

Editorial

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Dear Readers,

Mountains, with their great species richness, high numbers of endemic and endangered species, and great genetic diversity of crops and livestock as well as wild relatives, are one of the world's greatest sources of biodiversity, including high ecosystem diversity. The value of biodiversity—in terms of ecology, economics, natural and cultural heritage, aesthetics, and ethics—has received greater recognition in recent decades, for example in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Mountain people are guardians of this global good; they play a major role in protecting and conserving the richness of biodiversity. But mountain people should not only be regarded as protectors: they must also be beneficiaries, in the sense of “benefit sharing” within the framework of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Biodiversity is crucial to their livelihoods. Mountain people must be enabled to use biodiversity in the future in a sustainable way, and they must be compensated for the services they provide for mankind and future generations.

Innovative approaches to involving mountain people in policy and decision-making on conservation issues, and to rewarding them, are essential for the sustainable use of biodiversity, as the Development articles in this issue by Luís Llambí et al and Stefano Pagiola et al demonstrate with reference to planning for biodiversity conservation in the Andes and compensation for biodiversity conservation services in Central and South America, respectively. Jean-Marc Boffa et al discuss the need for conservation and use, with reference to landscape mosaics for multiple use and seed production for indigenous trees in Uganda. Sachin Das and Regina Laub focus on agrobiodiversity—an important aspect, as 6 of the 20 plant species that provide 80% of the world's food originate in mountains. Local knowledge and management experience shared by women and men is illustrated by the LinKS Project in Tanzania, a counterbalance to the negative effects of modernization and lack of awareness. John Stepp et al explore the link between biodiversity, mountains, and linguistic diversity, using GIS as a tool.