

ICIMOD Response to QQR Recommendations

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ICIMOD Response to QQR Report

Recommendation 1. Enhance the communication channels with RMCs to increase awareness of and feedback on ICIMOD programmes and usability of outputs.

We will review and suggest a country-by-country strategy for our engagement. This will be a key task of the Strategic Cooperation Unit. At present we have made steps in this direction with more country days, more targeted communication with our nodal agencies with support of our communications unit, and setting up different arrangements by country. As for the latter step, we have opened country desks in Myanmar, Bhutan, and China (with CNICIMOD). Similarly, we have country liaison offices in Afghanistan and Pakistan. RMC engagement is a dynamic process requiring continuous consultation and communication with partners both strategically and programmatically. The country-by-country strategy will be developed as part of the MTAP-IV document.

Recommendation 2. Increase alignment and engagement with RMC priorities.

We strive to have good alignment with RMC priorities at a strategic level through the board, and operationally through our programmes. However, we can improve at the operational level with a joint analysis of strategic priorities and an examination of how our priorities square with country-by-country priorities. Moreover, in our country-by-country strategies (see rec 1), we will aim to be engaged more with relevant national programmes and investment projects for better alignment with national priorities (e.g. \$36 million Green Climate Funding for a GLOF Project in Pakistan). ICIMOD has also started to consult with National Planning Commissions by country which provides another opportunity to align regional approaches to national plans and programmes.

All HKH countries have signed the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and through the HKH Monitoring and Assessment Programme, ICIMOD is aligning HKH priorities to be consistent with SDGs. ICIMOD intends to work with RMCs through INDCs and NAPs in devising SDG implementation plans.

Recommendation 3. Develop and apply guidelines for scaling-up proven innovations and for mainstreaming them into government systems and investment opportunities.

Agreed. We have recently placed a lot of emphasis on impact pathways and theory of change. It would be appropriate to develop a framework for scaling up our regional programmes, which would include internalisation of these ideas by staff and operationalization through joint planning processes with country partners. The joint plan would specify the data required, capacity needs, and which partnerships to be scaled up.

Recommendation 4. Identify the major research questions in HKH region which RMCs consider to be priorities for ICIMOD and develop strategic research partnerships around these priorities.

Agreed. This recommendation is being addressed by our work through the Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Process (HIMAP) which includes 10 major policy relevant research questions for the region, and will result in a synthesis on what steps will be required next. HIMAP questions were framed based on a broad policy-level dialogue with technical staff and government officials. Our Strategic Framework exercise is executed in consultation with wide range of stakeholders including policy makers in the RMCs. As well, we have devised new strategy themes that pose major research questions and we will confirm the relevance of these questions through a participatory process. We feel that this is not a onetime activity, but rather needs continuous analysis and understanding of national visions, programmes, and plans so that ICIMOD programmes and initiatives are aligned with RMC priorities.

Recommendation 5. Establish strategic alliances with multilateral organisations for leveraging knowledge, developing capacity, and integrating innovations into ongoing development processes.

Agreed. This recommendation is a part of our strategy. We already have numerous strong strategic alliances with organizations such as the UNFCCC, CBD, IPBES, IOM, UNCDF, GEOS, UNEP, Mountain Partnership, TPE, WB, CCAC, and many others. However, despite these many alliance, we need to strengthen the programmatic links to these groups at regional and country levels so that our innovations are used in ongoing development processes. We will do further analysis of large investment

programmes in countries where ICIMOD can provide technical backstopping or advisory services. The Strategic Cooperation Unit of ICIMOD will be given responsibility to review the strength of these partnerships and to identify potentially future partnerships.

Recommendation 6. Strengthen the annual review of implementation progress with more rigorous performance data and external input.

We will aim to improve our already extensive annual review process, including consideration of verification and validation of key results with third party monitoring. However, we need to recognise that there are already many donor-led external reviews in place which help us to refine our implementation strategies and help us to plan better in the future.

We will establish a participatory annual review process for major initiatives through a formal process of documentation and feedback from partners. The annual review of initiatives will provide a basis for our annual review process. In addition to the annual review, we will also assess selected programmes. Importantly, ICIMOD will integrate its partner relationship management system into the monitoring system for annual review of implementation progress.

Recommendation 7. Increase regional monitoring of the status and trends in mountain conditions and further promote access to ICIMOD's information portals.

We agree with this recommendation as a function of ICIMOD, and this is a key focus of HIMAP. HIMAP is proposing to periodically monitor HKH specific indicators consistent with the SDGs. In addition, observation of river basins, transboundary landscapes, cryosphere, and atmosphere shall also reveal regional status and trends on specific topics.

Recommendation 8. Facilitate private and public sector investment planning and the financing readiness of appropriate technologies that emerge from the Regional Programmes.

Agreed. We are placing more emphasis on private sector partnerships in our latest strategic framework. Our knowledge products should be aimed at providing the information and basis for developing business relationships and financial analysis necessary for follow-up investment of private and public funds. We will foster partnerships with relevant actors who are mandated to promote appropriate

technologies addressing challenges to mountain people in various sectors. We have had some limited experience with private sector funding of ICIMOD research in line with our public good mandate, and we will certainly consider this further.

Recommendation 9. Prepare a business plan for core funding aimed at sustaining 30% of the annual budgets for programme-wide activities and operating costs.

Core funds are vital for the sustainability of ICIMOD as an organization. Core funds are financed by contributions from regional and non-regional countries and by indirect cost recovery from projects. These core funds are aimed at fulfilling several aspects of ICIMOD's mission:

- to finance development of new and innovative ideas, scaling up of activities, and provide bridge funding for essential activities until new funding is sourced, as well as essential leadership functions (Board and Directorate).
- to fund those activities that contribute directly to fulfilling ICIMOD's mission and includes programmatic areas that are not adequately funded through programme and project funds.
- to be more effective at institutional functions such as gender integration, development of new partnerships (and strengthening of existing ones), strengthening our monitoring and evaluation systems, and enhancing our institutional information, knowledge management, and communication functions.
- to build and maintain relationships at the highest level between ICIMOD's Regional Member Countries (RMCs) and with the non-regional funding countries and other international agencies across the globe.

The ICIMOD Board has mandated the management to maintain core funds at 30% of the total annual budget. We have met that mandate for the last five years. Of these QQR recommendations, 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 require core funding, and to some extent all of the recommendations require a degree of flexible funding. We have moved to a programmatic funding approach from a project approach and will strongly emphasise this in our funding plans for the new strategy period. For this reason, we request donors for joint funding of the regional programmes, or to provide a higher level of core funds.

We will work with the ISG to develop a business plan as a part of our funding strategy for the next five years.

Recommendation 10. Revise the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and the operational structure to increase emphasis on key results of regional significance and coherent implementation across and within the Regional Programmes.

The revised SRF aims to emphasize key results of regional significance, and our framework also emphasizes cohesion across programmes and themes.

The review report suggested (i) well-defined baselines and end results within the planning cycle, (ii) opportunities for ICIMOD to lead a coordinated research agenda on selected regional issues, (iii) further development and elaboration of the RP implementation strategies in line with RMC needs and policy dialogue, and (iv) wherever possible, simplifying the programme delivery and reporting systems.

These will be taken up in the SRF and MTAP-IV documents. We want to improve our result-based M&E system with clear results and baselines. The system will be reviewed by international M&E specialists for simplification and standardisation of monitoring and reporting systems.

We are cognizant of the need to simplify our structure, but at the same time wish to avoid disciplinary silos in our work, and to promote cross programmatic fertilization which has worked fairly well over the last five years. At the start of 2017 we will go through a “tune up” exercise for our internal operations.