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# Editorial

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*Dear Readers,*

*An objective of the International Year of Mountains (IYM) 2002 was to "ensure present and future well-being of mountain communities by promoting conservation and sustainable development in mountain areas." Fulfillment of this objective requires adequate policy and institutional development as well as sound arrangements at the local, national, regional, and international levels. Clearly, IYM 2002 stimulated important social and political negotiations, institutional measures, and the creation of new networks. This issue of* MRD*, 5 years after, presents experiences and innovative approaches that benefited from the momentum of IYM 2002, from the international to the community level, and are relevant to both research and development. While multilateral agreements, international development initiatives, and globalization of the economy increasingly constitute the framework within which national policies have been elaborated, at the other end of the scale, individuals and communities have joined to steer development according to their own visions of the future and their fundamental rights.*

*Carefully established institutions are needed at all levels, but—more importantly—also between different levels, as illustrated by the papers in the Development section. M. Boesch reflects on the results of a European research project that explored the relevance of (local-level) culture in mountain policy in an era of globalization. D. Hoffmann discusses how Bolivia recently instituted a new policy of "parks with people," explicitly recognizes the right of traditional communities to live within protected areas. In Ethiopia, local level policies to promote sustainable land management have recently been adapted in a joint learning process involving the government, non-state agencies, and communities (T. Amede et al). Community-based natural resource networks in Nepal offer great potential for strengthening local environmental governance—translating policies into practice rather than duplicating government functions (R.C. Khanal). AGOCA, a network of mountain communities in Central Asia inspired by Alliance in the Alps, is proving to be an important tool for capacity building, exchange of experiences, and defense of the interests of mountain communities (V. Nikonova). Conventions are often blamed for being influenced more by power politics than by scientific insight; the example from Peru illustrates how science, government, and non-governmental organizations have learnt from each other and developed an adaptation mechanism for climate change (P. Lagos).*

*Two further international policy-related concerns are taken up by several papers in the Research and MountainNotes sections: poverty alleviation—see the papers discussing whether community forest management really benefits the poorest in Nepal, and what direction upland rice production is taking in northern Laos—and international research motivated by a strong concern about the future of people dependent on mountains. The latter has led to important overview papers by well-established groups of mountain specialists emerging from a major European effort—coordinated in Switzerland—to collect the "state of the art" in research focusing on global change and its impacts in mountain regions.*

*Undoubtedly, much remains to be done to ensure the sustainability of development in mountains in future, as expressed by the results of the survey to which* MRD *readers responded (see pp 90–91). The MRD Editorial Team is dedicated to ensuring that the journal will continue to be a mouthpiece for the global mountain community with respect to policies and institutions engaged in promoting sustainable mountain development.*

*Susanne Wymann von Dach and Anne Zimmermann, Assistant Editors*

*Hans Hurni, Editor-in-Chief*

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