledge/science crisis.

In Afghanistan, by the end of 2023, 4.2 million people were displaced as a result of conflict and violence and 1.5 million as a result of disasters – including earthquakes and droughts – according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Many of the displaced people live in refugee camps, where they face disease, food insecurity, poverty and unsafe conditions.

Sameera Noori, Deputy Director of Citizens Organization for Advocacy and Resilience (COAR), a humanitarian assistance organisation in Afghanistan, has been working to document the conditions of displaced people, including those living in refugee tents, during the climate and other crises.

“ Sameera’s work and attendance at the conference showcased her major contribution to humanitarian work, and brought to light the strength of the HUC network and capacity-strengthening opportunities.

As a HUC alumnus, in 2023 Sameera attended the World Climate Research Programme’s Open Science Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, where she presented this work, with a talk entitled ‘Silver lining in a cascading crisis: Interdisciplinary knowledge production for impactful climate science in Afghanistan’. The presentation aimed to bring to the attention of a global audience the specific multiple crises happening in the country, at the intersection of climate change, conflict and large-scale displacement.

Sameera’s talk included details of her work on the collaborative stakeholder survey, which involved interviews with local communities, environmental experts and government officials. This landmark survey provided detailed insights into how rising temperatures and erratic weather patterns compound resource scarcity, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Sameera’s work and attendance at the conference showcased her major contribution to humanitarian work, and brought to light the strength of the HUC network and capacity-strengthening opportunities.

In other news, the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) grew in 2023, with 10 new academic institutions joining the collaborative network, taking their membership over the 100 mark. Throughout the year, there was focused activity within the network, with in-country coordination gathering pace in China, India and Pakistan, and collaborative activities in nine Thematic Working Groups (TWG) and Cross-Cutting Workgroups. HUC affiliates proposed the creation of two new TWGs in 2023 to respond to emerging knowledge needs – ‘Traditional, Indigenous, and local knowledge system for Locally Led Adaptation’ and ‘High Mountain Data’.

The HUC continues to strengthen research and scholarship on issues relevant to the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), building dynamic knowledge partnerships between universities and HKH partner organisations to promote research and learning in and about the region and strengthen capacity.

Environmental economics in the triple planetary crisis: building skills and resilience in South Asian economies



With growing floods, storms, heatwaves and worsening pollution in South Asia in 2023, the number of casualties and economic losses across the region demanded the urgent attention and action of specialised economists working at the nexus of economic development, the environment, and the use of natural resources. The South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE) at ICIMOD continued its mandate to support researchers from the region and institutions interested in understanding these interconnections.

At the intersection of media, environment, and economics, a series of workshops on Environmental Economics for Journalists was delivered in February, with the aim of sensitising journalists in environmental and ecological economics-related issues. SANDEE organised and delivered the workshops in partnership with the Indian Society for Ecological Economics and conservation news web portal, Mongabay India. The workshops combined sessions by economics experts discussing relevant regional issues, with training by journalists on integrating the subject-specific knowledge into everyday storytelling. Participants were encouraged to pitch story ideas to workshop experts for further development. Sessions included ‘The economics of urban waste

management in South Asia', by ICIMOD's lead economist and SANDEE programme coordinator, Mani Nepal, and 'Economic valuation of ecosystem services' by Vikram Dayal, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, and Suresh Babu, Dean, School of Human Ecology, Ambedkar University, Delhi.

'Towards resilient South Asian economies' was the theme at the 2023 South Asian Economics Students Meet, which came of age with its 18th edition in March – welcoming over 130 undergraduate economics students and their mentors from different universities across South Asia to share knowledge and learning. The keynote address, by ICIMOD's Director General, Pema Gyamtsho, highlighted the specific challenges facing the Hindu Kush Himalaya as we build resilient economies in the face of the triple planetary crisis. Hosted at ICIMOD headquarters by SANDEE and partners, the Central Department of Economics at Tribhuvan University, and the Nepal Economic Association, this event provided a prime opportunity for students to present academic papers on a range of issues, network, and learn from each other.

In August, a cutting-edge workshop tackled the timely issue of developing an alternative approach to using the gross domestic product (GDP) for measuring progress in the region. The workshop, organised jointly by SANDEE and partners, East West University, Bangladesh, and Goa University, India, explored the limitations of conventional GDP in sustainability studies and environmental decision-making. Entitled 'Images from the Sky', the event provided participants an opportunity to engage with alternative ways to measure progress, including using satellite images combined with other socioeconomic and environmental outcomes. This workshop was part of the 12th Congress of the Asian Association for Environmental and Resource Economics.

Another major highlight of the year was SANDEE's 46th Biannual Research and Training workshop, held in December at ICIMOD headquarters. The event brought together SANDEE grantees and faculty advisors, who together reviewed research progress, developed action plans, and undertook personalised mentoring sessions to improve their research quality and capacity. During the workshop, the SANDEE-ICIMOD Karl-Göran Mäler Memorial Lecture featured talks by renowned academics from the field of environmental and agricultural economics and social science. This year's talks included 'Solar irrigation in Nepal: Equity in energy access and implications for fossil fuel use' by Soumya Balasubramanya, Senior Economist, the World Bank, and 'War and commons grabbing' by Jampel Dell'Angelo, Associate Professor of Water Governance & Politics, Institute for Environmental Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands; the moderator was Heman Das Lohano, Professor of Economics, Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, Pakistan.

In 2023, SANDEE provided research support to 25+ grantees through 9 new grants with mentorships, organised 10 different capacity-building training sessions/workshops where 400 researchers participated, and SANDEE alumni published over 40 peer-reviewed research articles. 2023 was also the mid-year for SANDEE-led regional research on economics of forest restoration in South Asia, where over 20 researchers from four countries have been involved.





Cross-cutting issues

ICIMOD HAS DEFINED THREE PRINCIPAL CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES FOR ATTENTION IN MTAPV: GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI), CLIMATE CHANGE, AND BIODIVERSITY.

ICIMOD's GESI commitment:

Bridging gaps, driving change

In 2023, ICIMOD reaffirmed its dedication to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), weaving these principles into its mission of advancing resilience and sustainable development in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region. Against the backdrop of increasing climate uncertainty and persistent social disparities, ICIMOD is setting new benchmarks for inclusive innovation and transformative solutions that empower the region's most vulnerable populations, particularly women and disadvantaged communities.

This year's observance of International Women's Day (IWD) spotlighted a crucial area: bridging the digital gender divide. Despite the potential of digital technology to accelerate progress toward gender equity, access to and benefits from such advancements remain disproportionately skewed. Women in the HKH region, particularly in remote mountain areas, often face barriers in accessing education, resources, and digital tools, further marginalising them in an era driven by technology. ICIMOD's commitment to tackling this divide aligns with its broader mission to address systemic inequalities, foster leadership among women and youth, and build resilience through capacity development and innovation.

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE



ICIMOD's programmes in 2023 demonstrated how technology can be a catalyst for empowerment. Under its SERVIR-HKH initiative, training programmes for women in geospatial information technology (GIT) not only built technical capacity but also opened pathways for leadership in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields traditionally underrepresented by women. Similarly, women para-hydrogeologists trained under ICIMOD's spring revival programmes are playing critical roles in data gathering, spring governance, and community

mobilisation. These initiatives exemplify ICIMOD's aim to create opportunities for women-led solutions to climate and environmental challenges.

Yet technology alone cannot solve complex issues. True progress requires addressing underlying barriers, such as gender-based discrimination, unequal access to resources, and social norms that hinder women's participation in decision-making processes. To this end, ICIMOD has prioritised GESI-responsive policies and programmes, ensuring inclusivity in every stage from design to implementation.



GESI-RESPONSIVE APPROACHES IN ACTION

ICIMOD's work on springshed management in India offers a powerful example of how gender-transformative approaches yield multifaceted benefits. See our story about women-led water user groups in the village of Moldhar, entitled, 'Benefits flow through rural village with GESI-responsive springshed management'.

TOWARDS SYSTEMIC CHANGE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE RESULTS



The integration of GESI into ICIMOD's institutional framework marks a significant step forward. From developing toolkits for GESI-responsive disaster risk reduction to ensuring gender balance in regional forums and fellowships, ICIMOD is fostering an organisational culture that champions inclusivity. The establishment of a Women's Circle and the adoption of mandatory training for all staff on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment further underline ICIMOD's commitment to creating safe and equitable spaces for its staff and stakeholders.

As ICIMOD moves forward under its Medium-Term Action Plan V (MTAP V), it aims to transition from GESI-responsive practices to -transformative approaches that address root causes of inequality and exclusion. This includes embedding GESI aspects into global advocacy efforts, fostering regional cooperation, and scaling

solutions that prioritise the needs and voices of those most affected by climate and environmental challenges.

By bridging the digital divide and integrating GESI into its work, ICIMOD is not just addressing today's challenges but also paving the way for a more equitable and resilient HKH region. The stories of empowered women in Moldhar and beyond are a testament to what is possible when inclusion and innovation go hand in hand.

Boosting biodiversity in the HKH: strengthening conservation with Indigenous communities



ICIMOD's very beginnings are intertwined with UNESCO's 'Man and the Biosphere' (MAB) programme: back in 1979, the MAB programme made concrete commitments to establish a regional centre focused on mountain development in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), based in Nepal. A biosphere is an internationally designated protected area, or nature reserve, which is designed to demonstrate a balanced relationship between people and nature. Examples of biosphere reserves in the HKH include Gallies in Pakistan, the Gaoligong mountains in China, and Nanda Devi in India.

Against the backdrop of the continuous intensification of global climate change, imbalanced regional development, and limited international scientific and technological cooperation, it is urgent to identify challenges in managing biosphere reserves, to formulate constructive and targeted optimisation strategies to improve their governance in the HKH region, and to promote harmonious coexistence between people and nature.



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Jumping forward to 2023, ICIMOD's team working on Ecosystem and landscape restoration partnered with the Chengdu Institute of Biology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, China, to organise a stakeholder workshop on biosphere reserves and 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECMs) in the HKH region. OECMs are defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity as '*A geographically defined space, not recognised as a protected area, which is governed and managed over the long term in ways that deliver the effective and enduring in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem services and cultural and spiritual values.*'

The workshop, which took place in China in November 2023, gathered a broad range of participants, including representatives from biospheres, Indigenous groups and networks, local communities, NGOs, academia, and ICIMOD's partners from across the HKH region. Together, they discussed the policy gaps, potential, challenges, and opportunities for biosphere reserves and OECMs, and initiated a dialogue

to establish a regional network for sharing lessons learnt and good practices in the context of implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) in the region.

This framework, which aims to halt and reverse nature loss, was adopted by all eight countries of the HKH – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan – during the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Montreal, Canada in 2022. Through this, they committed to contribute to Action Target 3 of the GBF by expanding and effectively managing protected areas and OECMs. Target 3 is also known as "30×30", meaning that at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and marine and coastal areas, should be conserved or protected by 2030 globally.

OECMs are considered important to achieve the Action Target 3 and provide opportunities for inclusive conservation by formally recognising areas outside the state-run PAs, managed by Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), and the private sector or other stakeholders. OECMs have been considered to advance equitable and effective conservation, which recognise the rights of IPLCs and promote principles

of social equity. OECMs provide diverse opportunities for conservation and development. Among others, the buffer zone and transition zones of the biosphere reserves are considered important for OECMs.

The November 2023 workshop and dialogues were designed to advocate inclusive landscape governance mechanisms where the rights of IPLCs are secured and their traditional access to resources are strengthened through biosphere reserves and OECMs. Additionally, the workshop shared progress and plans related to National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and discussed the opportunities to highlight the mountain agenda in NBSAPs and at the CBD CoP16 to be held in 2024.

Climate change: uniting to heal our mountains through high-level meetings and science-policy forums



The fast-changing climate is having devastating impacts on the HKH region's environmental and socioeconomic stability, resulting in catastrophic changes: water insecurity, food shortages, increased disasters, biodiversity loss, increasing shocks, rising poverty, among a host of other cascading issues.

This region is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; adaptation to this planetary crisis is therefore central to ICIMOD's work, running through all our Strategic Groups, and interweaving with the other cross-cutting issues, biodiversity and GESI.

To tackle climate change, at the institutional level, in 2023 ICIMOD created a new cross-cutting role to ensure climate change is integrated across our interventions, and appointed an existing staff member to this role. Action on climate change also runs through all of our SGs, with notable contributions highlighted throughout this Annual Report, through our engagement at COP and through our various campaigns.

A number of high-level events also pinpointed the HKH region's growing climate change issues, and the urgent need for networks and alliances to work together – regionally and globally – to develop and promote solutions with tangible impacts.



It is crucial to articulate a collective mountain voice to highlight the deepening climate crisis in the HKH, the need for increased global attention and investment, and to establish a regional cooperation mechanism for the region.

Firstly, in March, a **Regional Consultation Workshop on climate change policy and investment in the Hindu Kush Himalaya** was held at ICIMOD in Kathmandu. Bringing together delegates from the HKH countries, UNFCCC national focal points, HKH High-Level Task Force members, along with policy makers, scientists, development partners, and representatives from civil society, the private sector, and youth networks – the workshop’s focus was on articulating a collective mountain voice to highlight the deepening climate crisis in the HKH, the need for increased global attention and investment, and to establish a regional cooperation mechanism for the region.

The two-day consultation led to an agreement on five priorities for unified messaging in the run-up to the UNFCCC’s COP28, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, which was held in December. The five HKH priorities for COP28 included: collaboration for regional cooperation, targeted messaging, amplifying youth voices, tailored solutions, and diversified funding.

Secondly, in September, **the Second Hindu Kush Himalaya Science-Policy Forum** was held at ICIMOD, where scientists, policymakers, development practitioners, and researchers from across the High Mountain Asia region met to discuss the climate and cryosphere crisis.

Over two days, participants focused on three core objectives: assessing cryosphere science, discussing national policies and plans, and examining institutional mechanisms. Their goal was to address the far-reaching impacts of cryosphere changes on vital aspects such as water resources, biodiversity, and livelihoods.

From these deliberations emerged a set of ten-point recommendations, a roadmap to inform the next HKH Ministerial Mountain Summit, which will be attended by ministers from ICIMOD’s eight regional member countries.

Recommendations from the policy forum included the establishment of a transdisciplinary HKH Cryosphere Working Group, a regional cryosphere monitoring and research programme, and adopting a nexus approach for

disaster risks and water resources management. The forum emphasised upstream-downstream linkages, Nature-based Solutions, and research on cascading risks and transboundary implications.

Communication and knowledge exchange and building greater understanding of cryosphere change impacts on biodiversity and disadvantaged communities were all areas earmarked for rapid progress and greater investment.

The second HKH Science-Policy Forum concluded with a clarion call for immediate action, and consensus that the need for transboundary collaboration has never been more urgent.





Communications

#SAVEOURSNOW: ICIMOD's global advocacy campaign calls for urgent action for our cryosphere



Namche Bazar, one of the highest human settlements on Earth and the gateway to the high Himalaya, was the setting for the 75th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest in May 2023. At this commemoration, ICIMOD cryosphere analyst, Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa, stood together with his grandfather Kanchha Sherpa, the last survivor of the first ascent of the world's highest mountain, alongside the descendants of the pioneering mountaineers, Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary. They were joined by former Prime Minister of New Zealand Helen Clark to launch ICIMOD's global advocacy campaign, SOS, or Save Our Snow, to mobilise mountain communities, mountain athletes and guides, mountain champions and mountain scientists to protect Earth's frozen zones.

The rapid melting of snow and ice in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) poses grave implications for people and nature. As documented in ICIMOD's flagship publication, HI-WISE, published in June 2023, unprecedented and largely irreversible changes to the HKH cryosphere, driven by global temperature rises, threaten two billion people and are accelerating species extinction. The #SaveOurSnow campaign aims to unite

all those living, working or engaged in mountains to issue an SOS for Earth's frozen zones, and all beings that rely on their freshwaters.

In the campaign's first 48 hours, over 2,000 people from over 70 countries – from all walks of life, and including climbers, scientists and diplomats – signed the 'SOS Declaration', calling for governments to make good on their commitments to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.



The #SaveOurSnow campaign aims to unite all those living, working or engaged in mountains to issue an SOS for Earth's frozen zones, and all beings that rely on their freshwaters.

This threshold is crucial, for even 1.5 degrees of warming is too hot for the HKH and the quarter of humanity who live within or rely on it, so every fraction of a degree matters. The declaration urged leaders of all nations to honour their commitments to make rapid and deep emission cuts, end all new coal, gas and oil exploration, and accelerate the transition to renewable energy.

The campaign is a call to action for everyone who cares about Everest and the world's highest mountains – to help highlight the plight of the HKH region by sharing stories and photographs of mountains around the world, highlighting climate impacts using the hashtag #SaveOurSnow, uploading messages about their connection to snow, ice and mountains, and signing up to a newsletter.

The campaign also invited people to lend their voices and show their support by updating their Facebook and LinkedIn cover photos with carefully crafted captions along with #SaveOurSnow.

During the campaign's launch, Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of ICIMOD, said: "Even before we've hit the 1.5 degrees threshold of the Paris Agreement, the dangerous impacts of global warming are already being felt throughout the

Hindu Kush Himalaya: in record-breaking heat waves, droughts, natural disasters, unpredictable snowfall and precipitous and largely irreversible glacial melt. We need urgent, global action to protect the lives and livelihoods of the 2 billion people in this region and to safeguard the countless, irreplaceable lifeforms that exist only here."

For more information and to join the movement, visit saveoursnow.earth





Institutional updates

40 years of ICIMOD:

Commemorating, taking stock and moving forward in a time of crisis



In 2023, ICIMOD marked four decades of catalysing sustainable development in the complex terrain of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region. The 40th anniversary event, on December 5, 2023, was graced by the presence of the Right Honourable Mr Ramchandra Paudel, President of Nepal, as the Chief Guest.

Under the theme “Moving Mountains 2030”, the event highlighted ICIMOD’s journey and its commitment to shaping the future of the HKH region. The 40th-anniversary agenda included a series of key moments, showcasing ICIMOD’s achievements and its enduring partnerships. Importantly, this moment marks an opportunity to consolidate urgent actions for the future in the context of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

In his inaugural address, the Right Honourable Mr Ram Chandra Paudel stated, “ICIMOD has been a vital force in promoting regional cooperation and sustainable development. The 40th anniversary is a moment to recognise its impact and renew our commitment to the shared vision for the HKH region,” and emphasised the continued collaboration needed to address the evolving challenges in the HKH region.

The anniversary event featured a range of activities, including the release of a commemorative book highlighting four decades of ICIMOD’s contributions, launched by the Right Honourable Mr Ramchandra Paudel, and the inauguration of a new annex building.

During the event, the winners of the Dr Andreas Schild Memorial Mountain Prize were announced – see more in our dedicated story on the Mountain Prize.

Reflecting on this milestone, Dr Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of ICIMOD, stated, “ICIMOD’s 40-year legacy is a testament to our resilience and the collaborative efforts of our partners. We’ve addressed diverse challenges, enabling sustainable development in the HKH. As we move forward, our ambition remains high, guided by the lessons of the past.”

Also attending the event was Bhutan’s Advisor for Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and Governor of the Royal Monetary Authority, Hon’ble Dasho Penjore, and high-level representatives from other member countries of ICIMOD – Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Attendees also included ICIMOD’s Board and Support Group members from the region and beyond, as well as the diplomatic corps based in Kathmandu.

Speakers at the event included prominent personalities from ICIMOD’s past, including former Directors General and Board Members. ICIMOD expresses gratitude to its staff past and present, and to its partners and supporters, acknowledging the integral role they’ve played in working towards the organisation’s mission.

Following the signing of the Agreement at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 30 September 1981 by the Government of Nepal and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ICIMOD was established and inaugurated in December 1983 with its headquarters in Nepal’s capital. As per the ICIMOD Act 2040 (1983), ICIMOD was mandated to carry out study, research and other necessary functions in order to develop the mountain area of Hindu Kush Himalayan regions in an integrated manner.

ICIMOD reaffirmed its dedication and commitment to further strengthen its role in supporting its regional member countries to address the current and emerging challenges that the HKH region is facing from climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss as a neutral convenor and facilitator for sharing information, knowledge and sustainable policies and practices.

The 40th-anniversary event served as a moment to celebrate past successes, present achievements, and chart a course for a more robust pathway towards a greener, more resilient and inclusive development of the HKH region.

Celebrating our resilience champions

The escalating effects of climate change are leaving the HKH and its people vulnerable to heightened disaster risk, ecosystem imbalances, biodiversity loss, and socio-economic changes. The Dr Andreas Schild Memorial Mountain Prize sets out to amplify the voices of those on the front lines, facing and adapting to these challenges. It recognises outstanding individuals and groups actively engaged in on-the-ground solutions, forging a path towards a more sustainable HKH.

In 2022, the Mountain Prize was renamed the Dr Andreas Schild Memorial Mountain Prize in honour of former ICIMOD Director General Andreas Schild, a champion of the mountains of the world and the HKH region, whose impact remains in the hearts of those in the HKH whose lives he touched during his long and illustrious career.

With the climate crisis already devastating communities across the region, ICIMOD is working to build the public and political will for faster action and greater climate ambition. The Mountain Prize is an effort to empower change and champion resilience in the face of the climate crisis.

In 2023, we received 38 nominations from resilience champions in the HKH, working across a range of issues including our focus areas of cryosphere, water risks, improving air quality, transforming livelihoods, regenerating landscapes, regional cooperation and global leadership.

THIS YEAR'S WINNERS

Saathi, India – this company addresses menstrual health and combats the plastic pollution crisis through the production of 100% biodegradable and compostable sanitary pads made from banana and bamboo fibre. Utilising innovative technology, they transform banana and bamboo agri-waste into sanitary pads that contribute positively to the well-being of individuals, communities, and the environment. The company directly sources raw materials from farmers that would otherwise go to waste, providing them with additional income. The raw materials are processed in an all-women-run manufacturing unit, where women from underserved communities are employed, trained in essential skills, and educated about menstrual hygiene. These empowered women then return to their communities as advocates for menstrual health education, offering accessibility to affordable, sustainable, and healthy menstrual hygiene products. These products are made available to urban customers, whose purchases play a vital role in subsidising rural distribution, ensuring widespread access to sustainable menstrual products.

Rupani Foundation, Pakistan has been implementing innovative, community-driven solutions to respond to development challenges for over 16 years, reaching out to vulnerable populations in Pakistan, irrespective of their race, religion, ethnicity, or gender. The goal of the Foundation is to consolidate the human, financial and

technical resources needed to help the poorest and most marginalised especially women and girls, in the mountain communities of Gilgit Baltistan, Sindh and Punjab in Pakistan, to achieve a level of self-reliance and positive change in their wellbeing. Rupani Foundation is currently running over 300 early childhood development (ECD) centres, where over 5,000 children are enrolled. Other beneficiaries include over 6,000 mothers, grandmothers, fathers and other caregivers of the children, who also attend sessions in the centres. It runs 400 science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education schools where more than 40,000 students (50% girls and 50% boys) are enrolled for quality learning with 200 Tech Fellow Teachers, of whom 100 are women and 100 are men. Rupani Foundation has also provided employable skills to 22,000 youths and adolescents, and 4,000 teachers and ECD educators benefitted from this initiative.

THE HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Lhomon Society's Lhomon Education, Bhutan is an alternative school education which innovates experience-based teaching and learning rooted in the themes of earth, air, water, fire, wood and space. It works to recognise and promote education which addresses earth stewardship, as education is the key to sustainable mountain development in the HKH and beyond. Lhomon Education works with children from six remote, poor regions that are vulnerable to climate-induced disasters including frequent flash floods, windstorms, drought, crop losses and food insecurity. The learners are equipped with knowledge and skills about Nature-based Solutions to everyday living and changing attitudes towards being compassionate earth stewards at the grassroots level. The children are assessed through their learning and there are no formal examinations or passing or failing learners. This education model is replicated in India, Singapore and the US.

Upper Karnali Landscape Initiative (UKALI), Nepal focuses on sustainable biodiversity conservation, management and utilisation of resources along with environment restoration and climate change adaptation knowledge building and actions. The Upper Karnali Landscape in the north-western Himalayan region of Nepal is the largest continuous non-protected area in Nepal, covering an area of about 6000 sq. km. It is remote and rich in biodiversity, providing an important basis for the rural economy. Through the UKALI initiative, the local community and institutions are trained via numerous workshops, citizen science events, education and awareness-raising on biodiversity conservation, including forming school eco clubs and developing citizen scientists. The project leader conducts biodiversity surveys, documentation, and monitoring of habitat conservation, water source management, plantations and other projects. The initiative also focuses on developing enterprises that support livelihoods with local cooperatives including a honey enterprise and a yak cheese factory in Limi Valley in far north-western Nepal. UKALI conducts a community governance and conservation support programme that focuses on human-wildlife conflict mitigation, reducing threats of illegal poaching and trade in wildlife parts.

Congratulations to all our resilience champions!

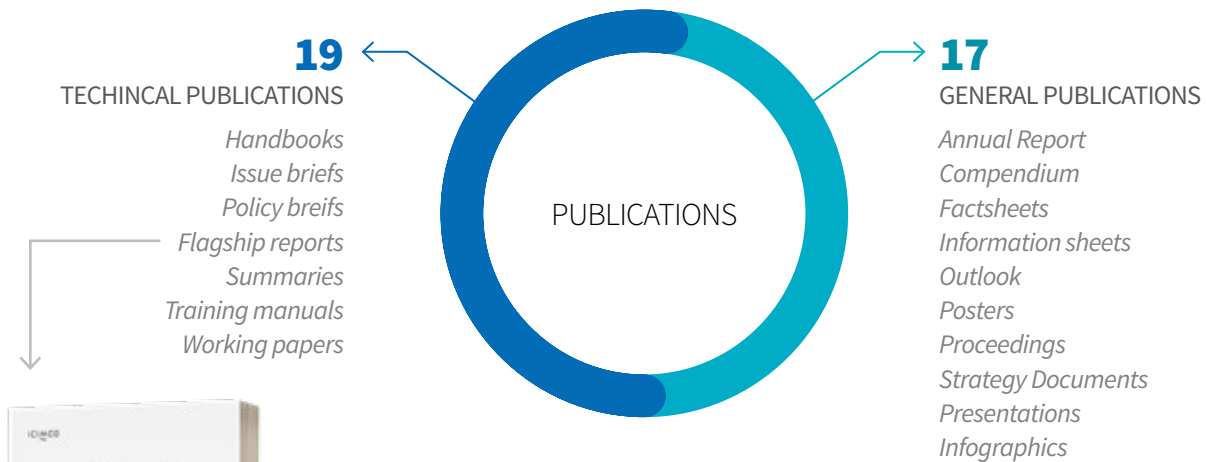




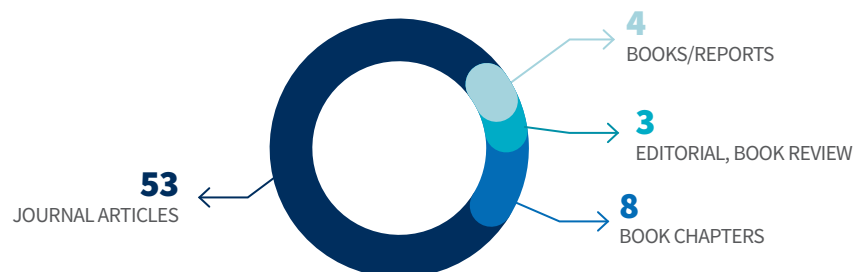
Annexes

Communications metrics

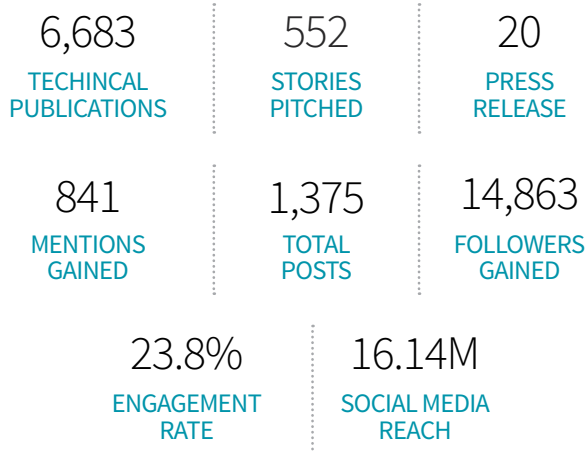
PUBLICATIONS



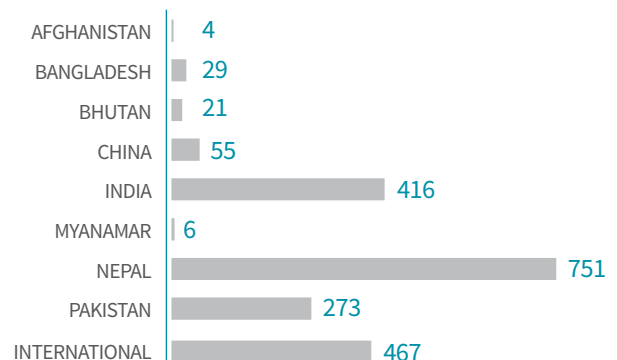
ICIMOD RESEARCHERS IN EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS



MEDIA AT A GLANCE



MEDIA MENTIONS IN RMCs AND OTHER COUNTRIES



SOCIAL MEDIA



5.1K
FOLLOWERS

117
TOTAL POSTS



36K
FOLLOWERS

117
TOTAL POSTS



36.8K
FOLLOWERS

397
TOTAL POSTS



16.5K
FOLLOWERS

511
TOTAL POSTS



5.7K
SUBSCRIBERS

62.3K
TOTAL VIEWS

WEB STATISTICS

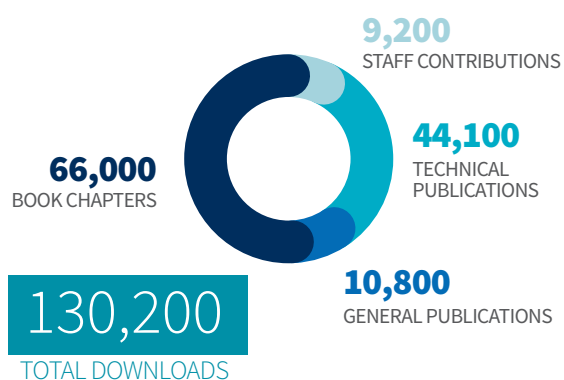
WEB CONTENT UPLOAD

122 EVENTS

33 ARTICLES/BLOGS

86 POSTS

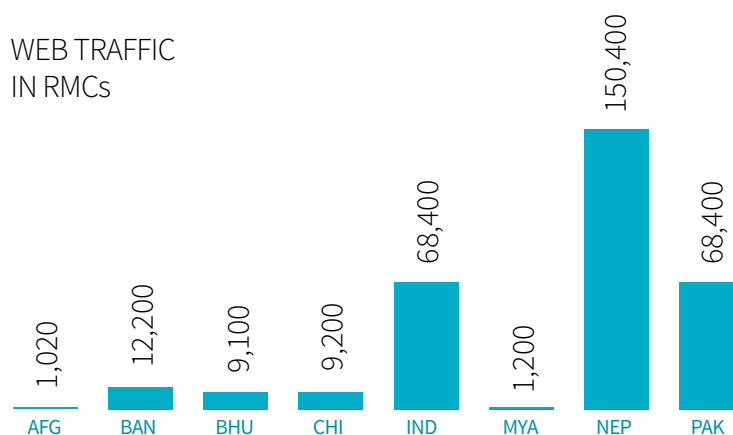
HIMALDOC DOWNLOADS



NEW MICROSITES

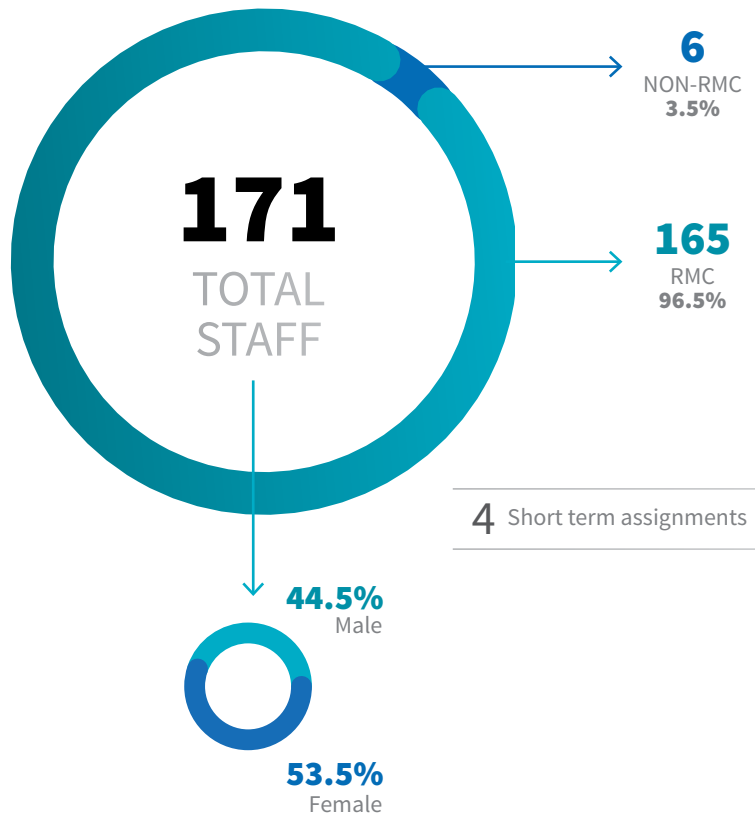
HI-WISE
#SaveOurSnow
Blog
Crisis in the Cryosphere
Forms
ICIMOD@40
Stories from Koshi
Kailash Tourism

WEB TRAFFIC IN RMCs



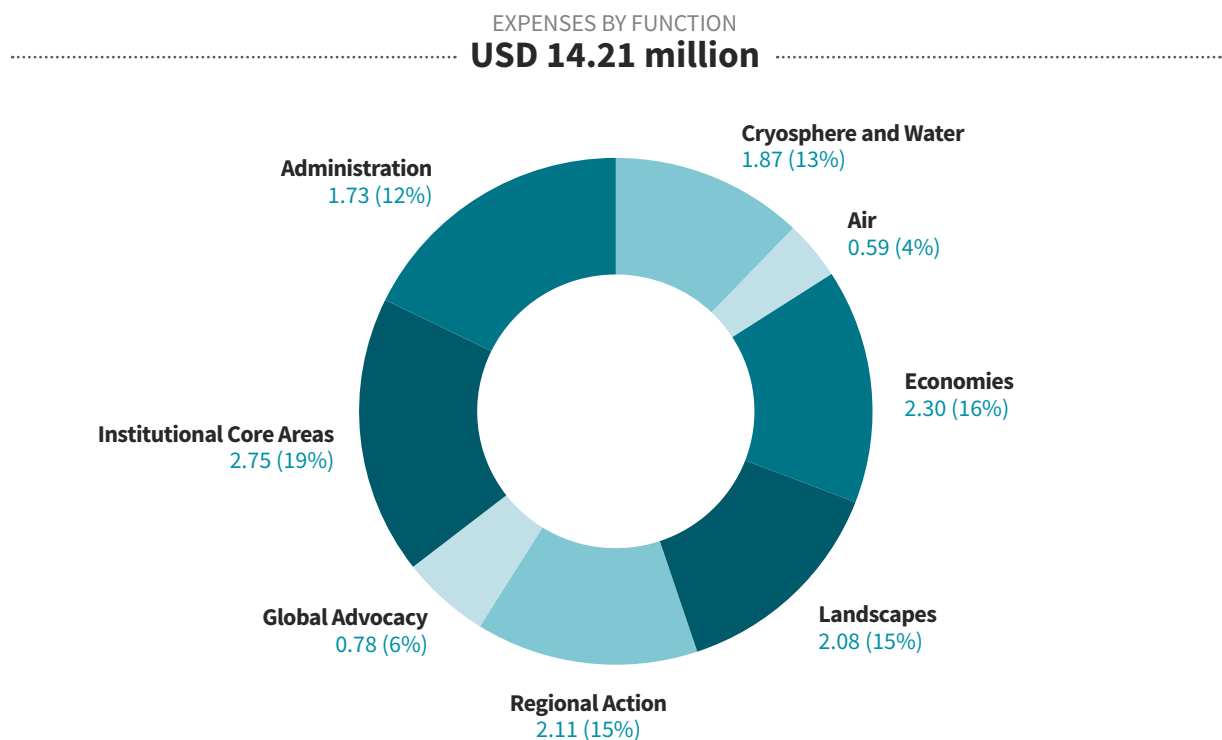
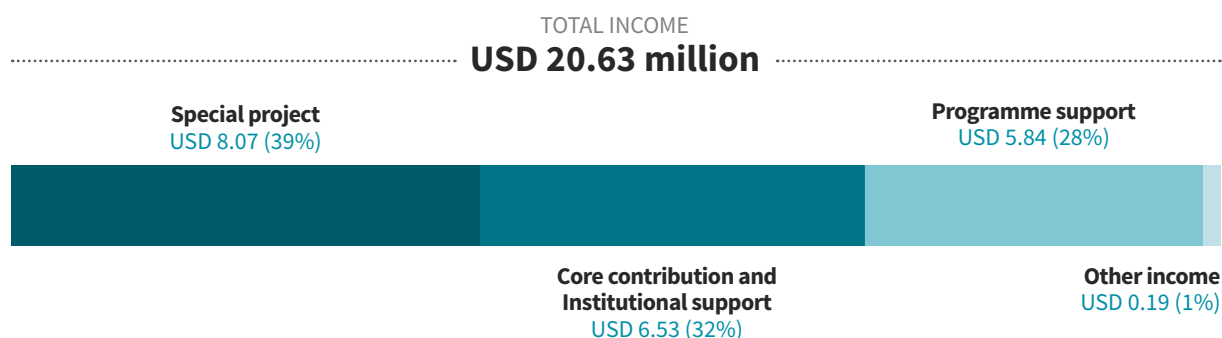
Staff

ICIMOD is committed to, celebrates and promotes equal opportunity and diversity in the workplace. We make efforts to ensure that all regional member countries are adequately represented in the workforce and have a Young ICIMOD Professionals Programme (YIPP) to encourage youth from underrepresented regional member countries and donor countries to apply. The majority of our staff are from the Hindu Kush Himalaya. ICIMOD is also committed to gender and social diversity and encourages qualified women candidates and those from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply.



Finance

The Centre receives funds in the following broad categories: a) core funds from regional and non-regional countries, and b) programme and project funds. From these funds, expenditure is made on the Strategic Groups and Action Areas, institutional functions and administration. In 2023, the total expenditure made by the Centre was USD 14.2 million (excluding exchange difference). Of this, USD 9.7 million was spent on Action Areas (68%), USD 2.7 million on institutional Core Areas (19%), and USD 1.7 million on administration (12%). A detailed breakdown of the expenditure is presented in the chart below:



Note: Figures in millions of US dollars

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Fund Balances as at 31 December 2023

All amounts in United States Dollars

		As at 31 December 2023		As at 31 December 2022
Fund Balances				
General Reserve		3,654,419		3,657,760
Operational Reserve		10,470,764		9,606,428
Exchange Equalisation Reserve		503,606		503,606
Programme Support Fund Balances (net)				
[Note 3(g) of Schedule 11]				
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sweden	152,984		-	
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Norway	1,696,063		-	
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	892,431	2,741,478	-	-
Special Projects Fund Balances				
Amounts to be incurred on projects	2,739,389		950,184	
Amounts to be recovered.	(736,978)	2,002,411	(1,846,306)	(896,122)
Total Sources of Funds		19,372,678		12,871,672
Assets and Liabilities				
Fixed Assets		2,699,917		3,128,274
Current Assets, Loans and Advances:				
Cash and bank balances		19,126,152		13,439,110
Loans, advances and other current assets		1,449,520		925,631
		20,575,672		14,364,741
Less: Current Liabilities and Provisions		(3,902,911)		(4,621,343)
Net Current Assets		16,672,761		9,743,398
Total Application of Funds		19,372,678		12,871,672

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

Operating Statement for the year ended 31 December 2023

All amounts in United States Dollars

	Year Ended 31 December 2023	Year Ended 31 December 2022
INCOME		
Contribution from Donors		
Core Contribution and Institutional Support	6,530,204	6,607,000
Programme Support	5,837,681	1,774,282
Special Projects	8,072,086	4,855,834
Other Income	190,762	701,576
	(A) 20,630,733	13,938,692
EXPENDITURE		
Programme Support Expenses	3,096,206	3,709,910
Special Projects Expenses	5,173,553	5,577,364
Core and Institutional Support Expenses		
Core Expenses	3,318,194	4,140,271
Directorate Expenses	897,191	990,570
Administrative Support Expenses	1,424,434	1,382,389
Depreciation [Note 3(a)(i) of Schedule 11]	307,595	300,801
Foreign Exchange (Gain)/Loss, net	(306,868)	652,457
	(B) 13,910,305	16,753,762
Surplus/(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure before provision for completed project balances	(A-B) 6,720,428	(2,815,070)
Less: Provision for overdue fund balances and amounts receivable from supporters [Note 2(xii) of Schedule 11]	-	(350,896)
Surplus/(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure	6,720,428	(3,165,966)
Less: Surplus/(Deficit) of Special Projects income over expenditure transferred to Special Project Fund Balances (net)	2,898,533	(721,530)
Less: Surplus/(Deficit) of Programme Support's income over expenditure transferred to Programme Support Fund Balances (net)	2,741,475	(1,935,628)
Add: Difference of SIDA Core Support income and expenditure transferred from Core Support Fund (net) [Note 3(h) of Schedule 11]	-	631,301
Surplus of Operational Reserve before appropriation	1,080,420	122,493
Transfer to General Reserve [Note 3(b)(ii) of Schedule 11]	216,084	24,499
Surplus transferred to Operational Reserve	864,336	97,994

Partners



BANGLADESH

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University

Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS)

Department of Environment, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)

Institute of Remote Sensing

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED)

Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, ICIMOD Nodal Agency



BHUTAN

Ministry of Energy and Natural Resource, Royal Government of Bhutan, ICIMOD Nodal Agency

Royal Thimphu College

Sherubtse College



CHINA

AIRCAS (Aerospace Information Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Sciences)

Beijing Piesat Information Technology Co., Ltd.)

China-ICIMOD Committee, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Chengdu

Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)

Chinese Academy of Sciences, ICIMOD Nodal Agency

Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)

Lanzhou University (LZU)

National Natural Science Foundation of China, Beijing

National Tibetan Plateau/Third Pole Environment Data Centre (NTP/TPE)

NRSCC (National Remote Sensing Center of China, Ministry of Science and Technology)



INDIA

Advanced Center for Water Resources Development

Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) Bangalore

Birla Institute of Technology and Science

G. B Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development (GBPNIHESD)

Goa University

Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)

Indian Institute of Technology

Indian Institute of Technology

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, ICIMOD Nodal Agency

Sikkim University



MYANMAR

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, ICIMOD Nodal Agency



NEPAL

Agriculture and Forestry University

Agriculture Forestry University

Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC)

Antarprerana Pvt. Ltd.

Center for Water Resources Studies (CWRS)

Central Department of Economics

Centre for Environmental and Agricultural Policy Research, Extension and Development (CEAPRED)

Community Development and Advocacy Forum Nepal (CDAFN)

Community Homestay Network Pvt. Ltd.

DHM - (Department of Hydrology and Meteorology)

Far Western University

Human Rights, Social Awareness and Development Centre (HUSADEC)

Institute of Forestry (IoF)
 Kathmandu University (KU)
 Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research (LIBIRD)
 Mandwi
 Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal (MoFE)
 National Planning Commission, ICIMOD Nodal Agency
 Nepal Institute of Development Studies
 Nepal Mountaineering Association
 Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA)
 Pathway Technologies and Services Pvt. Ltd.
 R&D Innovative Solutions Pvt. Ltd.
 Sabal Nepal
 Smart Infra Tech Solutions Pvt. Ltd.
 Tribhuvan University (TU)

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Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR), ICIMOD Nodal Agency
 Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Pakistan
 Government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) through Soni Jawari Center for Public Policy (SJCPP)
 Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives
 PARC Agrotech Company
 Sustainable Development Policy Institute

NON-HKH

Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Switzerland)
 Agribusiness Centre (AbC), Sri Lanka
 Alliance for Rural Electrification, Belgium
 Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Indonesia
 Centro De Apoyo Para La Gestión Sustentable Del Agua Y El Medio Ambiente (Agua Sustentable), Bolivia

Climate Analytics Berlin, Germany
 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
 EVK2CNR – (Everest-K2 National Research Council), Italy
 GASP - (Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet), Switzerland
 Humanitarian Open Street Map Team, United States
 Innovations for Poverty Action
 Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development) (IRD), France
 Institute of Policy Studies
 Institute of Research for Development (IRD), France
 International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi, Kenya
 International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines
 International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Gland, Switzerland, represented by Asia Regional Office, Bangkok, Thailand
 IWMI - (International Water Management Institute), Sri Lanka
 National Aeronautics and Space Administration United States, USA
 Norwegian Water Resources and Energy, Norway
 Population Council New York, USA
 South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, Sri Lanka
 The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO)
 United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), New York, USA
 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Thailand
 University of Central Asia (UCA), Kyrgyzstan
 Utrecht University, The Netherlands
 Water Environment Forum
 World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)

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Vice President,
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Executive Director, Mountain Research Initiative

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Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary, British Embassy

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CHINA	Dr Zhang Yapin Vice President, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)
INDIA	Smt. Leena Nandan Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India
MYANMAR	Mr Htay Aung – upto Sep 2023 Director General, Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Nay Pyi Taw, Union of Myanmar Dr. Thaung Naing Oo – from Oct 2023 Director General, Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Nay Pyi Taw, Union of Myanmar
NEPAL	Dr. Min Bahadur Shrestha Vice-Chairman, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal
PAKISTAN	Capt. R Muhammad Asif – until July 2023 Federal Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security and Research Mr. Muhammad Mahmood – from August 2023 Federal Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security and Research

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REGIONAL MEMBER COUNTRIES

Afghanistan Bhutan India
Bangladesh China Myanmar Nepal
Pakistan

NON-REGIONAL MEMBER COUNTRIES

Government of Austria, Austrian Development Agency (ADA)

Government of Norway, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Government of Sweden, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Government of Switzerland, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

PROGRAMMATIC FUNDING

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), United Kingdom

Government of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Kathmandu

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

STRATEGIC AND PROJECT FUNDING

Aerospace Information Research Institute, CAS

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

eWater Limited, Australia

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), United Kingdom

International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation - NORAD

Oxfam International

Rijksdienst Ondernemend Nederland

SCS Global Service

Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

The World Bank

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

University of Bern

University of Bristol

US Agency for International Development (USAID)

US Department of State

ICIMOD and its regional member countries gratefully acknowledge the generous support of Austria, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland for core and programme funding, and Australia, Canada's International Development Research Centre, the European Union, Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the World Bank for project funding.

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