

Special Event:
**Youth Forum Empowering Youth with Earth Observation Information for Climate
Actions**
1-6 October 2010, ICIMOD, Kathmandu

1. Background and Rationale

Climate change has been the defining environmental issue of our times affecting every segment of society in one way or the other. Climate change has put the Himalayan region in center of the international attention - as one of the most vulnerable ecosystems in the world severely impacting its social and environmental security of the region. As a result, the dynamics of life support systems on these ecosystems are threatened and traditional adaptation and coping mechanisms of the mountain people are losing their effectiveness. The Himalayan region deserves much more attention from local to global levels as a 'hotspot of climate change' and calls for urgent action. Raising awareness among youth and engaging them in action on the ground will be an important factor in addressing climate change in the Himalaya. Though young people are increasingly adding their voices globally to the call for action on climate change, awareness among youths in the region is limited.

It is estimated that more than 1.3 billion people are directly dependent upon the various ecosystem services from the mountains. Mountain ecosystem of the Himalayan region also bears important global significance. Climate change is one of the most critical global concerns of this generation where the youth of the region will face enormous challenges in future. It is therefore important to bring about awareness among youth and actively engage them in areas of preparedness, risk reduction, adaptation and mitigation. Youths have innovative ideas, knowledge and abundant energy to undertake local actions. Youth can play "agent for change" and act as effective communicators in their communities and be involved in regional and international arenas.

Earth observation is proving to be a vital tool to improve our understanding of the climate change phenomenon by providing information on the changes in various attributes which are indicators of climate change. Information derived from earth observation for weather, agriculture, glaciers, forest, air and many other applications will generate significant benefits in a number of areas in visualizing the impact of climate change and taking appropriate actions. Educating and exposing youth to such innovative tools and technologies will help in creating a rapid response to issues related to climate change in the Himalaya.

2. Objective

This special event on youth forum is being organized in recognition of the fact that climate change in the Himalaya has far-reaching consequences on livelihoods of mountain downstream people and their environment. The event will bring together youth from the region (ICIMOD member countries) with an aim to familiarize them on potential benefits of earth observation derived information and demonstrate practical actions in addressing climate change related issues. The forum will bring together climate champions from the region and will provide a regional platform to share and learn experiences

regarding climate change issues in the Himalaya. The event will provide opportunity among youths to familiarize with basic RS/GIS skills with practical hands-on sessions, demonstrate case studies related to use of EO in climate actions, internet related resources and project work to take local action in community. The event is supported by USAID and organized by NASA and ICIMOD together with local youth network and voluntary organizations.

3. Approach

Already there exist some youth networks dedicated to advocating climate change issues in the region. However, these networks have less knowledge or familiarity in the benefits of using earth observation in addressing climate change related issues. ICIMOD will be soon hosting the SERVIR Himalaya for operational geospatial data services for regional visualization and decision support for climate change adaptation in the region. It is envisaged that this will help developing resources, activities and the mechanisms to enhance awareness, access to information on climate change. The event will engage youth in exposing to the SERVIR Himalaya initiative and its use to the public at large. ICIMOD will facilitate two already existing youth networks groups to carry out the task. Further, these networks will be mobilized to disseminate and train youths among their networks in creating awareness on SERVIR Himalaya. Following are the youth networks and more such network in the region will be explored.

1. **Nepalese Youth for Climate Action (NYCA)** is a coalition of Nepali youth and youth groups formed with an aim to tackle climate change. NYCA works with universities, schools, organizations, and communities at national and international level to protect our future from the threats posed by climate change.
2. **GIS Society of Nepal** is a voluntary organization of GIS and RS professionals to promote the use of spatial science, technology and applications in Nepal. The society has a membership base of more than 400 GIS professionals.

4. Intended Audience

1. 15 young climate change enthusiasts, media persons, youth activists, development professionals from Nepal.
2. 4-5 youths from each ICIMOD member countries

5. Expected Outcome

1. Active youth network in the Himalayan region;
2. Increased visibility of SERVIR Himalaya among youth group;
3. Awareness on benefits of earth observation for climate change related issues;