



## **Improving the information basis for sound policy making and advocacy in mountains**

### **WHAT**

Mountain ecosystems cover 23% of the earth's land surface and provide a multitude of goods and services to humanity. These include the provision and protection of 60 to 80% of the earth's freshwater resources for domestic, agricultural and industrial consumption, the regulation of water flows, a natural resource base for local livelihoods, renewable energy, and the preservation of biodiversity including agro-biodiversity. Approx. 300 million mountain people are vulnerable to poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition.

The weakness or lack in data and information systems related to mountain peoples and environments in many countries is a key constraint for designing interventions and longer term policies at country and global levels. Decisions about investments in mountain development as well as policies to reduce vulnerability and food insecurity of mountain communities need to be based on sound statistical information which at the moment is not available.

In 2003, as a contribution to the International Year of Mountains 2002, FAO released a publication on mountain environments and populations and their degree of vulnerability. The key finding was that 40 percent of the mountain population in developing and transition countries, or 271 million people, met the criteria of vulnerability to food insecurity - of these, around half were likely to be chronically hungry.

### **HOW**

More than 10 years after the publication of the mountain vulnerability data, FAO is currently engaged in an effort to update the mountain vulnerability study. The study aims at collecting, analysing and disseminating sound data on a global scale on the vulnerability of mountain peoples to hunger, understand the underlying causes and track the changes across the past decade. The findings of this study will be launched and published in 2015.

Today, more global data, more national case studies of mountain countries and more sophisticated tools and methodologies for data interpretation are available than they were in 2002. Accordingly, the work on the update of the vulnerability study has evidenced that it represents a starting point that can be further expanded to include more global data and to be more precise in terms of the situation at the regional and national levels. In addition, Mountain Partnership members have expressed a strong interest and need for the collection and analysis of mountain disaggregated information regarding other parameters such as migration, area under specific mountain products, crop yields, education level, etc.



## **BENEFICIARIES**

Policy makers and ultimately mountain communities are the direct beneficiaries of this initiative as its results will allow to champion the cause of mountains and formulate policies which are based on up-to-date and accurate mountain-disaggregated information. Academia and scientific community will also benefit from sound and up to date information.

## **EXPECTED RESULTS**

Through this initiative and statistical survey, mountain-disaggregated information will be collected and analyzed, mainly through GIS-mapping, at the global, regional, national and, if requested, sub-national levels. The initiative will address the following issues:

- proportion of mountainous people with not enough access to food;
- percentage of adults or children underweight;
- statistics on malnutrition and micro nutrient deficiencies;
- composition of the households;
- access to services such as banking and insurance systems, extension services, education and health infrastructure;
- migration trends within and from mountain regions;
- gender aspects since in many mountain areas there is a strong feminization of the population due to male outmigration.

The initiative will make a critical contribution to:

- the formulation and adoption of policies for the improvement of mountain peoples' livelihoods;
- increased investments fostering the growth of sustainable mountain development;
- improved methodologies for collecting data on mountain peoples and environments;
- the sharing and dissemination of knowledge about the socio-economic conditions in mountain areas.

## **WHY INVEST**

The initiative will fill a very critical gap which has continuously been expressed since the International Year of Mountains in 2002: the lack of mountain disaggregated information. The Mountain Partnership Secretariat has a comparative advantage in leading this project in mountain areas because of its global mandate, its links with Governments and research centers from all over the world which are part of the MP constituency, and because it can rely on FAO's technical expertise.