



Message from the Director General

Poverty and physical and social vulnerability dominated the news throughout much of our extended Himalayan region over the course of 2004. The final event was the tsunami that struck at the end of the year, which included some of our member countries along its devastating path. That and evidence of Himalayan glacial melting, triggering increased flash floods, serve to remind us of the importance of early warning. Forecasting technologies, regional cooperation, and an integrated approach to disaster preparedness and management are important areas of ICIMOD's contribution.

Violent strife continues to trouble some of our regional member countries notably Nepal. Along with increased outmigration of mountain peoples, urban settlements are increasingly crowded and air and water pollution continues to worsen with unregulated development.

News like this dramatises the enormity of the challenges we face. It also strengthens our resolve to match the challenge with equal effort. We have reaped modest but enduring results, particularly in providing mountain peoples and their communities wider options for alternative livelihoods and escape from poverty; greater voice in the management of forests and rangelands; and more useful information exchanges on means to overcome the physical and social barriers that make development in the mountain context a continuing uphill battle. We have brought the mountain agenda and perspective to the attention of governments and policy makers in the region, and have been gratified to find distinct mountain approaches increasingly embedded in state and national policies.



Small successes like these rarely make the headlines. They nonetheless inspire the Centre, its staff, and our Partners, and lend us impetus in what we do. Strategic partnerships and regional cooperation more and more define the ways in which we effectively leverage our efforts. This applies particularly in the areas of policy, environmental sustainability, technology options, and information and knowledge sharing. Here we have found impact is achieved better across boundaries than with

individual states or countries alone, and solutions lie in the sharing of knowledge and coordination of approaches.

An example in which concerted effort on a regional scale is proving more effective is in biodiversity conservation. This requires cooperation across borders in the places that species inhabit. Substantial work has been achieved over the past year in regional cooperation, from consultations with our Himalayan countries to increased consensus on policy issues affecting mountain peoples. Similarly, watersheds often cross geo-political boundaries and their effective management will demand transboundary planning that integrates human and ecological dimensions.

The initiatives that paved the way for these dialogues were undertaken by our different programmes. When we are successful, the results reinforce each other and lead to more informed policy reforms than would the activities in isolation. Advocacy networks that have emerged out of these consultations are ensuring continuity and broadening of the efforts started with our partners.

This report presents just a few of our significant accomplishments in the past year. The focus is on key results that we have identified in our overall strategy. We dwell on processes initiated more than numbers — not how many villages are practicing this and that farm technology,



for example, but policies and processes of helping whole villages and communities to help themselves. This strategic focus on key approaches and policies that can have a large scale impact in reducing mountain poverty and vulnerability is increasingly informing all of our work.

During 2004, ICIMOD celebrated its 21st anniversary and inaugurated our own new home in Khumaltar, just south of the Ring Road in Kathmandu. The Centre marked these milestones by holding a high-level symposium to assess our achievements and help map out our future directions. There was consensus that though much has been achieved the future challenges for ICIMOD were also reflected in the glaring poverty, conflict, and vulnerability of mountain areas. Significantly, there was increasing recognition of the importance of the Himalayan mountain areas to the hundreds of millions living downstream in South and East Asia for provision of water, biodiversity, and security. ICIMOD is committed to helping our mountain region meet those challenges.

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Director General