

# Asia Pacific Mountain Network (APMN) Bulletin

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## Coordinator's Note

The Asia Pacific Mountain Network (APMN) has seen some significant changes: Mr. Shahid Akhtar, who was the former Coordinator of the APMN, is no longer with us at ICIMOD, having left for Malaysia to take up a new position as Regional Coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme (APDIP); the APMN now has Dr. Tej Partap as a democratically-elected Asia/Pacific representative on the MF Board of Directors; the APMN organised its first ever e-conference with a record showing in February-March, 2001, which is an indication of the fact that the APMN has now come of age; and, last but not least, the APMN has been making its presence felt in Central Asia through implementation of its Capacity Building project and Small Grant's Programme. Talking of the APMN Small Grants' Programme, an immensely popular APMN initiative, six proposals from all over the region were funded for the years 2000-2001.

As the APMN Phase II moves into the last year of its project cycle, it is time for all of us to take stock of how far the APMN has come from a handful of members in 1996 to the one-thousand-plus-strong that it is today. As of March 2001, the APMN had 1051 members worldwide (comprising 48% of the total Mountain Forum membership), of whom roughly 37 were organisational members.

Increased membership presents a new challenge: how to manage rising printing and distribution costs? Should the APMN distribute publications only to offline APMN members, while making the same available to the rest on-line or as e-mail attachments? It is an issue that needs addressing and it will be taken up this year. Last but not least, we urge all to be actively involved in MF-APMN activities such as the upcoming e-conferences, as well as stay up-to-date on the International Year of Mountains 2002 by regularly visiting [www.mountains2002.org](http://www.mountains2002.org).

**Note: E-conference:** The APMN's next e-conference, in November 2001, will be on 'Energy' in the Mountains. *Himal ko Awaz*: As many of you know, we introduced pilot issues of a newsletter, *Mountain Voices*, translated into Nepali as *Himal Ko Awaz*. The next issue will be on 'water harvesting.' The English version will be presented to partners for translation into their local languages.

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(APMN is supported by a grant from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.)

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## MF Board Election Held in Asia/Pacific

In the Interim Board Meeting of the Mountain Forum held in Switzerland in early 2000, it was decided that regional nodes of the Mountain Forum would elect members on a rotational basis. One of the nodes selected to conduct elections was the Asia Pacific Mountain Network. To this end, the Asia Pacific Mountain Network (APMN), a regional node of the Mountain Forum (APMN), held a web- and email-based election from Sept 19 - Oct 30, 2000. The election was publicised through the MF-Asia Discussion List and other global MF-lists. The Nominee's Criteria, Nomination Process, Voters' Eligibility Criteria and the Election Process were clearly outlined in the publicity posted to the lists or the APMN website.

The election was a three-person race. Out of the 450 MF members from Asia/Pacific registered then, 63 (some 15%) cast votes in this election: the majority (43) voted for Dr. Tej Partap, electing him as the Asia/Pacific representative to serve a three-year term on the Mountain Forum Board of Directors. Dr. Partap, Vice Chancellor of the Himachal Agriculture University, India, can be reached at <[vc@cskkv.hp.nic.in](mailto:vc@cskkv.hp.nic.in)> or at <[tpartap@mtnforum.org](mailto:tpartap@mtnforum.org)>.

## The APMN Small Grants' Programme, 2000-2001

The APMN Small Grants' Programme provides grants ranging from US \$ 500-3,000 to institutions in Asia and the Pacific (as network partners) to help establish their capacities to promote sustainable mountain development. The programme also supports selected institutions in the region that either have unique information or other resources or that specialise in one or another dimension of mountain development and are prepared to share these region-wide. These institutions are designated as either APMN Centres of Excellence or as APMN Resource Centres.

Under the APMN Small Grants' Programme, 2000-2001, 65 proposals were received from all over Asia/Pacific: 50 from South Asia, eight from Central Asia and Russia, six from South East and North East Asia, and one from West Asia. This number constitutes an increase of roughly 75% over last year. Although most proposals were excellent; due to limited funds, only six could be supported.

The proposals were reviewed as per the established Small Grants' Guidelines, and the short-listed proposals were further reviewed by taking into consideration other criteria as well such as geographical balance and viability/sustainability of the proposed projects. After fully considering all the criteria, the APMN has decided to support the following six proposals, whose abstracts are provided below.

### *South-East Asia*

**Project Title:** Priangan Montanes Region Database Development

**Proposing Organisation:** Yayasan Konservasi Alam Nusantara - KONUS

**City/Country:** West Java, Indonesia

**Overall Objective:** A systematic compilation and documentation of information on Priangan Mountain Region (PMR) in order to provide reliable information to a wide range of users, particularly decision-makers

#### **Specific Objectives**

- . To set up information and database management centre at Priangan Mountain Region (PMR) as the first step towards the creation of an Indonesian Mountain Network
- . To develop a standardised format for collecting information on the highland ecosystems of West Java, and store it in a database
- . To ensure that the information reaches a wide range of users in the region, especially the local government and stakeholders

#### **Intended Beneficiaries**

- . Local government
- . Researchers and scientists

#### **Expected Results/Outputs**

- . Database and Information Centre for PMR as the first step towards creating an Indonesian Mountain Network
- . Database will be updated regularly
- . Networking

**In-kind/Cash Contributions:** Manpower, 4 computers, 1 notebook

### *South Asia*

**Project Title:** Development of a Portal on the Usage of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing Technology for Sustainable Mountain Development in Asia

**Proposing Organisation:** Centre for Spatial Database Management and Solutions (CSDMS)

**City/Country:** Noida, India

**Overall Objective:** Launch of a portal that focuses on the role of GIS and related technologies in addressing the mountain issues of Asia.

### **Specific Objectives**

- . Develop the above-noted portal
- . Create a website with a facility for email and an e-discussion group
- . Publish a monthly newsletter
- . Facilitate easier and faster exchange of information, ideas, and experience about mountain issues at local, national, and international levels

### **Intended Beneficiaries**

- . GIS and remote sensing community working on mountains
- . Government agencies
- . Academic institution
- . NGOs
- . Mountain community at large

### **Expected Results/Outputs**

- . An internet website, email and discussion group on the role of GIS and remote sensing in mountain development
- . A database of organizations, communities, and individuals committed to sustainable mountain development in Asia
- . A monthly electronic newsletter
- . Special issues of GIS and development on mountains

**In-kind/Cash Contributions:** (The rest of the fund will be mobilised by CSDMS through its own resources.)

**Project Title:** Linking Mountain Communities through the World Wide Web

**Proposing Organisation:** Pragya

**City/Country:** Haryana, India

**Overall Objective:** To give Himalayan communities a platform to realise their potential, share ideas and information utilising Internet technology.

### **Specific Objectives**

- . A website dedicated to preservation and management of natural and cultural heritage of the region and facilitation of indigenous community enterprise, to include:
  - online database (on crafts, medicinal plants),
  - discussion lists (on natural resource management, architectural improvements, crafts markets),
  - provide information (on tourism assets and facilities, festivals, testing facilities available, training scheduled), and
  - enable e-commerce (for crafts, tourism, herbal products).
- . Indigenous communities empowered with training to use the above website for their own development

### **Intended Beneficiaries**

- . Indigenous communities in the Pragya project areas of Lahaul & Spiti, Sikkim & Arunachal Pradesh
- . Groups such as traditional healers (amchis), craftspeople (weavers, carpenters) - many of them women, farmers, youth, tourism enterprise operators

### **Expected Results/Outputs**

- . Development of a website which will act as a platform for the natural and cultural heritage and enterprises and sustainable development of the Himalayan region
- . Developed capacity in Himalayan communities to empower themselves in an increasingly digital world

**In-kind/Cash Contributions:** While the budget requested will support phases 4 (website development) and 5 (Capacity Building) of the project, Pragya is contributing towards phases 1, 2, and 3.

- . Database development for the Western Indian Himalayan projects is being supported by Whitley Awards Foundation, and Ministry of Rural Development, Gov. of India
- . Database development for the Eastern Indian Himalayan projects is being supported by Khadi Village Industries Commission, India
- . Computer hardware procurement support is being extended by Apple Computers India

**Project Title:** Mountain Information

**Proposing Organisation:** Sri Lanka Urban Multi-Hazard 'Disaster Mitigation Project' (SLUMDMP)/Centre for Housing Planning and Building (CHPB)

**City/Country:** Battaramulla, Sri Lanka

**Overall Objective:** Increase capacity for natural disaster related information dissemination aimed at sustainable development in Sri Lanka

### **Specific Objectives**

- . Increase accessibility by the public to mountain-related hazard information in the areas of landslide and slope movements, mountain slope erosion, watershed management, hill-country construction, and sloping agricultural methods for urban and infrastructure development initiatives in the hill country areas of Sri Lanka.
- . Raise public awareness leading to increased public desire for a culture of safety.
- . Active web-based information service on mountain development linked with the existing web pages of relevant institutions.
- . Establish listserves to serve as forums for discussion.
- . Train a SLUMDMP official on information management and other relevant areas for sustainability of the Web page and list serves.
- . Capacity building in the area of web-based information usage among development workers, professionals, researchers, R&D institutions etc.

#### **Intended Beneficiaries**

- . Researchers, property developers, R&D institutes
- . Professionals such as planners, engineers, scientists, environmentalists, administrators etc involved in hillside development such as mountain land-use planning, mountain agricultural development, mountain watershed management and mountain infrastructure development.
- . Farmers
- . Community at large

#### **Expected Results/Outputs**

- . Online database on literature available on relevant subject areas, namely, landslide and slope movements, mountain slope erosion, watershed management, hill country construction, sloping agricultural methods etc.
  - . Listserve for forums for development workers interested in the given subject areas.
  - . SLUMDMP official trained in a regional programme in information management, online database, listserves, e-conferences etc. aimed at sustainability of the outcomes of the proposed project.
  - . Increased interaction and collaboration with various stakeholders - development workers, professionals, researchers, R&D institutions etc.
- Counterpart Contribution (cash/in-kind): The Centre has over 15 computers, 3 printers, email connection, Internet connection and the website.

#### **Central Asia**

**Project Title:** To Establish a Resource Centre to Provide for Steady Development of the Pamirs Highland Region

**Proposing Organisation:** Pamirs Biological Institute Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan

**City/Country:** Khorog, Tajikistan

**Overall Objective:** To establish a resource centre to provide for a steady development of the Pamirs Highland region

#### **Specific Objectives**

- . Gather and systemise science information
- . Establish a computer database (data and facts) about the mountain region and the country
- . Share the information database with APMN and other individuals and organisations
- . Feed the information into the global network

#### **Intended Beneficiaries**

- . Scientific community (scientific institutes, researchers)
- . APMN members
- . Khorog State University community
- . Peasants' Association
- . Nature Conservation Associations of Pamir
- . Universities in Tajikistan

#### **Expected Results/Output**

- . Establishment of a resource centre (computer centre and database)
- . Recommendations on cultivation and other agricultural practices will be provided to local communities, peasant associations, and farmers
- . Information sharing with APMN
- . Provide seminars, consultations, publications for individuals and organisations
- . All materials prepared will be disseminated among interested organisations and individuals through E-mail or the Internet, and among local communities through an 'Information Sheet'

**Counterpart Contribution (cash/in-kind):** Internet, manpower

#### **West Asia**

**Project Title:** Landscape degradation in mountain valleys of arid plateau of Iran

**Proposing Organisation:** Faculty of Environment, University of Tehran

**City/Country:** Tehran, Iran

**Overall Objective:** To observe and analyse the degradation processes affecting the landscape of the mountain valleys of the arid Iranian Plateau

**Specific Objectives**

- . To understand the mechanism of the regressive tendency existing in the environment concerned
- . To monitor, observe and analyse the aforementioned degradation processes through visible signs in landscape dynamics

**Intended Beneficiaries**

- . APMN and research institutes
- . Local inhabitants and officials through publicity

**Expected Results/Outputs**

- . A two-hour film and a rather short document
- . The film will be accompanied by commentaries of experts
- . Project outcome will be prepared as several case studies

**APMN E-conference on 'The Intervention of Technology in Mountain Areas.'**

The APMN, the Asia/Pacific node of the Mountain Forum, together with its parent institution, the ICIMOD, organised a regional e-conference on the broad topic *'The Intervention of Technology in Mountain Areas: Strategies for Developing Fresh Approaches and Mainstreaming of Local Innovations in the Asia/Pacific Region'* through the MF-Asia Discussion List, February 4 through March 6, 2001. Dr. Sudhirender Sharma of the Energy Environment Group based in New Delhi, India, moderated the e-conference with essentially the advisory and technical support of the TMI/GISN and ICIMOD/APMN teams.

Dr James Gabriel Campbell, Director General of ICIMOD, officially launched the e-conference, asking, in essence, that key question which was at the heart of this e-conference: "How can we assist mountain communities to adapt modern technologies and local innovations to help improve their living standards?"

The broad objective of the e-conference was to contribute to the ongoing debate on the impact of technology intervention in mountain areas, showcase innovative approaches that helped reduce or reverse negative impact, identify local innovations which can be mainstreamed, and identify areas of research.

The month-long e-conference was broken down into four weekly themes, as follow.

**Theme of Week 1:** 'Large-scale interventions, regional, national and corporate interests vs. local mountain communities'

**Theme of Week 2:** 'Who takes responsibility? Who benefits?'

**Theme of Week 3:** 'Technology for peace and development?'

**Theme of Week 4:** 'Integrating traditional local knowledge and new technologies and empowering mountain communities.'

Under each of the weekly themes a number of questions and issues - too numerous to list here - were posed for the discussants to address. For example: has technology intervention helped mountain inhabitants, could it have been better than it has been, and, if not, how can it be made more mountain- and people-friendly? The questions and issues raised by the moderator and participants at any time could be addressed by anyone from any of the many standpoints such as historical perspective, socioeconomic context, ecological/local viewpoints, and policy environment. Gender issues and sustainability were the cross cutting themes addressed in each of the weeks. Numerous case studies were presented.

During the course of the e-conference a general agreement emerged on the following.

- . On the whole large-scale infrastructure projects have not been beneficial to mountain communities and mountain environments.
- . Community priorities such as livelihood strategies, including gender concerns, have rarely been considered in the entire process of technology development and transfer.
- . Poverty and inequality are the major causes of stress (environmental, political and economic), which are best addressed by decentralised decision-making, with sustainability component built into it, to ensure equity for mountain communities.
- . To counter the negative impact of technology intervention, accountability should be billed into the process - and exploitative laws, governing rights to natural resources, need to be challenged.
- . When talking about technology transfer, integration (with indigenous technology) and merger should take into account other extended issues such as patent rights, indigenisation/localisation, and rights of the communities who are going to be directly or indirectly affected by whatever form of technology transfer.
- . Even in cases where the community was bypassed, one should question the intervention: were the project designs based on sound scientific data?
- . Decentralisation in the form of village-level governance is usually a government's version of local control; and what is perhaps needed is the revitalisation of society's own system of governance and control - not something thrust upon the community.
- . Most interventions were based on the principle of economic returns rather than ecological gains, and that

- short-term economic emancipation of the community must be weighed against long-term ecological losses.
- . Before transferring any technology, its local relevance and place must be tested and verified against the existing knowledge.
- . Economic disparity and/or marginality are the main causes of conflict in mountain areas and the challenge is to address the root cause of conflict rather than symptoms at each level, ensuring its arrest at the lowest level.
- . There doesn't seem to be a significant body of research linking development interventions with peace in mountain areas, although it is when technology polarises development - favouring certain sectors over others - that peace suffers.
- . Qualitative change must exceed the quantitative in 'development' and in 'education'-the crucial lack of critical thinking needs to be addressed.
- . Relevance of local knowledge and wisdom in tackling a problem may very well be worth several million dollars of technology.
- . An articulation of any distinction between the traditional and the modern distances the scientist from the 'people', and there are instances where practices are local and traditional but have a clear scientific base.
- . Blending of the traditional with the modern should be encouraged as long as it takes the form of infusion - not 'intervention'; and it was clear that the blending was more likely to justify and legitimise the 'modern' and not vice versa.
- . The incentive systems governing scientific/technology development research lure the people to share their experience-based knowledge at the cheapest price, and this indeed is dishonesty given the fact that there is a premium on the same in the market place.
- . Traditional knowledge should be protected, but no clear mechanism for doing so emerged, given that it is an emerging discipline.

Although there were areas of agreement and disagreement, no broad recommendations -'action points' - emerged from the discussion. This is not necessarily a shortcoming of the e-conference, given that the topic was broad and that location/context-specific examples did not allow for broad generalisations.

Some two hundred participants from all corners of the world registered. All in all, 650 people 'attended' the e-conference. A total of 141 postings was made during the e-conference, plus a dozen more that were not posted because they didn't address that week's theme or they were sent in after March 6, 2001, the last day of the e-conference. However, each one of these postings will make its way into the synthesis report.

The general consensus gleaned from the evaluation survey was that the e-conference was successful in that the whole interaction experience was rich in content and superbly moderated.

Dr. Sudhirendar Sharma, overall moderator, and Dr. Alejandro Camino, Executive Secretary of the Mountain Forum, made closing remarks, saying that while the e-conference may have ended, the debate still continues in the outside world.

Please visit the ICIMOD/APMN e-conference web pages at <<http://www.mtnforum.org/apmn/e-conference.htm>>.

## Central Asia Project

Under the capacity-building project of the APMN on 'web-publishing and internet technologies', the APMN and the International University of Krygyzstan (IUK) organised a two-week training workshop for 11 nominated participants from all five Central Asian Republics (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan), from September 18-29, 2000. The Kathmandu workshop for the three selected nominees was held from January 8-19, 2001. The final stage of the project - the hands-on training and assessment - for a selected trainee and other people within her organisation was held in Bishkek in May 2001. Moreover, a series of meetings was held with the Central Asian Mountain Information Network (CAMIN) and other key partners to explore possibilities for joint partnerships in the region.

## Mountain and Media Workshop

The APMN, together with its partner organisation, PANOS South Asia, organised a sensitisation/training workshop on mountain issues and mountain journalism for 15 journalists from the Asia-Pacific region, from November 13-16, 2001. The objective of the workshop was to foster informed debate by ensuring enhanced coverage in the media about mountain areas and peoples. Specifically, to take advantage of the build-up to the International Year of the Mountains 2002 to increase the frequency and quality of reporting on mountains and sustainable development issues. It is envisaged that participating journalists will write two features each for their publications, and that a journalist will be commissioned to address the various issues relating to sustainable development in mountain areas and put together a reference pack.

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