

## THE WORLD MOUNTAIN NETWORK NEWSLETTER

«Welcome to the newly established World Mountain Network! At last we hope that we have an organization in place that will improve communications and encourage mutual support amongst all those concerned about mountains –environment, appropriate resource use, and the future of mountain people. Please take this as an invitation to participate and to share the Newsletter with your colleagues and friends.

The production of this first issue of a World Mountain Network Newsletter has been made possible by a grant from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) to the International Mountain Society (IMS) via the United Nations University (UNU). It is intended to produce three or four issues per year, initially in an English language edition, as financial resources increase, editions in other languages may be added. Assistance, in the form of financial contributions as well as news items, for the enlargement of the Newsletter is warmly welcomed.

This Newsletter has been produced in Davis, California, by the IMS. It is the result of efforts by several institutions and a great number of individuals and it reflects an urgent concern, first identified at a meeting of *The Development of Mountain Environments* held in Munich in 1974 under the sponsorship of the German foundation for International Aid (GTZ). The need to establish some form of international community of mountain scholars, developers, conservationists, and indeed, of all those involved with and concerned about the future of the world's mountain environments and mountain peoples, has not changed since 1974. It has certainly become more clearly defined and more urgent. Many attempts have been made during this period to establish mountain programs and national, regional, and international institutions, as well as various channels of mountain communication. The virtual proliferation of mountain organizations is noteworthy and extremely encouraging –surely a reflection of the growing pressures that are being exerted on mountain environments and mountain peoples. nevertheless, this very proliferation has added greatly to the need for rapid and effective exchange of information and ideas. As recently as November 1987 during a Study Week

in the Vatican on *A modern approach to the protection of the environment*, organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the following recommendation was approved:

We therefore recommend the establishment of an effective international research network on environmental problems related to mountains in order to ensure a more realistic approach to the management of mountain resources.

Several organizations have greatly assisted this increase in awareness and concern, and many of the currently available mountain research strategies, concepts, and forms of collaboration have arisen from clearly identifiable sources. First and foremost has been Unesco's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) Project 6-Study of the impact of human activities on mountain ecosystems. It is appropriate, therefore, to emphasize the importance of Unesco MAB-6 and its many national level derivatives, as well as ICIMOD, based in Kathmandu but of International scope. Similarly, the International Geographical Union's Commission of Mountain Geocology and Resource Management, since its formulation under the late Professor Carl Troll's leadership in 1968, has done much to mold mountain research. Subsequently, the UNU not only established a Highland-Lowland Interactive Systems project (recently renamed Mountain Ecology and Sustainable Development) in 1978, but also provided the financial impulse for the founding of *Mountain Research and Development* and creation of the International Mountain Society in 1980. This was also assisted by Unesco with the production of four special issues of *Mountain Research and Development* as a state of knowledge report on the Andes. Another organization, IUCN, also has a very impressive tradition of involvement with the conservation of mountain environments.

These are only a few of the organizations that have been actively involved in the furtherance of mountain research and its application to development and conservation issues. There is insufficient space to mention them all in this first issue of the Newsletter. One of our intentions, over time, is to introduce them and describe their functions and activities.

With the special funding from the Swiss Government to support a regular world-wide exchange of mountain experience, initially through creation of this Newsletter, it seemed appropriate to seek agreement amongst a nucleus of committed organizations and formally to establish a World Mountain Network. At Berne-Appenberg, in early July 1990, it proved possible to bring together representatives of a number of key organizations. These included ICALPE, UNU, Alpaction-Bellerive, IGU Commission, East-West Center, IMS, University of Berne, University of California, Lincoln University New Zealand, Soviet Academy of Sciences-USSR/MAB-6, Tajik Academy of Sciences. Prior to that meeting several other organizations had expressed support in principle for some kind of international mountain structure to serve the needs of all. Formalization of these ideas had been worked out at a meeting in

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Honolulu in August 1988, hosted by the East-West Center (A report on this meeting was published in *Mountain Research and Development* Vol. 9 (2): 187-195). Finally, at the time of this writing, through postal and telegraphic correspondence, the World Mountain Network is rapidly expanding. Professors Adam Kotarba and Leszek Starkel of the Department of Geomorphology and Hydrology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Krakow, have subsequently expressed their commitment. Similarly, in a letter dated 18 September 1990 and addressed to Professor Bruno Meserli, Dr. E. F. Tacke, Director of ICIMOD, expressed that "we will be happy to assist in this important endeavor"

### *Newsletter objectives*

1. To provide a medium for the exchange of information about current investigations by individual mountain researchers throughout the world. This should embrace academic as well as applied research and development activities.

2. To promote collaboration and exchange of ideas among these individuals, and especially to achieve crossdisciplinary and interdisciplinary communication.

3. To serve as a clearinghouse for relevant information from the various mountain associations, institutes, and centers to enable them to keep in touch with each other and with other interested organizations throughout the world. In particular, this will offer opportunity to provide information on program development, and on training and employment opportunities.

4. To enhance the ability of existing mountain institutions to provide information and ideas to their own clientele by offering copies of the newsletter in sufficient quantity for their own distribution. Two mountain institutions have already indicated willingness to do this, although translation into Russian and Spanish will be required.

5. To supplement and be used by such existing publications as: *Mountain Research* (China), ICIMOD Newsletter, Govinda B. Pant Institute Newsletter (India), East-West Center Watershed Newsletter for Asia and the Pacific, Newsletter of the African Mountains Association (Addis Ababa), *Mountain Research and Development*, *Himalayan Research and Development*, and the newsletter of the USSR Academy MAB-6 Project.

### *Procedure*

The World Mountain Network Newsletter will be prepared by the International Mountain Society in collaboration with all participating institutions. It will be produced three or four times a year, initially in English, and distributed to an existing mailing list of about 1,200 addresses. This distribution will be

expanded progressively on receipt of request from individuals, institutions, and libraries world-wide. It will also serve as the official newsletter of the Commission on Mountain Geocology and Resource Management of the International Geographical Union (IGU) and of the UNU mountain project. In addition, it will be provided in quality to any existing center, institute, or association for use as its own vehicle for expansion of the network. In each issue space will be made available for use by these institutions for dissemination of their own information of interest both to their own clientele and the global mountain community at large. The contents of the Newsletter will also include: brief reports on research progress by individuals and groups; new projects being undertaken; training or educational opportunities; forthcoming events; brief reports on past meetings; abstracts of new and particularly relevant books or articles; and professional news of individuals. Of special importance will be a planned series of critical commentaries on mountain development and conservation issues and projects.

Additional funding is now sought for *sustained* support of this endeavor. This will facilitate more frequent distribution, expansion of the network and translation into other languages. As individuals and institutions not now in regular communication with the world community of mountain scholars are identified, the press run for the Newsletter will be enlarged.

It is envisaged that such a network establishment would provide individuals with critical moral support for making their expertise and convictions available to their local decision makers. In particular, it would serve to break the intellectual isolation in which many mountain scholars in the Third World, in Eastern Europe, and in the USSR find themselves today, thereby increasing the world-wide effort to encourage sustainable use of mountain environments.

We hope this Newsletter will come to be regarded as the newsletter of the world-wide mountain community at large. We invite recipients to please photo-copy and redistribute, request additional copies, provide names and full mailing addresses of interested persons and institutions, and contribute material for future issues, as appropriate. The format is adjustable and will no doubt change, so that suggestions are welcome. Institutions and individuals with financial means can assist by purchasing multiple copies, single copies, taking out an annual subscription, paying for space to have their own material include, or by helping to provide for multiple-language editions.

Our overall goal can be indicated most succinctly by reiteration of the IMS slogan, "To strive for a better balance between mountain environment, development of resources, and the well-being of mountains peoples"».

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