

## Nobel Laureate **Elinor Ostrom** will talk about governing the commons in a period of climate change

FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE



Common property (or pool) resources such as forests, grazing lands, fisheries, and community irrigation systems are important resources for the rural poor, on which much of their livelihoods depend.

In 2009, American political scientist Elinor Ostrom won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, which she shared with Oliver E. Williamson, for “her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons”, honouring her nearly five decades of work on the subject. The topic is of keen interest to the South Asian region where 40% of the world’s poorest people reside, and where some models can be drawn of how ‘the commons’ have been managed well by local communities, working together as grassroots institutions of self governance. Examples include Nepal’s community forests, and community irrigation cooperatives in parts of India, Nepal, and elsewhere in the region.

Ostrom examined these models of collective action and cooperation in managing the commons and came up with the thesis that, under certain conditions, communities given the right to self-organise can govern themselves democratically in a way that can sustain them while preserving the environment. Her work challenged an earlier popular article – ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ – by US ecologist Garret Hardin (1968), which forecast doom for these resources from overpopulation and human exploitation. It also challenged conventional thinking, illustrating how these resources can be managed successfully without government regulation or privatisation.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences considered her research as “bringing the topic from the fringe to the forefront of scientific attention, showing how common resources can be managed successfully by the people who use them rather than by governments or private companies.” Her work is based among others on field work on the communal irrigation systems of western Nepal and management of pastures by locals in Africa.

ICIMOD, in partnership with the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, brings Ostrom to a Nepal audience in an in-depth discussion of the subject in an ICIMOD Knowledge Forum.

Title: **‘Governing and Managing Forests and Other Common Property Resources in a Period of Climate Change’**

Date: **Monday, 6 December 2010 at 10 am**

Venue: ICIMOD Headquarters, Khumaltar, Lalitpur (Kathmandu).

**Our colleagues in the development community and the interested public are cordially invited to attend (RSVP).**

ICIMOD’s occasional Knowledge Forum series is intended to foster scientific discussion on issues of mountain concern and to share global, regional, and member country knowledge and perspectives with stakeholders and interested persons.

**For more information, please contact:**

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