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Coordinator's Note

The three-year APMN project was launched on 1 November 1995 with financial assistance from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This is the last issue of the APMN Bulletin for this phase of the APMN project.

During the past three years, APMN has had a number of significant achievements. First and foremost, it brought together hundreds of individuals and institutions throughout Asia and the Pacific to share information and their experiences firsthand. It sponsored several workshops and seminars throughout the region, and it supported numerous study tours and exchange visits. Six issues of this Bulletin to facilitate communication and exchange of information in the region, bridging the gap between APMN on-line (on the Internet) and off-line members. Last, but not least, it worked closely with the Mountain Forum.

We are submitting a proposal to SDC that concentrates on institutional strengthening and capacity building by carrying out study visits and internships, conducting electronic discussions and conferences on key topics and issues related to mountain development in Asia and the Pacific, and by bringing out this Bulletin over the next three-years. We will keep you informed of our progress in this respect.

This last issue of the APMN Bulletin for the present phase focuses especially on the Central Asian subregion of Asia and the Pacific. This is because, although the republics of Central Asia are mountainous, they have been given little space in previous issues of the Bulletin. In addition, we bring you highlights of the ongoing electronic discussion of the MountainForum on the Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*). This discussion demonstrates clearly the value of Internet not only for sharing information, but also for raising questions and issues for debate. Such a mechanism can enrich original ideas or concepts even as they are being formed. Like-minded individuals - people who may not have even heard of each other previously but who share common concerns - can work together throughout the world without moving from their offices.

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North Central Asia

Subregional Mountain Seminar in Central Asia

Under the subregional activities of APMN, a subregional seminar entitled 'Mountains of Central Asia: Problems, Experience and Perspectives' was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from 25-27 May, 1998. This seminar was organized jointly by the International University of Krygyzstan (IUK) and the ICIMOD APMN programme.

This seminar was the first of its kind to be organized in Central Asia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It brought together scientists from various institutions in Central Asia. There were 30 participants ; and this was for the first time in 9-10 years time that ex-colleagues and scientists from the former Soviet Union had met with each other to discuss their work. Papers presented at the seminar dealt primarily with sustainable mountain development issues prevalent in the Central Asian republics.

The seminar adopted the following resolutions.

- To attract the attention of the public and governments of the countries of Central Asia and the rest of the world to the problems of mountain development in Central Asia
- To increase efforts to accumulate and exchange information and establish data banks on the environmental economic, social, ethnic, cultural , and other issues of mountain development
- To participate in the establishment of integrated programmes and projects, legal norms, and laws governing the protection and optimal use of resources in the Central Asian region
- To have the United Nations declare the year 2000* the International Year of the Mountains, which in itself and through related activities will bring geopolitical, economic, and financial resources from the world community to the mountains
- To participate actively in planning various activities for the International Year of the Mountains at the regional, subregional, and national levels
- To support the initiative of scientists from the Kyrgyz Republic in establishing , in the city of Bishkek, a regional information centre for mountain studies in Central Asia and to consolidate the efforts of scientists from the Central Asian Republics in facilitating the activities of this Centre
- To support the initiative of scientists from the Kyrgyz Republic and the Government of Kyrgyzstan to establish an International Institute for Mountain Studies in the city of Bishkek
- To make necessary efforts to strengthen the economic and financial foundations of scientific research and to train personnel and disseminate information on the problems and goals of sustainable development of fragile mountain ecosystems
- To recognise the Mountain Village project in Kyrgyzstan as a key model for mountain settlements for sustainable human development in the mountains; and to recommend financing project
- To publish the proceedings of the seminar in Russian and English
- To support the initiative of the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science to include the concept of 'mountain geocology and sustainable development' in the Plan of Action of the International Association of the Academy of Sciences
- To consider holding an annual international seminar on sustainable mountain development

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Mountain Profile of Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz Republic is located in the northeastern region of Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan borders Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tazhikistan in the west and south and China in the east and northeast. The longest border is between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, of 1,374 km. It lies along latitudes 39 11' to 43 16' north and longitudes 69 15' to 80 18' east .

The longest distances are from west to east , 925 km, and from south to north, 453.9 km. The republic covers 1,985 sq.km. By European standards it is a medium-sized state (larger than Bulgaria, but smaller than Romania), but by Asian standards it is small. The population of the Republic as of January 1994 was 4,500,000.

The Mountain Ranges

The Tian Shan

The Tian Shan can be divided into several parts which differ from each other. The Northern Tian Shan contains high altitude ranges such as the Talas, Kyrgyz, Zailiyskiy ,and Kyungei-Atatoo. In this area the Chui Valley and large mountainous gaps such as the Talas, Kemin, and Issyk-Kul. Altitudes vary from 539 (Kamyshanovka rayon) to 5,015m (Talgat Peak in Zailiyskiy Alatay). In this part, deep divisions in the surface, considerable variation in altitude (from 500-1500m), and extreme erosional-denudation reliefs common at mid- and high altitudes. Geologically deposits of crystal minerals from the Paleozoic age and sediment minerals from the Paleogene* age are found.

The Western Tian Shan ranges in the south-west direction, transversing the line of the Talas-Fergana. There are deep breaks in the crust of the earth here. Here we find the Chatkal, At-Oinokskiy, and Fergana ranges.

The Eastern Tian Shan is characterised by common, narrow water-separating crests, sharp peaks, and slopes that are sharply divided. A considerable portion of the landscape is composed of series of peaks/crests separate the valley drainage systems lies at altitudes from 2,000-2,500m. In the highest parts of the ranges, the tracks of ancient and modern glaciers are have deep impressions on the landscape. In middle mountain area most of the ranges rise to about 3,500m. The mountain slopes are divided by deep, narrow valleys.

Low altitudes of from 1,500-1,800m are a characteristic of the mountains framing the Fergana Valley. Here, desolate areas with slopes showing the effects of water erosion are found.

The Central and Internal Tian Shan are situated between the ranges of Teskei-Alatau in the north, Kokshal-Too in the south, and Fergana in the west. This wide area of ranges and mountainous gaps has its own characteristic features and the highest altitudes in Kyrgyzstan are to be found here. The ranges are composed mainly of crystal minerals from the Precambrian and Paleozoic eras. Most of the pre-mountainous areas consist of multi-coloured clays, sands, and conglomerates. The geological structure of the mountain gaps consists paleogenic-neogenic minerals.

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(This is an excerpt from the posting sent by Prof. Kurmanalieva Razia to the Mountain Forum discussion list on June 4, 1998).

State of Mountain Geosystems in Kazakstan

Uncontrolled growth in anthropogenic pressures that last for decades has led to considerable degradation of mountain geosystems. In the mountains of southern Kazakstan, at a distance of several kilometres from the industrial centres, Juniper forests are destroyed because of technogenic pollution of the soils. In eastern Kazakstan, unsound forest cutting has resulted in the depletion of forest areas. As a result of overgrazing in the Dzhungarsky Alatau range, degradation of natural landscapes takes place alongside reduction in the number of species of flora and fauna and activation of erosion, mudflows, and avalanches.

According to an assessment undertaken by the forestry service over a period of 20 years, from 1964 to 1984, even in relatively scarcely populated regions of the Northern Tian Shan it was found that permanent degradation of mountain forests, reduction in forests and bushland, and failure in the natural recovery of coniferous plants had taken place. Progressive degradation of mountain pastures was also observed.

Pollution of mountain geosystems is another grave problem. Such pollution is manifested by hydroecological situations in which concentration of pollutants, such as heavy metals, pesticides, chlorine, and arsenic compounds, is increasing in many rivers of Kazakstan. The most visibly polluted rivers are the Ural and Irtysh. For more than two centuries, the watersheds of these rivers have been subjected to multilateral economic activities that include mineral extraction and metal industries. Even in situations in which limited economic activities have taken place, concentrations of copper, zinc, and oil in surface water throughout the basin of the Irtysh River along the border of Kazakstan exceed maximum available concentration (MAC); average amounts of copper being 10-11 times, zinc being 3-4, and oil being 4-5 MAC. Comparisons of the quality of surface water with corresponding indices for the period before the crisis (1987-89) show that economic activities at former level will lead to considerable increases in concentration of pollutants in surface water - 23 MAC for copper and 216 MAC for lead, while the cyanide content will increase not less than a 1,000 times.

Prospects for the growth of tourism and recreation activities also pose a serious problem. According to research, one tourist needs 100-3,000 square metres of territory for full-value leisure (even one day), and each tourist creates one kg of litter. All these impacts of tourism call for regulation of tourism pressures on mountain geosystems.

Another problem that needs to be addressed quickly is natural disasters in mountain areas. Besides earthquakes (the real threat of which is the permanent psychological stress on the population), dangerous exogenic phenomena such as mudflows and floods, sudden glacier advances, and snow-water streams threaten the geosystems of the mountains in Kazakstan.

The demographic and socioeconomic situation, complicated in the past by the disintegration of Soviet Russia and the introduction of a market economy, has undergone change. However, the situation has been adversely affected by poor infrastructure in the mountains, strictly specialised economic activities, and isolation of the mountain population from the more economically developed lowlands; and in addition limited adaptation of mountain people to the market economy. This has resulted in weakening of the economy, growing poverty, etc.

Specific features of the current situation in the mountains of Central Asia include a high birth rate, growing death rate (especially infant mortality), low density in population and scarcity of people in settlements, increasing poverty, and, stemming from this latter, growing migration of the mountain population to the economically better developed lowlands.

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The International Centre for Geoecology of Mountain Countries in Arid Regions

The International Centre for Geoecology of Mountain Countries in Arid Regions (ICGM) was established in Kazakhstan in 1996. The Centre was founded jointly by the Institute of Geography of the National Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan, the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Permafrost Institute of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Its financial resources are provided chiefly from the funds for scientific problems of the governments of Russia and Kazakhstan. The ICGM also receives some financial support through grants from international organizations such as INTAS and UNESCO, members' contributions, and the sale of ICGM publications.

The Centre is in the process of compiling a database of continuous field observations carried out over a 24 to 46- year period on glaciology, climatology, water resources, hydrology, natural hazards, snow cover in the mountains, geocryology, and geoecology. The Centre also studies sustainable mountain development.

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Mountain Geoecology and Sustainable Development Programme

Mountain regions of the CIS (the newly independent states of Central Asia) are to be the focus of attention for the International Association of the CIS Academies of Sciences on the initiative of the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences ,which is currently starting a research programme on 'Mountain Geoecology and Sustainable Development'. This will aim to:

- provide analyses of the current status of the CIS mountain territories and develop alternative models for their integrated development, and
- implement the academic research outcomes in applied development programmes at the local, national, and regional levels.

A permanent CIS Mountain Conference will be established to provide a forum for discussions on theoretical and applied research issues arising from specific project outcomes (case studies). The Conference will issue a bulletin in the Russian and English languages to disseminate the outcomes of working sessions, research projects, and scientific discussions.

National Reports will be prepared on the status and development of the CIS mountain regions and a research volume compiled to cover the issues of sustainable mountain development in the post-Soviet period.

This programme shall be managed by a Directorate that includes representatives from all mountain CIS countries. President of the Kyrgyzstan Republic, A. Akaev, has given his preliminary consent to becoming the Patron of the Programme.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the President of the Altai Republic, S.I.Zubakin, Vice-chairman of the Russian MAB (Man and Biosphere) Committee, V.M.Neronov, and the MAB Project 6 Coordinator in Russia, Yuri P.Badenkov. The various parties signing the Memorandum of Understanding expressed their intention to strengthen coordination in the implementation of research and in projects carried out through international cooperation in the areas of environmental conservation and sustainable mountain development in the Altai Republic and the Altai-Sayans mountain regions. For these purposes, an informal consultation group is planned which will work in close contact with the Government of the Altai Republic.

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The Second CoDoCA Conference in Urumqi, China

The Council for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia (CoDoCA) is organizing a second conference entitled 'Strategic Considerations for the Development of Central Asia' from 13-18 September, 1998, in Urumqi, China. The conference is a joint initiative of CoDoCA, and the Xinjiang Environmental Science Research Institute. The conference will be organized in association with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the World Wide Life Fund for Nature, and others.

This conference in Urumqi will continue the debate started in 1994 at the first CoDoCA conference. It will focus on the key issues affecting Central Asia; and in particular on the relationship between economic and social development and the protection of Central Asia's fragile resources. The central theme of the conference is that *"the limited carrying capacity of Central Asia's arid plains and mountains is at the heart of the region's common environmental and development problems."*

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The Hindu Kush-Himalayas

Polythene Use Banned in Ladakh

Polythene use has been legally banned in Ladakh. NGOs based in Leh, the capital of Ladakh, are now coming together to fight this menace. Below is the circular issued by them recently.

CIRCULAR

The order of the District Magistrate, Leh, issued vide his No. JC-70(I)98(903) dated 01.05.1998, banning polythene bag usage in Leh town is an initiative of historical importance which pre-empted the disastrous ecological impact to the future environment of Ladakh. The District Magistrate, Leh, owes thanks for his timely welcome step in this regard.

Now, the question of strict implementation lies on the cooperation of the public. Therefore, a meeting of all the NGOs based in Leh town is being organized to draw a strategy to ensure awareness and education among the public to act against the polythene menace as per the order of the District Magistrate, Leh. (Limited editing changes have been made for publication in this bulletin.)

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Southeast Asia

Makiling Centre for Mountain Ecosystem created

The Makiling Centre for Mountain Ecosystem (MCME) was recently created under the newly recognised College of Forestry and Natural Resources of the University of The Philippines, Los Banos. It was created in response to the changing context of natural resource management in The Philippines, considering particularly the challenge of advancing the sustainable development of mountain ecosystems. Based on the approved resolution of the University of the Philippines' Board of Regents, which came into effect on June 25, 1998, MCME has the following mandate.

- To conduct research and demonstration programmes in mountain ecosystem development, and
- formulate and execute plans for the sustainable management of Mount Makiling Forest Reserve (MFR).

The first centre for small mountain ecosystems established in The Philippines, MCME is a fitting response to Chapter 13 of the Earth Summit Agenda 21, which identifies the global programme of action for sustainable mountain development as a means for managing fragile ecosystems. It envisions evolving into an academic centre of excellence in mountain ecosystem conservation and demonstrating the applications of sustainable development principles and technologies in promoting food, economic, and environmental security. The following objectives support this vision.

- Build up the scientific and technical foundation for sound mountain ecosystems' conservation and development
- Promote both scientific and indigenous knowledge practices for conserving and developing the natural resources found in mountain ecosystems
- Focus on and demonstrate the application of appropriate technologies for sustainable management and development of the human and biophysical components of mountain ecosystems
- Formulate and execute plans and recommend actions pertaining to MFR protection, conservation, and development
- Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes and institutional performance
- Perform other functions related to its mandate as specified by the Dean of the College of Forestry and Natural Resources.

Organizationally, MCME is composed of four different divisions, namely, Social Forestry, Botanic Gardens, Parks and Ecotourism, and Watershed. In addition, it has two support units - Forest Reserve Monitoring and Law Enforcement Unit and Institutional Building and External Linkage Unit. As an academic research and demonstration institution, MCME derives its strength from the technical expertise of the existing faculty and research and extension personnel of the College of Forestry and Natural Resources, as well as from other relevant units of the University.

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West Asia

TEMA launches Macahel Project

The Macahel rural development project, which is in its formative stages, aims to conserve one of Turkey's few remaining virgin forests. The forest, with all its original fauna and flora intact, is high in the mountains of Artvin province bordering the state of Georgia. The area, known in Georgian as Macahel and in Turkish as Camili and Karagöl, is under threat from the 3,000 people and 2,000 farm animals living in six villages in the vicinity. The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion for Reforestation and for the Protection of Natural Habitats (TEMA) knows that the villagers have to make a living and will eventually turn to what is left of the region's forests for sustenance.

The solution lies in offering the local people a choice: ways of earning a living without destroying the forest and its unique ecosystem. Mr. Gökyiit (Vice-president of TEMA) has already set up a local company for beekeeping and honey production. He owns half the stock in the company and has announced, on a framed statement hung on one wall of the company office, that these shares will be distributed to the villagers free of charge as a reward for helping out with the preservation of the forest. Experts have determined that the indigenous queen bee of the Caucasian region remains genetically unaltered in the Macahel area. A dozen local volunteers have undergone training in the breeding of these queen bees, which are expected to fetch a good price at home and abroad. The Macahel project received financial support both from APMN and TEMA.

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Special Feature

Mountain Women: Moving Forward Amid Changing Environments

The Theme

Stereotypic images that the world may have about mountain women generally do not reflect the reality. There is wide variation in the degree of mobility, degree of control in decision-making, and in the status and value of women within mountain societies.

Yet, in all cases, mountain women are burdened with more work, have less education and opportunities for exposure to new ideas and technologies, and have lower levels of self-esteem and self-confidence than men. This applies even to cultures in which women had traditionally enjoyed a more egalitarian relationship with men, e.g., in Buddhist and animist societies. Changes occurring in once remote mountain areas are affecting gender relations in ways that are not yet fully understood. The indications are that the status of women in households, communities, and societies could be declining as traditional mountain societies are being transformed by the prevailing values of predominant, national cultures. In addition, some new values come from Western influences, some from regional influences, and some from the development paradigms themselves. The marginal status of most mountain societies makes resistance to more powerful forces difficult, and the process of mainstreaming mountain cultures into national identities may negate the stronger positions of women from mountain communities.

On the other hand positive impacts are seen in the education of girl children, non-formal education for women, and women-focused programmes to address the practical and strategic needs of mountain women. At the grassroots' level, however, programmes and policies appear to have little impact because of women's heavy workloads, limited mobility, and the lack of economic independence.

Expected Outcomes

- Analysis of some of the challenges facing mountain women around the world, recognition of common themes as well as diversity in their changing environments, and identification of opportunities for halting the decline in status of mountain women
- A network of people interested in the common challenges and changing status of mountain women
- A searchable archive of the discussion on the Mountain Forum's World Wide Web site;

In addition Jeannette Gurung and Greta Rana examined the discussions from the perspective of work they are carrying out on a book about mountain women in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

Although the conference ended on September 6th, the mf-women address continues to give participants, old and new, a forum for discussion of mountain women's issues. Through this conference enthusiasm was generated about the idea of bringing mountain

women and those who worked with them or carried out research on them together during the 'Year of the Mountains - 2002'. We invite you to share your ideas with us too. For your information, we have included a brief summary of the topic areas.

- *Mainstream laws, customary laws and mountain women.*

"Can someone please define mountain women? Are we talking about specific global areas? Does it include East Africa?" (Mary Morris, USA, 3/9/98)

"Polyandry among the Sherpas was common (as in other mountain communities), although now against mainstream law in Nepal. The Sherpa woman occupied a privileged position since she solely decides the pattern of physical and economic relations. This may have been practised by high altitude communities to keep intact their meagre land holdings. The Khasi (northeast Indian mountain people) have a practice in which the bridegroom goes to live in the bride's house (matrilineal marital practice). Customs in ancient societies often served as laws. There are several practices that give a certain status to women which mainstream laws do not guarantee." (Kishor Pradhan, Nepal, 5/9/98)

- *Does income generation lead to empowerment? (or income control?)*

"Recent research shows that income generating projects and credit for women's projects are being commandeered by husbands." Examples from Grameen Bank in Bangladesh were also shared. (Sangeeta, Nepal, 19/8/98)

"It is the issue of not doling out money but imparting skills that would eventually help women control their own destinies; skills also help increase self-esteem." (Anita Pandey, Nepal, 20/8/98)

- *Need to connect with women who have experienced mountains as a profoundly healing environment.*

"Women's traditions are often oral, and it takes some getting used to see written exchanges more as chatting with friends than as formal statements. We should work to collect enough mountain women's theme material to produce a really splendid contribution to the 2002-Year of the Mountains." Olivia Bennett at Panos, London. (Jane Pratt, USA, 14/9/98)

- *Need to link women's issues relating to activism in the mountains.*

The Gender and Development Programme of ICIMOD conducted research on the situation of mountain women to gain more knowledge before initiating activities and development strategies. This research activity is described in the background to the discussion on mountain women. A gender mainstreaming programme has since been initiated in which gender is one of three programmatic cross cutting themes for ICIMOD's next phase (1999-2002). We also run an annual course on Gender and Organisational Development for Sustainable Land Use for staff and 14 partner institutions in 7 countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas (HKH) Region. (Jeannette Gurung, Nepal, 12/8/98.)

"We can think of introducing 'mountain themes' at women's meetings and introduce a 'mountain women's theme' at environmental or social action meetings that we attend." (Elizabeth Byers, USA, 9/9/98). The Moderator (Greta Rana) concluded on 12th September, 1998:

It seems obvious that little is known about mountain women. Yet, in looking at indicators whether health, education, political participation or environmental (topographical) one can say (in the case of mountains) two things dominate. The socio-religious culture strongly influences all other factors and the laws are emanating from religious edict. Hence women's status is governed by this 'set' if you like. That is why we are interested in promoting further discussion from other mountain areas of the world focussed on two aspects.

- In mountain areas how far are laws based on equivalent status of individuals and the workings of civil society? How far are they emanating from socio-religious norms that may accord different status to individual citizens based on caste, creed, sex, etc? In relation to this do mainstream laws replacing customary laws work for or against the equivalent status of women?
- In other mountain areas of the world is this 'passage' from socio-religious norms through to law and reflected in notions of statehood defined by socio-religious rather than civic boundaries clearly seen. The dialogue continues and you are welcome to take part.

August 12 - September 6, 1998

On the <mf-women@mtforum.org>

This was the mountain forum's first conference exclusively about mountain women. When the conference began there were as many as 72 subscribers and this rose to 86. Most of the subscribers were listeners who had joined to learn something about mountain women. Greta Rana <greta@icimod.org.np> and Jeannette Gurung <jeannett@icimod.org.np> were the topic moderators. All the postings from August 12, 1998, have been archived on the Internet page:

<<http://www.mtnforum.org/mtnforum/emaildiscuss/emaildiscuss.htm>>.

For details of the postings, simply scroll down to "**View MF-Women discussion list postings**" and click the button.

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