

## **International Center for Integrated Mountain Development**

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# International Center for Integrated Mountain Development

## A Partner in Sustainable Mountain Development

The International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is the first and, so far, the only international center devoted to integrated mountain development. It was established in 1983 out of widespread concern for the alarming environmental degradation of mountain habitats and the poverty of mountain communities in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region. While international in scope, its main geographic focus is the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, a mountain chain extending for more than 3500 km, which is the home of over 140 million inhabitants and encompasses the mountain areas of parts or all of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.

In pursuing its mandate, ICIMOD works mainly at the interface between research and development and acts as a facilitator for generating new mountain-specific knowledge that is relevant to mountain development. At the same time, ICIMOD attempts to ensure that new knowledge is shared among all relevant institutions, organizations, and individuals in the region. Its primary functions are to serve as a multidisciplinary documentation and information center, a focal point for applied and problem-solving research activities, a focal point for training, and a consultative center.

ICIMOD has a staff of 140, of whom 30 are internationally recruited professionals representing several nationalities. They bring to the Center expertise in a wide range of

areas, including agronomy, agroforestry, farm economics; common property resources management, land-use planning, and hazard and rangeland management; soil conservation; communications and information management; and alternative energy systems and water resources.

### Regional collaborative program

In an attempt to address the issues highlighted by Chapter 13 (Mountain Ecosystems) of Agenda 21, ICIMOD embarked, in January 1995, on a dynamic and ambitious 4-year Regional Collaborative Program for the Sustainable Development of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. The program was designed after extensive consultations with partner institutions in ICIMOD member countries, ICIMOD's Board of Governors and Support Group, and many others. The experience gained has been enormously valuable in helping the Center move on to the next phase (1999–2002) of programming for sustainable mountain development in the HKH in the areas described below.

### Program areas

ICIMOD has designated five major program areas. These reflect the



three principal thematic concerns in sustainable development of the HKH and the two main mechanisms that ICIMOD uses to increase the capacities of local and national institutions to apply the knowledge generated by the thematic programs, which are

- sustainable livelihoods for mountain households
- gender balanced mountain development
- sustainable management of the mountain commons
- capacity building of mountain development organizations
- information, communication, and outreach.

#### Principles of partnership

ICIMOD adopts a decentralized approach to program implementation in which national institutions have the main responsibility to plan, implement, and finance programs that are particularly appropriate in light of the mountain mandates of the respective institutions. ICIMOD functions as a facilitator, providing access to knowledge and advice, and gives a regional perspective to the national and local activities undertaken.

Within the overall framework of cooperation with countries in the HKH region, ICIMOD enters into long-term partnership agreements with academic and research institutions, government development agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and international organizations with a mandate or an interest in sustainable mountain development.

#### Outreach

ICIMOD annually publishes about 40 monographs on diverse topics, ranging from mountain agriculture and mountain risk engineering to alternative energy systems and biodiversity. ICIMOD also produces a *Newsletter* and a publication called *Issues in Mountain Development* in

order to regularly inform a large network of institutions and individuals about the results of mountain research, lessons learned, best practices, and what works and what doesn't in the context of mountain development. In addition, ICIMOD also produces CDROMs, posters, video films, and slide presentations and organizes or takes part in exhibitions devoted to a range of topics. At the field level, ICIMOD has 15 test sites in six of the eight ICIMOD member countries. Trials and demonstrations of various successful technologies and practices are carried out at these sites. A dynamic homepage is maintained at [www.icimod.org.sg](http://www.icimod.org.sg).

#### ICIMOD's role in regional cooperation

While it is primarily the responsibility of national and local agencies to undertake, organize, and manage development interventions in their specific geographic areas, ICIMOD can play a very important role in the process, particularly in those areas where it has a major comparative advantage.

In view of the potential value of regional cooperation for the management of many economic and environmental problems in the HKH region, ICIMOD has a crucial role to play in facilitating this cooperation with respect to development of mountain areas. Countries share common watersheds, flora, fauna, and cultural resources. Regional cooperation has been a major component in ICIMOD's programs, and this will continue to be the focus of all future activities.

#### Beyond the Hindu Kush-Himalayas

Since 1994, when FAO convened the first ad hoc meeting on follow-up to Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, "Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development," ICIMOD has played an increasingly important role at the regional and the global levels. ICIMOD coordinates

the Asia Pacific Mountain Network, and together with The Mountain Institute and the International Potato Center, it established the Mountain Forum. ICIMOD also has strong links with institutions and individuals outside the HKH, some 1000 of which are on ICIMOD's mailing list, receiving the Center's *Newsletter* and *Issues in Mountain Development* three times per year.

#### Governance and sponsors

ICIMOD is an international center with an independent board of governors consisting of eight senior officials of the governments of the regional member countries and seven scientists and/or development specialists nominated by the ICIMOD Support (donor) Group. By early 2000, the following seven European governments had contributed financially to ICIMOD's core Regional Collaborative Program: Austria, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Specific project support is also provided by some of these donors as well as another 10 donor organizations. The governments of regional member countries contribute both in cash and in kind.

#### ICIMOD's Unique Features

Within a clearly defined ECO-REGIONAL FOCUS, ICIMOD provides LINKAGES between

- Environment & Development
- Research & Development
- Policies & Technologies
- Disciplines
- Countries

and serves as a MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT FORUM

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