

ICIMOD Gender Equity Policy

1. Rationale

ICIMOD's mission is “*Enabling and facilitating equitable and sustainable well being of the people of the Hindu Kush Himalayas and supporting sustainable mountain development*”. To achieve this mission, it is essential to ensure the full participation of mountain people, men and women, in development initiatives. Gender mainstreaming is a useful approach to help ICIMOD to accomplish its purpose by promoting an equitable participation of men and women in the development process of the HKH and an equal benefit from it.

Women and men both play an essential role in achieving sustainable mountain development. However, women's contribution is not fully acknowledged and this lack of recognition is translated in development policies and practices that perpetuate an unequal access to financial services, property, rights, legal protection, education, information, health and other social services. This furthermore prevents women from effectively participating in decisions making that shape economic, political and social development and to benefit equally from them.

Experiences have shown that gender inequalities hinder the achievement of sustainable development. This is why promoting gender equality has been regularly asserted through many international and regional forums for achieving development goals. Gender equality is one of the Millennium Development Goals and is considered as an essential condition to achieve all the other development goals. Many development stakeholders have reaffirmed the principle of gender equality for mountain development at the *Bishkek Global Mountain summit*, in the *Thimphu Declaration* and in the *Orem Declaration of the Mountain Women*.

ICIMOD acknowledges these commitments and further commits itself to fulfill the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment. Consecutively, it also clearly recognizes that gender inequality is still prevalent in many societies, including in the Himalayan region, compounded further by other social and economic inequalities, like poverty, caste and ethnicity. Therefore, taking into account the recommendations made by ICIMOD's Quinquennial Report 2006, in the Mid-term Action Plan (2003-2007) and in line with the ICIMOD Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2006, this Gender Equity Policy will be implemented in ICIMOD's overall development interventions, including in the policies, in the programmes and the projects, in capacity building and in knowledge management in order to promote a people centered and gender equitable development.

What has been done at ICIMOD?

In recent years, ICIMOD has promoted gender equity in the mountain development by conducting awareness and trainings sessions on gender in the Regional Member Countries; by supporting the formation of a mountain women's network; by organizing a global gathering of mountain women; and by publishing and disseminating documents on mountain women's development. To additionally strengthen and institutionalise gender activities, ICIMOD established in 2002 a Gender Unit under the Integrated Program “*Culture, Equity, Gender and Governance*”. The Gender Resource Team (GReaT) composed from representatives of ICIMOD's Integrated Programs has been re-established in 2006, working closely with the Gender Unit. A gender perspective has progressively been integrated in ICIMOD's thematic competencies like energy, natural resources management, tourism, water management,

disasters preparedness, and others. However, the 2006 Gender mainstreaming strategy paper has highlighted the need to enhance ICIMOD's capacity to address gender issues through its interventions.

What are the challenges?

The global context of economic and environmental changes impact on people's livelihood and their ability to adapt to these changes depend on their capacity to access new technologies and knowledge. It also greatly depends on their capacity to make choices and exercise control on their asset. Men and women do cope with these new realities in different ways. The traditional division of roles could considerably limit or favor the aptitudes to one or the other to adapt to the new realities. Therefore, it is important for ICIMOD to be aware of gender issues, to contribute to address them and to promote equity.

Addressing gender issues in the HKH presents many challenges. Diversity of cultural contexts and national capacities often compel to use different strategies to increase women's and men's participation in development activities and notably in decisions-making, and to access to and control economic, social and political resources. The Gender Needs Assessment conducted in ICIMOD in May 2007 has identified the difficulty to address gender issues in ICIMOD's programs due to the absence of a Policy and guidelines, and the difficulty to convince the partners to more actively address gender issues and promote equity.

To ensure a sustainable development in HKH that will equally benefit to men and women, and to address the challenges, this ***Gender Equity Policy*** lays out a long term goal to effectively address the practical and strategic needs of women and men in the HKH region.

2. Goal and Objectives

*The goal of ICIMOD's Gender Equity Policy is to **promote gender equality in achieving sustainable and equitable mountain development.***

Objectives:

1. To promote **equitable and meaningful participation** of both men and women at all levels of mountain development.
2. To promote **equal rights, and equitable access to and control over resources and benefits** for women and men in the HKH.
3. To strengthen and **empower women** in the HKH.

3. Key Elements of the Policy

1. Mainstreaming gender

Gender will be mainstreamed in the overall ICIMOD's strategy, policies, programmes, projects and in the organization itself;

- **in programme development:** Taking into account gender issues and addressing them at the level of projects' identification, formulation, budgeting, implementation, and in partnership development.

- **in the monitoring and evaluation systems:** integrating gender in all monitoring and evaluations processes; producing qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure effects and impacts of our interventions on men and women and on the reduction of gender inequalities, and women empowerment.
- **in the organisational culture:** Ensuring equity in recruitment; ensuring a gender sensitive workplace; making accountable all staff members in promoting gender equality and ensuring gender sensitivity in decisions-making.
- **in capacity building:** Training on gender-related issues for ICIMOD staff, partners and RMCs; incorporation of gender dimensions in all ICIMOD's trainings and workshops; ensuring a gender balanced participation in all training; development of checklists, guidelines, indicators, and other tools to identify gender issues.
- **in support to mountain women's empowerment:** Developing tools to support the empowerment of women in the HKH according to women's needs in each cultural context; promoting women's access to technology that contributes to alleviate their workload; support trainings designed for women on leadership, entrepreneurship and empowerment.

2. Documenting gender issues in the HKH

ICIMOD will promote the production of data on gender issues in the HKH and in different areas of its interventions by:

- Developing gender disaggregated database on ICIMOD's thematic issues;
- Documenting gender issues in the HKH;
- Disseminating information related to gender issues for advocacy and policy dialogue.

3. Advocating for gender equality in the HKH

ICIMOD will strengthen its role in advocating for gender equality for achieving the well-being and the development of mountain people by:

- ***Networking***
 - inside the organization through the Gender Resource Team (GReaT);
 - with women's organizations and academic institutions, especially the ones representing and working in the mountain areas;
 - at the regional level with the gender focal points from each RMC,
 - at the international level with organizations and academic institutions working on gender issues.
- ***Influencing Policies***
 - Documenting and disseminating information related to gender issues of the HKH;
 - Raising awareness and building capacity of the RMCs to address gender issues;
 - Integrating gender issues in dialogue initiatives with policy-makers;

- Giving visibility to gender issues in the HKH in the regional and international platforms by participating and contributing in conferences related to mountains development and to gender issues to increase gender sensitive interventions of development stakeholders in the HKH.

4. Accountability

1. The Director General is responsible for:

- ensuring gender mainstreaming in all ICIMOD's policies, programmes and management
- providing the necessary resources for the implementation of the Gender Equity Policy in ICIMOD's programming and within the organization
- promoting gender equality towards ICIMOD's partners

2. The Deputy Director General is responsible for

- ensuring the implementation of the Gender Equity Policy by all managers and members of the staff
- advocating gender equality towards ICIMOD's partners
- ensuring that gender equity is mainstreamed in all ICIMOD's policies, programs and projects

3. The Director of Administration is responsible for

- promoting gender equity in the recruitment and the management of human resources
- ensuring a gender sensitive workplace free of any type of discrimination
- implementing policies that prevent harassment and power abuse
- monitoring and evaluating the competencies of all staff members about gender equity

4. Program Managers are responsible for

- mainstreaming gender in all programmes and projects
- developing gender strategy for each project with the support of the gender unit
- institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for measuring progress in gender equity, reflecting gender issues in all documents, reports, and publications
- building capacities of all program's human resources related to gender approach
- providing tools to ensure that gender issues are properly addressed
- ensuring equitable participation of men and women in all activities of the program and projects - in particular in decision making processes
- providing proper collaboration with the gender focal point
- developing gender responsive budgets

5. Professional staffs are responsible for

- mainstreaming gender in their programmes and projects
- building their capacity to understand, address and give visibility to gender issues in their domain of intervention
- adopting approaches and methodologies that are gender sensitive and promote gender equality
- ensuring equitable participation of men and women in all activities of the program and projects - in particular in decision making processes
- providing proper collaboration with the gender focal point
- advocating for gender equality in every occasion, outside the organization, reflecting on ICIMOD's commitments to gender sensitive mountain development

6. Support staffs are responsible for

- promoting gender equality
- building their capacity to understand and address gender issues in their work
- contributing to a gender sensitive and friendly workplace

7. Gender Unit is responsible for

- supporting the organization in gender mainstreaming
- monitoring the implementation of the gender equity policy
- collaborating with programmes and projects to develop strategies and tools to address gender issues and empower women
- contributing to build capacities of all ICIMOD's staffs and partners
- advising on gender issues for partners and RMCs

5. Monitoring

Following the adoption of the Gender Equity Policy, a 5-years implementation plan for mainstreaming gender will be elaborated.

The Gender Resource Team (GReaT) and the Gender Unit will play the role of advisor and vigil of the present policy.

A focal point will be created in each country and will have the role of collecting information about gender issues in the mountain areas and monitoring the progress made towards gender equity through ICIMOD's intervention, along with the monitoring unit, gender unit and the country coordinator. It will also be responsible to identify and network with organizations working with mountain women.