

A large group of people, likely employees or students, are posed in a large circle on a lawn in front of a large, multi-story building. The entire image has a blue color overlay. The building has a central entrance with a portico and several balconies. The people are wearing dark jackets, some with a logo on the chest.

ICIMOD

# People and Organisational Development Strategy

2024–2026

# Foreword

At ICIMOD, we envision *a greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient Hindu Kush Himalaya*. Central to achieving this is our unwavering commitment to unity – working as **One ICIMOD**. This commitment extends through our greatest asset, our **people** – staff and other professionals – who collaborate with a wide array of partners and allies, nurturing supportive networks across our regional member countries and globally.

Our first-ever **People and Organisational Development (POD) Strategy 2024–2026** articulates the strategic investments and endeavours we are committed to during the fifth Medium-Term Action Plan (MTAP-V) period. These efforts are meticulously aligned with our Strategy 2030, ensuring ICIMOD’s capacity to attract, retain, and empower the finest talents. Our core values – *Integrity, inclusiveness, neutrality, openness, relevance, and ambition* – form the foundation of the Strategy, guiding our actions and ensuring the faithful implementation of our commitments.

The POD Strategy serves as a compass, steering our efforts to enhance staff engagement, development, and performance. It reinforces our commitment to cultivate a workplace culture where every staff member feels valued, supported, and motivated to excel. The Strategy has the full support of ICIMOD’s senior leadership, who are actively

engaged in overseeing its progress with the facilitation of the Human Resources Unit.

The development of the POD Strategy has greatly benefited from the diverse insights and feedback collected from across our organisation. This collective input lays a strong foundation for a shared sense of ownership and accountability as we embark on fulfilling People and Organisational Development commitments over the next three years. Initiatives such as the Organisational Culture Shift and the Leadership Excellence and Adaptive Programming are already underway as strategic POD actions. As we deliver these commitments, we will continuously learn during this MTAP-V period and periodically refine the POD Strategy for MTAP-VI (2027-2030).

It is with immense pleasure that I extend an invitation to all readers to explore this key strategic document of ICIMOD. I encourage all stakeholders to actively engage with the initiatives outlined in this Strategy and to stay updated with the progress that will uphold the spirit of ICIMOD.

**Pema Gyamtsho**  
Director General

# Contents

PAGE 1-3

## **Introduction and context**

PAGE 4-13

## **Focus areas and commitments**

PAGE 14

## **Cross-cutting themes**

PAGE 15-17

## **Implementation approach**

*HR Team role and approach*

*Reporting, learning, and accountability*

*Planning and resourcing*

PAGE 18-19

## **Implementation timeline**





# Introduction

This People and Organisational Development (POD) Strategy document describes the commitment to and investment in people, culture, performance, and Human Resources (HR) system effectiveness that ICIMOD will realise over the next three years to ensure organisational fitness to deliver its MTAP-V targets and strengthen itself as an agile, responsive, and influential development actor in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region.

The POD Strategy fulfils commitments made in the Strategy 2030 (Strategic Objective 4) and the MTAP-V (Section 3.1.8). It provides direction and sets out expectations for the next three years. As this is not a planning document, it does not describe Strategic Groups (SGs), Action Areas or Interventions in detail, nor does it outline the functions of the Central Operational Units and Administration. It will guide detailed planning and resourcing of human talent on an annual basis in line with ICIMOD's planning and implementation calendar.

This document was developed and written with extensive feedback and inputs from the Senior Management Committee (SMC) and a cross-section of ICIMOD staff. It is deliberately concise to serve as a quick reference for all staff with regard to ICIMOD's people commitments and what can be expected each year between 2024 and 2026. Each year, the POD annual plan will be published as part of the HR Unit workplan and will be accessible to all staff via the HR portal on the intranet. Periodic updates will keep staff updated and provide space for feedback as the strategy unfolds. The achievements and lessons of this POD strategy will inform the subsequent one to support MTAP-VI.

The POD Strategy complements and aligns with several important policy and directional documents that will work in synergy to help embed the ambitious changes we have embarked on in our transition. ICIMOD's core values of integrity, neutrality, relevance, inclusiveness, openness, and ambition have guided the POD Strategy development and inform its implementation.

# Context

ICIMOD's Strategy 2030 boldly states its commitment to “driving policy and practice change towards greener, more inclusive and climate-resilient development in the HKH region”. To do this, the strategy highlights four Strategic Objectives to become a knowledge and innovation hub, an enabler of regional cooperation and collaboration, a global knowledge lead, and a recognised voice for sustainable mountain development.

This significant and deepening of ICIMOD's profile and impact demands several internal changes to ensure that ICIMOD is fit for purpose, not only to deliver on its strategic ambitions but also to continue to adapt and grow in response to a fast-changing development context.

The transition process is well underway – several changes in structure, operational models, and programming practice have been established. It is a complex process with many iterative and interdependent strands – changes in collaborative practice, agility, mindset, and performance culture take time and intentional effort. The POD Strategy has been crafted with this awareness in mind – its priorities align with the need for support in these areas.

Externally, ICIMOD faces similar pressures to other development organisations including strong and growing competition for talent especially at senior levels, post-COVID shifts in staff expectations from work and the workplace, and clear evidence of the connection between equality, diversity, inclusion, and organisational performance.

ICIMOD's vision is strongly linked to the urgency of addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. This is the time to show results and gain influence in the policy discussions that will have direct impact on lives, livelihoods and overall environmental and socio-economic sustainability of the HKH region. To meet this challenge, ICIMOD needs a responsive and vision-relevant POD Strategy to support the internal changes, shifts in mindset, performance culture, and capacity strengthening required to become a truly agile and high-performing regional organisation that is also a great place to work and attractive to the best talent available to deliver results.





The ICIMOD Strategy 2030 sets out clear institutional and people-related reforms needed to assure and ensure its ability to fulfil its impact ambitions and continue to thrive as an organisation.

Section 3.1.8 of the MTAP-V, commits ICIMOD to the development of a POD Strategy to enhance HR and make ICIMOD the employer of choice in the HKH region.



The rich and wide-ranging suggestions on POD inputs from the Culture Talks held during the All-ICIMOD retreat of January 2023 have informed the POD strategy and a specific Culture Shift initiative is to be launched in 2024.

- A) Insights learning, observations from the HR Team from first-hand engagement with staff and managers.
- B) External trends that are shaping work and influencing POD practices in comparable development organisations.

**FIGURE 2:** SOURCES INFORMING THE POD STRATEGY

# Focus areas and commitments

The POD Strategy has four Focus Areas which describe the key people, performance, culture and HR systems ambitions that ICIMOD will work towards over the next three years. For each Focus Area, the POD Strategy outlines clear ambitions and sets out an overall approach and guiding principles. These will inform the design and implementation of specific deliverables. These

deliverables may be in the form of tools or systems to be developed, special initiatives or programmes to be designed and rolled out to achieve the aims expressed in the ambitions for each area. Guidelines and process flows for each initiative will guide implementation and assure the quality of each deliverable.



FIGURE 3: FOUR FOCUS AREAS OF HR AMBITIONS

The figure on the right shows how the broad ambitions for each Focus Area will inform and guide each POD deliverable for the MTAP-V period. The essence of the broad ambitions in each Focus Area are reflected in ‘principles’ that guide and assure coherence in the choice and design of what to do (which initiatives) and how to do it (approach), to realise the stated ambitions. At the level of day-to-day practice, specific guidelines and process flows explain who is targeted and how they may access, make use of and benefit from each POD service, system or programme that is earmarked for the MTAP-V period.

**FIGURE 4:** BROAD AMBITIONS FOR EACH FOCUS AREA WILL INFORM AND GUIDE EACH POD DELIVERABLE FOR THE MTAP-V PERIOD

### **AMBITION STATEMENTS**

A description of what we aim for in each Focus Area – the kind of ICIMOD we aspire to be

### **APPROACH AND PRINCIPLES**

A description of the principles and points of departure that will inform the way we work towards the ambition expressed

### **TOOLS, INITIATIVES, AND PROGRAMMES**

Specific commitments and Deliverables: 2024–2026

### **GUIDELINES AND PROCESS FLOWS**

These will guide day-to-day practice



## FOCUS AREA A

# People, learning, and development

### AMBITION

An ICIMOD where all staff feel respected, valued, and recognised. This is demonstrated through role clarity at all levels with clear delegation and performance expectations. Strong feedback culture regarding both high and low performance. Opportunities for personal and professional growth. Enabling work environment. Quality HR services and advice.

### PRINCIPLES

- Managers in the lead for people management
- Employees self-drive their growth
- Formal and informal opportunities for learning
- Encouragement of initiative and learning from mistakes

### APPROACH

- Investment in people management and relational skills for all managers
- Strengthening and systemising Learning and Development (L&D) practice
- Prioritising capacity needs for MTAP-V
- Positioning HR Team as enablers
- Making employee life cycle visible and tangible for all staff
- Effective retention strategies for strong performers

**A1**

**EMPLOYEE LIFE-CYCLE MANAGEMENT**

Refresh orientation content (culture)

Support managers to help staff navigate their stay (life cycle) with ICIMOD, making full use of available HR and learning and development (L&D) services and opportunities

**A2**

**LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AND ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING**

Roll out 'Leadership Excellence and Adaptive Programming'

Create standard module for manager orientation and training

**A3**

**LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Synthesise and analyse L&D data in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software

Create L&D Plan aligned with MTAP-V needs

**A4**

**COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS REVIEW**

Current package reviewed and revised

**A5**

**SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT**

Establish critical role list in consultation with Directorate and SMC

Incorporate use of talent grid in analysis of performance data

Talent and succession management proposition submitted to SMC

**A6**

**HR SERVICE DELIVERY**

Publish HR process flows and KPIs

Complete employer branding actions – this includes building ICIMOD's image as an employer, and our ability to attract and retain talent. Employer branding encompasses our values, work culture, and reputation in the job market.

## FOCUS AREA B

# Performance and accountability

### AMBITION

High performance culture with strong sense of accountability.

Trust between managers and their teams.

Clear and consistent performance management system that aligns with ICIMOD's future-fit ambitions.

Managers lead and drive performance culture in their teams.

Peer and multiple feedback are integral part of performance cycle.

### PRINCIPLES

Equal value for targets for behavioural and technical skills expressed in Terms of Reference (ToRs) as well as the Staff performance management system (MbO)

Trust building and encouragement of a healthy appetite for risk when driving innovation

Three-directional accountability - upward (meaning from managers/supervisors), horizontal (among peers), and downward (from staff reporting to you).

### APPROACH

Clearly articulated authority structures, limits, and decision thresholds in ToRs

Meaningful rewards for high performance, initiative, and results orientation

Managers address underperformance in a consistent manner

A practice of critical reflection to be institutionalised at organisational, SG and other unit levels.

Systematic analysis of performance data to identify high potential for talent management

ERP as enabler of better performance, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of work

Multi-view performance management system and adaptive monitoring practice by managers



2024 - 2026 COMMITMENTS AND TARGETS

**B1**

**ROLE CLARITY – JOB DESCRIPTIONS, STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES, DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**

Finalise delegation of authority for relevant roles  
Complete accurate ToRs for all roles

**B2**

**HORIZONTAL ACCOUNTABILITY EFFORTS**

Stimulate critical feedback / reflection, peer-to-peer learning, and inter-team feedback

**B3**

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPGRADE**

Make MbO fit for purpose and include 360-degree feedback  
Strengthen feedback skills at all levels

## FOCUS AREA C

# Culture and behaviour

### AMBITION

We aim for an open workplace culture with equality, diversity, inclusion and a strong sense of belonging across all levels of staff.

We envision transparent decision making with information sharing as appropriate.

Individual and team behaviour aligned to ICIMOD values and code of conduct.

Effective and trusted feedback mechanism.

Safe work environment confirmed by staff.

### PRINCIPLES

Role modelling as a driver for culture change – managers and leaders walking their talk on behavioural expectations

Transparency about key choices and decisions

Our culture is ‘us’ – everyone plays a part

### APPROACH

Workplace culture and behavioural expectations addressed in recruitment, induction, and day-to-day interactions

Promotion and facilitation of regular conversations about culture and behaviour in teams at all levels in ICIMOD

Alignment of organisation around core values and behaviours: A group of internal ‘Culture Champions’ have put together a series of ‘culture statements’ about the ICIMOD culture we want to cultivate - this is known as a ‘Culture Deck’

Calling out and addressing behaviours that do not align with ICIMOD values

Strengthening of feedback capabilities and practice at all levels



2024-2026 COMMITMENTS AND TARGETS

C1

**CULTURE SHIFT INITIATIVE**

Roll out culture shift initiative across all teams in 2024

Address culture and behaviour expectations in orientation and performance

C2

**CORE VALUES IN HR PROCESSES**

Embed and reflect Core Values in HR processes e.g. reference check, interview, ToR

C3

**SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Publish Safeguarding Policy and mechanisms and track compliance

Clarify Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy and sensitise staff

C4

**OPEN COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES**

Establish quarterly all-staff meeting to connect, inform and exchange

Quarterly sharing of HR Dashboard updates

Launch POD initiative  
Project Briefs

## FOCUS AREA D

# HR systems for organisational effectiveness

### AMBITION

Structure well embedded and supportive of ICIMOD ambitions. Interactions across teams improve efficiency and agility.

Optimum use of HR Systems. Standardised HR service delivery aided by process flows and response time guarantees.

Consistent business processes (Standard Operating Procedures)

### PRINCIPLES

Managers and team leads drive productivity and results-oriented culture

Less paper, more traceability, and transparency of processes

Data-driven HR & POD responses

### APPROACH

Steady move towards 100% use of ERP for HR business processes

Tailored talent attraction and retention strategies to meet workforce planning needs

Greener process including working towards a paperless office and procurement choices

Future-fit review of existing HR policies

Consistently provide high-quality HR services internally and externally



2024 - 2026 COMMITMENTS AND TARGETS

**D1**

**STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING**

Co-create strategic workforce planning for MTAP-V and adjust annually in planning process

**D2**

**DIGITALISATION OF HR PROCESSES**

Digitalise and quality assure all HR Processes by end of 2024  
Improve HR System interface with Finance and MEL

**D3**

**DATA-DRIVEN POD STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

Staff survey by end Q3, 2024 and establish as annual process for adaptive implementation of POD



# Cross-cutting themes

In implementing the POD Strategy, the following elements will run through as cross-cutting themes, informing, and helping to shape POD initiatives and programmes as they are designed and delivered:

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)**

Over the next three years, the POD Strategy will build on ICIMOD's commitment to DEI and encourage specific actions, targets and tools including affirmative action where possible and appropriate, to help ICIMOD to become a truly equal diverse and inclusive organisation. DEI considerations will inform the design and implementation of all POD commitments wherever relevant.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

The POD Strategy is in essence about the ICIMOD team, collectively making the changes required to deliver on our ambitions and MTAP-V targets. It must be owned by everyone. The HR Team will communicate regularly and openly about POD commitments and progress and encourage staff engagement and feedback in multiple ways.

## **LEADERSHIP**

The POD Strategy ambitions and commitments will only be delivered if leadership is exercised at all the levels where it is required. The Directorate and SMC leadership and ownership is needed to prioritise, allocate resources, and monitor its implementation. The HR Team needs to exercise leadership in driving the POD actions each year and engaging ICIMOD around them. At the individual level, ICIMOD staff can show leadership in their participation, interest, and critical feedback.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AWARENESS**

In line with ICIMOD's institutional mandate and commitment to environmental sustainability, the HR Team will be conscious of the environmental impacts of its operations and processes and aim to reduce them. It will support the efforts of the Climate Action Lead in the implementation of the institutional Climate and Environmental Action Plan.

## HR Team role and approach

The HR Team, as the custodian of the POD Strategy, will take the lead in ensuring its timely implementation under supervision of the Director of Administration, Finance and Operations. As an organisation-wide strategy, the Directorate, in collaboration with SMC, is responsible for ensuring that the POD Strategy is adequately resourced and supported.

The HR Team will play a facilitative role in the implementation of the POD Strategy in close collaboration with SMC and teams with specific expertise as and when required. It will be responsible for annual planning of the deliverables, monitoring, and quality assurance. The POD deliverables will be achieved by a combination of direct delivery by the HR Team where appropriate, close collaboration with internal specialists and commissioning of external experts. HR will ensure the integration and sustainability of processes to improve the impact of this POD Strategy and its initiatives.

To be effective in supporting managers and first/second line supervisors to drive the performance culture that ICIMOD seeks, the HR Team will need to professionalise its service provision and provide clarity on processes, timing, and quality to be expected in all HR processes from recruitment to exit. The team will invest in its ability to support ICIMOD's transition from a business partner perspective. The team will deepen and transform its own practice in the process of implementing the POD Strategy.

The HR Team will be accessible to staff and will be proactive in providing information and updates on different aspects of the POD Strategy, in line with ICIMOD's values, as much as possible, making it clear how all ICIMOD staff groups will benefit from the POD Strategy commitments in a variety of ways.

# Reporting, learning, and accountability

The HR Team, in collaboration with SMC, will use the POD Strategy implementation process to contribute to ICIMOD's efforts to strengthen organisational learning, accountability, and staff engagement. To do this, the following steps and actions will be taken to report on and seek feedback on the POD Strategy as well as on specific POD initiatives:

- The Head of HR will deliver a quarterly update to SMC on the implementation of the POD annual plan
- ICIMOD's Annual Progress Report will include a section on the POD targets for the particular year. In PAC meetings, an update will be included in the organisational update. The mid-year review of the MTAP-V will include a review and forward adjustment of the POD Strategy commitments and targets.
- The HR Team will hold bi-annual townhall sessions to update staff, share insights, and take feedback on ground-level effects or results of POD initiatives and programmes as they are launched and implemented. The sessions will also be used as 'listening' and exchange sessions on broader issues around POD, building on the positive experiences in the process of developing this POD Strategy.
- Updates on the HR Dashboard will be shared quarterly; this will include a progress tracker on POD implementation.
- Each of the POD initiatives that are approved in the HR annual plan will be linked to an individual's targets in the MbO system. This might be actual delivery of targets or responsibility to oversee or ensure they are met. Where other teams are required to support or deliver components, it will be reflected in their annual plan and the MbO targets of a specific person.
- An annual staff survey will help to track shifts in staff experience and views over the MTAP-V period and provide a source of inputs for adapting the POD Strategy each year.
- Head of HR will promote and facilitate cross-team learning and reflection to increase feedback culture and learning as the POD Strategy is implemented.



# Planning and resourcing

The investments required to meet all the POD Strategy commitments in the MTAP-V period will be planned and decided upon on an annual basis as part of the ICIMOD planning and budgeting process.

The Directorate has already committed resources to some POD initiatives including external support for the Culture Shift Initiative, Leadership Excellence and Adaptive Programming, and consultancy to support the adjustment of the performance management system. The capacity of the HR Team will also be expanded with an additional HR Officer function who will devote a proportion of their time to a comprehensive Learning and Development (L&D) plan in 2024.

To support and inform Directorate decision making and allocation of resources (internal and external), each

POD initiative will be further elaborated in a Project Brief, which describes its scope, targeting, purpose, key activities and support requirements. Project Briefs for planned initiatives will be submitted to SMC and Directorate as part of the HR Unit's planning process for each year.

In planning the implementation of POD initiatives, the Head of HR will ensure timely communication and engagement with SMC to ensure alignment and synergies with the overall ICIMOD annual planning process.

The timeline on Page 18 provides an overall rollout plan for 2024 to 2026. This will be adjusted based on progress in the previous year.

# Timeline of launching POD Initiatives 2024–2026

This timeline outlines the plan we are committed to for the next two years.

2024

FIRST HALF

SECOND HALF

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE  
AND ADAPTIVE  
PROGRAMMING

A2

COMPENSATION AND  
BENEFITS REVIEW

A4

HR SERVICE DELIVERY

A6

ROLE CLARITY  
– JDs, SOPs, DOAs

B1

CULTURE SHIFT  
INITIATIVE

C1

OPEN COMMUNICATION  
INITIATIVES

C4

STRATEGIC WORKFORCE  
PLANNING

D1

A1

EMPLOYEE LIFE CYCLE  
MANAGEMENT

A3

LEARNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

B2

HORIZONTAL  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
EFFORTS

C2

CORE VALUES IN  
HR PROCESSES

D3

DATA-DRIVEN  
POD STRATEGY  
IMPLEMENTATION



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