



PRESS RELEASE

European Union & ICIMOD launch €11 million Rural Livelihood and Climate Change Adaptation programme in the Himalayan region

Five year programme spans Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Nepal

New Delhi, 4 December 2012 – The European Union (EU) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) today signed a €11 million agreement for livelihood development and mitigation of climate change impacts through adaptation. Spanning the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) mountain region, this programme will have contribution of €10,000,000 from the EU.

The Himalayas are the highest mountain range in the world and represent the world's greatest extent and volume of permanent ice and permafrost outside the Polar Regions, feeding into 10 major river basins. Together, these rivers contribute to the fresh water supply of an estimated 1.4 billion people. The HKH region spans over 8 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Nepal with interconnected mountain ranges and plateaus, extending for more than 3,500 km. Glaciers alone cover an area of 60,000 km². The region is the world's 'roof' and 'water tower'.

Over the years changing climate patterns have negatively impacted the lives of people in this region. Glaciers are receding, permafrost retreats, snow melt induces changed river flows, and ecosystems are altering. There is an increased frequency and duration of extreme climatic events, causing more frequent and severe natural disasters. These factors aggravate erosion, land degradation, decline in soil fertility and crop yields. The capacity of mountain people to deal with these growing stresses is limited, and the incidence of poverty too is growing.

The EU and ICIMOD programme which starts in 2013, aims at using natural resources in a more sustainable, efficient way and protect the environment. This objective will be achieved by:

1. Enhancement of the knowledge base on Himalayan ecosystems and ecosystem services;
2. Raising awareness on the effects of environmental degradation, climate change and adaptation;
3. Strengthening collaborative action research in the region;
4. Building capacity in higher education, training institutions and civil society across the HKH region to scale up best practice for improved resilience to climate change.

Pilot activities, which the very pivot of this programme, will focus on livelihood opportunities and sustainable management of natural resources, including promotion and development of pro-poor value chains of mountain products and services and the use of ecosystem services such as landscape and biodiversity for recreational and cultural activities with direct community involvement and benefit.

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