Terms of Reference
6th Quinquennial Review of ICIMOD
(2017-2021)
jointly coordinated and commissioned by
ICIMOD's Board of Governors and ICIMOD Support Group
in close cooperation with ICIMOD

1. Background

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working for the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). Since 1983, ICIMOD serves eight regional member countries (RMCs) – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. ICIMOD supports the RMCs with information and knowledge generation and sharing to find innovative solutions to critical mountain problems. The Centre provides a regional platform where experts, planners, policy makers, and practitioners can exchange ideas and perspectives towards the achievement of sustainable mountain development. It also facilitates knowledge exchange across the region, helps customize international knowledge and tailor it to the region's needs, and bring regional issues to the global stage.

ICIMOD has been reviewed independently in five yearly cycles since its inception through Quinquennial Reviews (QQR). As listed below, there have thus far been five QQRs and one Mid Term Review which have helped ICIMOD to improve its focus, sharpen its strategy and grow efficiently and effectively:

1st QQR-1991, 2nd QQR-1995, 3rd QQR- 2001, 4th QQR- 2006, Mid Term Review, 2010 and 5th QQR-2016

It is worthwhile to mention specifically that the learning and reflections from the Mid Term Review (MTR) 2010 in the changing context of the HKH, have significantly helped to develop ICIMOD's Strategy and Results Framework 2012, and have provided long-term direction and a regional integrated programmatic approach that is still valid today. Since then, the Centre has made considerable progress in achieving the strategic vision laid out in that document. ICIMOD has matured as an institution, its financial resources have grown, it is filling its regional niche, and it is delivering impact.

In 2016, the 5th Quinquennial Review (QQR) generated ten major recommendations which led to the development of a new Strategy and Result Framework (SRF), 2017. Eventually this led to the elaboration of a five-year Medium-Term Action Plan 2018-2022 (MTAP IV). ICIMOD has three strategic impact areas namely, i) reduced poverty; ii) enhanced resilience by reducing physical and social vulnerabilities; and iii) enhanced ecosystem services. To realise these impacts, ICIMOD's current strategy and result framework sets out the following seven strategic results.

SR 1 – Widespread adoption of innovation and practices developed by ICIMOD and partners to adapt to change, leading to positive impacts for women, men, and children

SR 2 – Significant advances in the generation and use of relevant data, knowledge, and analysis

SR 3 – Significant advances made in approaches and knowledge that promote gender equality and inclusive development.

SR 4 – Significantly developed human and institutional capacity

SR 5 – Policies considerably influenced by the work of ICIMOD and its partners

SR 6 – Enhanced regional cooperation related to sustainable mountain development

SR 7 – Global recognition of the importance of mountains to ensure improved and resilient livelihoods and ecosystems

Currently ICIMOD implements six regional programmes which build on ICIMOD's deep history of engagement with key stakeholders and are formulated to deliver strategic results; promote transboundary cooperation; meet capacity-building needs in the region; and support long-term testing, piloting, and monitoring of innovative approaches. The six regional programmes include: (1) Adaptation and Resilience Building, (2) Transboundary Landscapes; (3) River Basins and Cryosphere; (4) Atmosphere; (5) Mountain Environment and Regional Information Systems (MENRIS); and (6) Mountain Knowledge and Action Networks.

During 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted all HKH countries in terms of significant economic downturns in national and local economies affecting production, industries, services and jobs. It has severely impacted the poor and vulnerable and has led to significant disruptions in government priorities, programmes and policies for pursuing sustainable development goals in general and particularly for the HKH region. This has also created several challenges in terms of investment and strategic shifts in resource allocation to various sectors by government and private sector entities. The situation has also created many setbacks for the capacity building, piloting and scaling up efforts of ICIMOD which were being pursued in partnership with many organisations in the region.

As the five-year time since the last QQR will soon end and ICIMOD will complete the implementation of its MTAP IV in 2022, it is important to commission the 6th QQR in 2021 for ICIMOD to improve its strategic direction, performance, and impact also considering the COVID-19 situation in the region and globally.

2. Objectives of the review

The purpose of the review is both to provide accountability to the Board of Governors (BOG), ICIMOD Support Group (ISG), regional partners and mountain communities at

large, and to strengthen ICIMOD's functioning based on the conclusions and recommendations of the review. Thus the review will:

1. Assess the performance of ICIMOD based on its approved Strategy and Results Framework in terms of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of results.

2. Provide recommendations of how ICIMOD can improve its Strategy and Results Framework and next Medium Term Action Plan (MTAP).

2.1.   Key review questions

The 6th QQR will cover both the strategic and operational performance of ICIMOD from 2017-2021. Key review questions are:

2.2.   Strategic orientation

2.2.1. To what extent has ICIMOD been able to achieve its seven strategic results (SR) as defined in its Strategy and Results Framework (SRF), 2017 and MTAP IV? How relevant were the Strategic Results and how can they be improved for MTAP V?

2.2.2. Has ICIMOD's work contributed to its stated strategic impacts: i) reduced poverty; ii) enhanced resilience by reducing physical and social vulnerabilities; and iii) enhanced ecosystem services?

2.2.3. Has ICIMOD addressed appropriately the key priority actions and strategies for the region as outlined in the SRF 2017?

2.2.4. Has ICIMOD been able to achieve its focus on gender transformative change and inclusive development at various levels across its work, what barriers have been encountered and how have they been overcome?

2.2.5. How has the quality of ICIMOD's scientific work and its visibility been improved over the years?

2.2.6. To what extent has ICIMOD been able to implement the recommendations made by the 5th QQR 2016?

2.2.7. How has ICIMOD been able to tackle the COVID-19 situation and how should it adapt to the post COVID-19 situation both strategically and programmatically and other external factors?

2.3.   Governance and management

2.3.1. Are arrangements for ICIMOD's BOG and committees and ISG effective for strategic governance and sustainability of ICIMOD in the changing context of the region and globally?

2.3.2.   Is ICIMOD effectively measuring its results and outcomes? Has it developed an effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system which can fulfill the need for accountability and learning?

2.3.3.   What evidence is available that ICIMOD is actively learning from its M&E system?

2.3.4.   Have the knowledge management and communication systems been able to help in achieving visibility and impact both at regional and global levels? Has the strategic cooperation function of ICIMOD been able to deliver in promoting effective partnerships with programme partners, strategic cooperation with RMCs, funding agencies and private sector entities?

2.3.5.   Have management mechanisms been supportive to deliver results (Directorate, Finance, Administration, Human Resources and internal committees)?

2.3.6.   To what extent is the current matrix structure of integration and multidisciplinary teams delivering the best possible results in an efficient and effective manner?

2.3.7.   How has ICIMOD adhered to its stated value for money principles in its operations?

2.3.8.   What evidence is there that ICIMOD has promoted gender and inclusion as an organization and it its programmes.

2.4.   Complementarities and value addition

2.4.1.   What are the complementarities and synergies with respect to different donor-funded programmes currently implemented by ICIMOD as part of the Strategy and Results Framework?

2.4.2.   What is ICIMODs advantage compared to other organizations working in the HKH region? Present comparative analysis of similar entities which are intergovernmental, regional knowledge centers both in the region and globally.

2.4.3.   Where has ICIMOD added the most value in terms of its regional programmatic approach, themes, and partnership building?

2.5.   Partnerships with regional member countries

2.5.1.   To what extent has ICIMOD been successful in forging multi-stakeholder partnerships with RMC governments, civil society organisations, universities, research institutions, and the private sector? How much this has been able to contribute to realizing the ICIMOD's mission?

2.5.2.   Has ICIMOD been able to adequately strengthen and engage strategically with these key stakeholders for scaling up its approaches, results and innovations?

2.5.3.   Has ICIMOD's work contributed to regional cooperation between RMCs and other actors? To what extent has this been possible? (Illustrate by means of some outstanding paradigms)

2.5.4. What evidence is there of increased RMC ownership of ICIMOD over the QQR period and what lesson have been learnt for increasing this ownership in future

2.6. Funding

2.6.1. What is the value addition of ICIMOD's core funding by some donors compared to a project funding approach?

2.6.2. Assess the funding scenarios for ICIMOD and make recommendations for future support and fundraising strategies in the context of changing funding priorities.

2.6.3. Assess the sustainability of ICIMOD as a regional organization in terms of permanent sources of funding to continuously deliver its mandate in HKH region.

2.6.4. Assess the feasibility of GCF, AF, GEF and other global funding instruments for ICIMOD?

2.6.5. Assess the ownership of the RMCs of ICIMOD in funding ICIMOD in line with ICIMOD's RMC funding strategy.

3. Review methodology

It is expected that the reviewers will describe and justify an appropriate evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection in the EOI. The evaluation design, methodology and methods for data collection and analysis are expected to be fully developed and presented in the inception report. Given the situation with Covid-19, innovative and flexible approaches/methodologies and methods for remote data collection should be suggested when appropriate and the risk of doing harm managed. The reviewers shall specify the proposal how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process (e.g., OECD/DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation). The reviewers should also propose any improvements or alternatives to the process that will improve the quality for review or improve efficiency and value for money. The reviewers will also be responsible for notifying the QQR management team of any problems relating to delivery of the review and recommending solutions to effectively achieve the ToR outcomes.

Limitations to the chosen approach/methodology and methods shall be made explicit by the reviewers and the consequences of these limitations discussed in the proposal and part of the inception report. The reviewers shall to the extent possible, present mitigation measures to address those negative consequences and risks. In cases where sensitive or confidential issues are to be addressed in the evaluation, reviewers should ensure an evaluation design that do not put informants and stakeholders at risk during the data collection phase or the dissemination phase.

The reviewers will mainly use available evidence from ICIMOD's M&E system as well as data sources from key stakeholders from ICIMOD's RMCs. Data will include:

- ICIMOD's available M&E data, progress reports and other relevant documents
- Strategic documents
- Board minutes and key approved policies
- Interviews of ICIMOD key staff and partners
- Interview with key BOG and ISG members
- Selected field-based observations
- Observations from relevant published materials and websites
- If possible, comparative analysis of similar entities which are intergovernmental, regional knowledge centres

3.1. Review team

The QQR will be carried out by an external independent supplier that will be selected based on a competitive basis through a transparent procurement process.

The members of the review team shall be independent of ICIMOD. If any selected reviewer has been involved with ICIMOD's work previously, this should date back at least five years. Familiarity with the region and ICIMOD's mandate is desirable among at least some of the review team members. The team leader should have solid experience as team leader.

The suppliers should propose a team of between 3 and 5 experts to undertake the review that ensures gender balance use of expertise from the region, and:

- In depth knowledge of the HKH and its development, social, economic and environmental issues, including gender.
- Evidence of ability to undertake impactful reviews of similar institutions
- Proven ability to engage with high level stakeholders
- A mix of skills that includes a balance of research, political and M&E skills
- High level communication skills
- Ability to deliver a high-level quality product to a tight deadline during and post COVID situation

3.2. Criteria for review

The criteria for review should follow the OECD DAC evaluation criteria to ensure a comprehensive review. The reviewers should use these criteria as a guide to the review and should avoid following each criterion mechanistic manner – especially where criteria are less relevant.

In **the context of ICIMOD** this will translate into:

- **Relevance:** The relevance of ICIMOD's interventions in relation to the declared aspirations of regional stakeholders stated in the SRF.
- **Coherence:** The extent to which ICIMOD has been able to bring both internal and external coherence to its programme delivery in the region including internal

coherence related to synergic efforts of intra and inter regional programmes and initiatives, external coherence related to synergetic and coordinated work with programmes, initiatives and policies in the RMCs and global efforts which are of complementary nature and have significant value for sustainable mountain development.

- **Effectiveness:** ICIMOD's ability to achieve the results and outcomes stated in the SRF and the MTAP.
- **Efficiency:** Assess efficiency of ICIMOD's inputs/resources leading to targeted outputs and outcomes as compared to feasible alternatives in the context.
- **Impact:** ICIMOD's ability to realize its strategic impact in terms of reducing poverty, increased resilience, and improved ecosystem services.
- **Sustainability:** The capacity of ICIMOD to secure the sustainability of its interventions and funding base.

3.3. Proposed process and timeline

The ICIMOD Support Group (ISG) has formed a special committee for quality assurance and approval of all the final processes and product of the QQR. Given the situation with Covid-19, the time and work plan must allow flexibility in implementation.

The following timeline may be considered:

S#	Indicative process and timelines	Date
1	ToR agreed by ISG QQR Committee	22 Dec 2020
2	Review and approval of the TOR by the ISG	20 Jan 2021
3	Expression of Interest (EoI) announced	22 Jan 2021
4	EOIs received from various firms	22 Feb 2021
5	Assessments done by the ISG and four selected firms will be asked to submit a full proposal in the prescribed format	5 Mar 2021
6	Full proposals received	19 Mar 2021
7	Assessment of proposals	31 Mar 2021
7	A firm is selected and announced	9 Apr 2021
8	Contracting process with the selected firm completed	19 Apr 2021
9	Inception meeting with QQR Committee/ ICIMOD/selected firm: Discussion on the TOR, expectations, quality, and timing	20 Apr 2021
10	Inception report draft	5 May 2021
	Review of inception report and feedback	15 May 2021
	Final Inception Report submission	25 May 2021
	Chair of ISG QQR Committee updates the ISG and Board on progress made	1 June 2021
	QQR Committee meeting with the review team on roll out plan	10 June 2021
11	Commence full QQR evaluation: interviews and field visits	15 June 2021
	Interactions, interviews, and field visits completed	30 July 2021
	Check in meeting the QQR Committee and the reviews- process and way forward	2 August 2021
	Presentation of initial findings of the QQR to the ISG committee	20 August 2021

S#	Indicative process and timelines	Date
12	First draft of QQR report submitted to ICIMOD and ISG for feedback	30 August 2021
	ISG QQR Committee provides feedback on the first draft of QQR report	10 September 2021
13	Draft report shared with ICIMOD and ISG for feedback	20 September 2021
	Comments and feedback given to the review team	30 September 2021
14	Final draft QQR report submitted to ISG, BOG, and ICIMOD	10 October 2021
15	ISG and BOG Programme Advisory Committee approves the report and recommendations	November 2021

4. Implementation schedule (indicative)

The indicative QQR implementation period is set out above. The indicative stages of the review and their contents are set out below. The reviewers should set out their proposals for how they will undertake the review and improvements to these indicative activities.

4.1. Inception period

- Review of all documents, including existing review reports
- Interaction and discussion with key ICIMOD staff
- Prepare inception report
- Submit inception report
- Approval of inception report

4.2. Field interaction

- Meetings with ISG members and ICIMOD staff
- Meetings with key ICIMOD partners
- Meeting with selected regional ICIMOD BOG members
- Meeting with selected ICIMOD Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) of the BOG and ISG members
- Visiting selected RMCs for field visit and interaction with key partners

4.3. Compilation and preparing reports

- Prepare initial draft and share for feedback
- Prepare presentation to ISG and PAC joint session (Team Leader will make a presentation)

4.4. Report finalization

- Incorporate feedback and finalize the report
- Submit the report
- Presentation of the findings to the BOG and ISG

5. **Reporting**

The QQR Review Team will report directly to the ISG QQR Committee on matters related to the quality and findings of the review. On operational and logistics matters, the QQR Team will report to ICIMOD and the focal point would be Mr. Farid Ahmad, Head of Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, ICIMOD.

The following reports will be submitted during the review:

- Inception Report - (format will be given to the selected firm)
- Detailed Plan and Budget (format will be given as part of the proposal)
- QQR Report - (format will be given to the selected firm)
- Interaction plan document: The reviewers should also propose a review 'interaction plan' – that ensures ISG QQR Committee is fully engaged with the review (e.g., regular video calls, bi-weekly summary presentations). This will ensure that any 'course correction' is possible as the review progresses.