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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.*

In the Research section, Antje Burke focuses on biodiversity patterns in an arid environment of Namibia, while Nakul Chettri et al explore the relation of bird communities to habitat in the Sikkim Himalaya. An article by Markus Stumpp et al discusses the impact of livestock grazing on soil fertility in Mongolia. Núria Roura-Pascual et al focus on transformation of rural landscapes in the eastern Pyrenees, and Yang Guojing et al address the hydrological effects of forest landscape patterns in the Qilian Mountains of China. A contribution to the MountainNotes section by Richard Crooker discusses a human ecological crisis in the hills of Thailand, related to the difficulties of replacing opium cultivation with alternative cash crops.

We hope that MRD readers will be better informed about the great importance of biodiversity in mountain regions after reading the contributions in this issue, and that they will reflect on how their own work and personal interests might contribute more effectively to its conservation and sustainable use.

Hans Hurni, Editor-in-Chief
Susanne Wymann von Dach, Assistant Editor

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