



SCIENCE AND DIPLOMACY FOR THE HIMALAYAS

 by Sean Treacy

ICIMOD – the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development – is a model for high-impact science cooperation and the focus of a new TWAS monograph.

Landscapes are not bound by national borders, and the Himalayas are a colossal landscape that stretches almost the full breadth of Asia, from the world's highest peaks to sprawling cities, fertile plains, jungles and river deltas. In order for researchers to understand the mountains' vast influence, many countries had to come together in the interest of strong science and mutual prosperity.

The result was the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, or ICIMOD, based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Founded in 1983, the centre is the combined creation of eight countries in the Hindu Kush Himalayas – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.

ICIMOD's far-reaching impact is captured in a new TWAS monograph – the latest in the Excellence in Science series. Published with support from COMSATS, the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South, it is the 13th book in a series that debuted

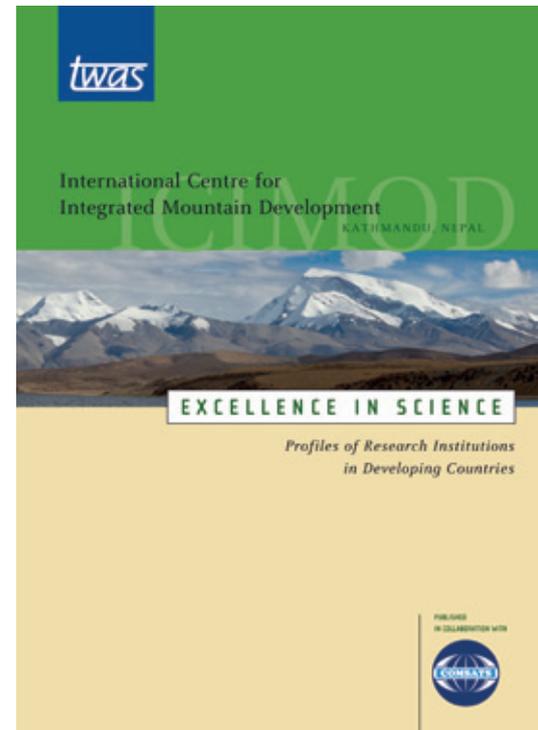
in 2007. It explores ICIMOD's history, work and challenges, from efforts to help nations address flooding and climate change to providing essential help in response to 2015's devastating earthquake in Nepal. The book was written by journalist Giovanni Ortolani of Trieste, Italy, with images by Italian photographer Paola di Bella.

ICIMOD represents the power of international collaboration and science diplomacy to build extensive, detailed knowledge of the mountains, valleys and rivers of an important but sensitive environmental system.

"We picture ourselves as spanning a gap between people who are producing basic science, like universities, and people who need that information, like practitioners and policymakers," says ICIMOD Director General David James Molden.

"ICIMOD takes a holistic view of science," says Bai Chunli, president of TWAS and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), in the book's foreword. "It understands that knowledge about the atmosphere and the Earth's tectonic plates – and everything in between – can help to support the health and sustainable prosperity of human communities."

ICIMOD also organizes numerous regional programmes that include three countries or more. For instance, it has a mentorship programme that allows researchers from the region to meet twice a year to deepen their knowledge about this landscape and develop solutions for sustainable ecosystem management.



▲ TWAS's new monograph on ICIMOD, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

The book also explores how ICIMOD strengthens international cooperation through research. For example, Molden says in the book, areas such as water management are politically more difficult to discuss than others, yet ICIMOD still works to engage different nations on these sensitive issues. ■

To request a copy of the book without cost, please email info@twas.org

View a multimedia production on ICIMOD: www.bit.do/ICIMODslideshow