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Moving Mountains: A New Strategy and Action Plan for ICIMOD to Embrace Change and Accelerate Impact to 2030



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In the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), at the top of the world, we are witnessing rapid climate change, biodiversity loss, increased disaster risk, and rising inequality. Ambitious partnerships must drive evidence-based action to solve these complex problems. As an intergovernmental knowledge center for the 8 HKH countries—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan—the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) aims to deliver tangible outcomes to address the challenges the region faces. It will meet these challenges through a new strategy and action plan. The vision is to work toward a greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient HKH. This will be delivered through a refreshed mission to build and share knowledge that enables greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient policies and through action and investment across the diverse countries and communities of the HKH.

Introduction

The triple planetary crises—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—have hit the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region with a vengeance. The escalating effects of these crises, as well as water insecurity, increased disaster risk, and widespread socioeconomic change, all point to a critical need to support transformative action—at scale and with urgency to 2030 and beyond. These pressing needs, coupled with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) turning 40 in 2023, have propelled the organization toward a new strategy and a new medium-term action plan (ICIMOD 2022, 2023).

With this new strategy, ICIMOD commits to the challenging and ambitious task of driving policy and practice change toward a new vision of greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient development in the HKH. To fulfill its aims, ICIMOD will deploy its strengths to catalyze necessary transitions in policy, investment, and action, both regionally and globally.

Delivering its green ambitions will require identifying policy and practice solutions that are more environmentally responsible, regenerative, circular, or climate neutral. For instance, solutions that can promote socioeconomically viable, nature-positive enterprises; reduce air pollution and carbon emissions through innovation; or protect and

regenerate biodiversity, rangelands, watersheds, and other environmental services with policy incentives will be considered. Delivering its climate-resilient ambitions will entail identifying policy and practice solutions that protect communities, developing their ability to withstand and bounce back from shocks and stresses, and enabling them to adapt to change. In every case, ICIMOD will tackle risks and opportunities that are common to the region and transboundary in nature while emphasizing the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

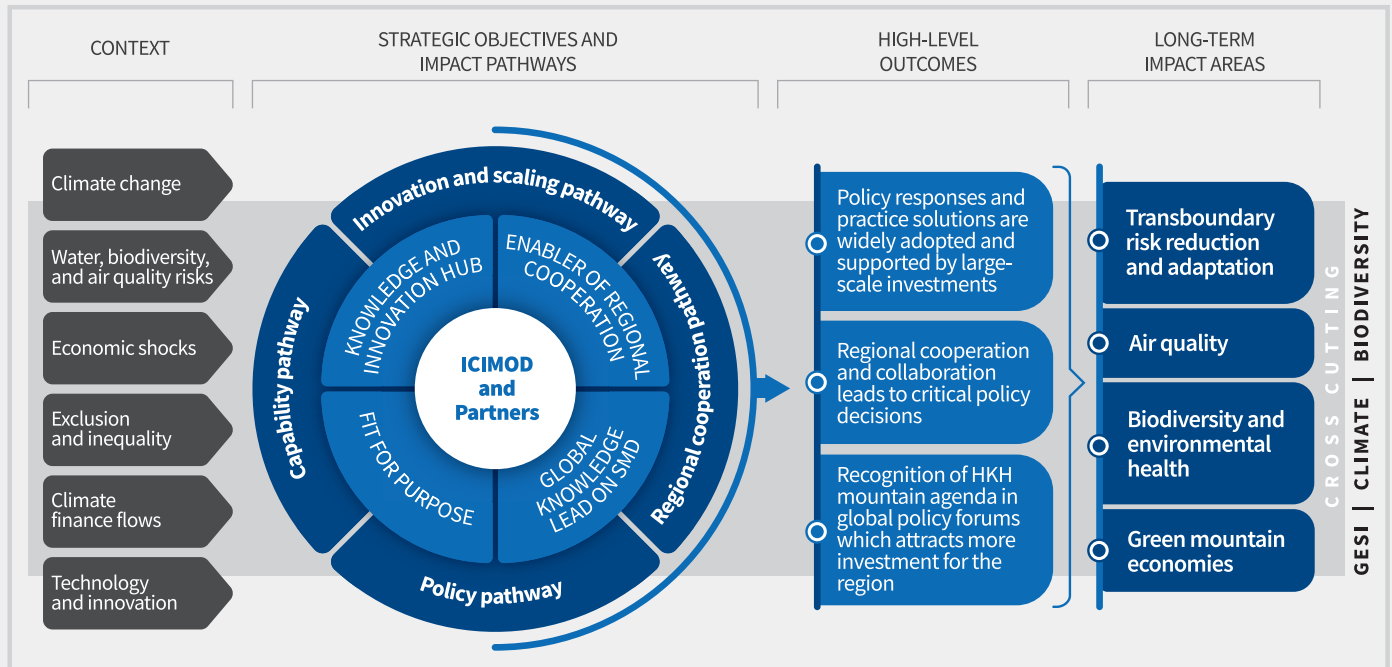
Building on our strong foundations: ICIMOD@40

Over the last 4 decades, ICIMOD has cemented its role in the HKH region. It has built on its visionary mandate to facilitate exchange and learning on regional and transboundary mountain issues among the 8 founding regional member countries—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. As a nonpolitical and neutral regional knowledge center, ICIMOD is an impartial convenor and coordinator on significant technical matters. These are addressed as they arise from research and evidence and are reinforced by the HKH Call to Action (ICIMOD 2020), which was endorsed in the first Ministerial Mountain Summit in 2020.

The commitments enshrined in the HKH Call to Action, coupled with multiple other international and regional policy obligations to 2030, set the stage for ICIMOD scaling up the quantity and quality of its contributions. The need is amplified by the rapidly increasing magnitude and complexity of regional and transboundary challenges that present differently across the diverse countries of the HKH. ICIMOD's planned contributions are articulated in a new strategy for 2030 and a new medium-term action plan that will come into effect from 2023 and extend through 2027.

Deep investments over 4 decades of work have laid the foundations for the institution's long-term impact areas. These include transboundary risk reduction and adaptation, air quality, biodiversity and environmental health, and green mountain economies. These areas represent some of the most complex challenges regionally and globally, and they can be measured against specific global goals and targets

FIGURE 1 ICIMOD's strategic objectives, impact pathways, high-level outcomes, long-term impact areas and the cross-cutting issue areas of gender and social inclusion, climate and biodiversity. GESI, gender equality and social inclusion; SMD, Sustainable Mountain Development.



articulated in the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Pathways to fulfill our objectives

To focus actions on delivering its vision and mission, ICIMOD will be guided by 4 strategic objectives: serving as a knowledge and innovation hub, enabling regional cooperation and collaboration, leading global knowledge and providing a voice for sustainable mountain development, and ensuring that the internal organization is fit for purpose to 2030 (Figure 1). Building on these strategic objectives, 4 impact pathways will operate together in various combinations. They will consist of a set of actions to be defined in the institution's fifth medium-term action plan (MTAP V). These will culminate in 3 high-level outcomes: policy responses and practice solutions that will be widely adopted and supported by large-scale investments; regional cooperation and collaboration that will lead to critical policy decisions, including a regional institutional mechanism and protocols; and recognition of the HKH mountain agenda in global policy forums to attract more investment to the region (ICIMOD 2023).

In developing both the new strategy and MTAP V, ICIMOD consulted regional partners, donors, and staff. Incorporating their recommendations, MTAP V pushes the institution to be purposeful and responsive yet adaptive, ensuring that it can better capture the opportunities that arise over the course of the plan period. This will enable progression from outcome to impact. It signals a shift from

aspirational targets to ensuring more effective support to its regional member countries to deliver specific measurable changes. It also identifies a series of institutional change steps to make ICIMOD a more agile and responsive institution that puts institutional culture and core values at the heart of what it does.

A streamlined structure

As part of this change, ICIMOD will streamline its structure, organizing it into 3 strategic groups and 6 action areas (Figure 2). These will be supported by key business functions, including finance and administration; strategic planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning; communications; and business development and resource mobilization.

The vital cross-cutting issues of gender equality and social inclusion, youth leadership, climate, and biodiversity are incorporated into the delivery of results and will be supported through a dedicated resource for insights and innovation. ICIMOD will continue to build effective strategic partnerships and alliances that are transformative and deliver results at scale.

Next steps

From January 2023, ICIMOD will begin implementing this new strategy and action plan. We will also undertake institutional change in 7 key areas. This will assist us in making significant progress along our impact pathways while ensuring we always base our actions on the strong roots of our core values and identity.

FIGURE 2 ICIMOD's 3 strategic groups and 6 action areas.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Izabella Koziell is deputy director general of ICIMOD. Pema Gyamtsho is director general of ICIMOD.

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