

Joint Evaluation of Achievements and performance of The Mountain Forum (MF) and The Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS)

Volume 1: Evaluation Report

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Acronyms

AG	Advisory Group
AIMF	Aspen International Mountain Foundation
CDE	Centre for Development and Environment
CONDESAN	Consortio para el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Ecoregion Andina
FDDM	Foundation for the Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions
GA	General Assembly
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
MP	Mountain Partnership
MPC	Mountain Partnership Consortium
MPS	Mountain Partnership Secretariat
MRI	Mountain Research Initiative
SC	Steering Committee
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SIMCC	Strategic Initiative on Mountains and Climate Change
UCA	University of Central Asia
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WB	World Bank

Executive Summary

1. The Mountain Forum (MF) is a network of networks of researchers and practitioners in the field of Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD). The Mountain Partnership (MP) is a community of organisations and countries/governments to advance the Mountain Agenda at the global level. The former is a network of people coming together on their own initiative. The latter is a type II partnership, mandated by the UN to represent mountain issues.
2. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has been a major donor to the two forums, MF and MP, for the past 12 years. Especially over the past five years, SDC has provided substantial funding, not only to Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS) Global Hub, but to all the decentralised structures of MF and MP. Over the past two years, it has also provided substantial additional funding for the forthcoming Rio+20 conference activities (including the Lucerne conference, publication of global and regional reports, and contribution for a pavilion on SMD at the conference).
3. The Swiss support was evaluated once in 2007, and this current evaluation, in 2012, aims to assess the achievements and performance, systems and processes, and provide strategic guidance, options and recommendations for future support. It aims to make recommendations to SDC for the way forward in funding these two forums.
4. The first step of the evaluation methodology consisted of participant observation, whereby the two evaluators observed a meeting of the Mountain Partnership Consortium (MPC), organised by the MPS located in FAO, Rome, in February 2012. The basic design of the evaluation was presented at this meeting. The second step consisted of two shallow dip e-surveys, with MF users and MP members, on major questions concerning the evaluation. A deeper exploration was done through phone / skype interviews and some email interactions, with 23 key informants from among members, and other stakeholders of the MF, MP, MPC and MPS. A study of documents supplemented the interviews and e-surveys. All these, taken together, formed the basis of the findings, conclusions and suggestions made in this report.
5. The MF has run a rather diverse range of activities such as maintaining a data base of over 7600 users, distributing books and publications, and facilitating a Mountain calendar of events planned by MF users, MP members and others in their respective countries. The users mentioned achievements and benefits.
6. Overall, while the MF started as a members' forum, and continues to be a large and unique knowledge sharing community, currently it is driven by the activities of the networks that are its members. Only a few remain engaged, while many are dormant, giving rise to the need to re-engage with its members. There is also a need to re-assess whether the forum, in its current form, is needed, or can it be merged with the MP. In whichever form it continues, the new design must ensure equitable distribution of power and resources across different regions, so that the regional / decentralised hubs are empowered, and they have an increased capacity to respond to the needs of local users/ members.
7. The MP also has an impressive list of activities completed over the past few years, mainly in terms of raising issues concerning SMD at the global level, publications, and finding the resources for new partnership initiatives and capacity building, by the global and decentralised hubs. Still, there is some debate about the achievements: a lot of activities for what achievement, what impacts eventually?
8. All in all, it appears that, since the last evaluation of the MPS in 2007, the same deficiencies are still matters of serious concern: (i) lack of strategic focus and of clear-cut political lines at large, (ii) blurred, if not confused conception of partnership, (iii) lack of tools to monitor projects or actions launched under the flag of MP, and (iv) poor ownership on behalf of the members.
9. The key factors facilitating the activities and possible achievements have been the active engagement of SDC as a donor, and contributions of the most active member organisations, networks and decentralised Hubs. The Italian Development Cooperation and FAO have also been a key donor to the MPS, through the Central Hub.
10. A key area of contention has been the divergence between the perceived value that the MPS in FAO Rome and a few other key organisations, have of the MPS and the opinion of other key

stakeholders. The differences relate to the perceived value, added accountability, and cost efficiency. In order to provide oversight for strategic direction and financial plans, the MPC was formed, comprising a range of prominent members of the MP. However, this has been contested as a governance mechanism, and parallel mechanisms like the Advisory Group (AG), which is set up to monitor only one project, have recently been constituted. The donors are divided in their outlook, and the relationships between the major donors and implementing agency: SDC, Italian government, World Bank, and FAO, Rome are not cohesive, as witnessed by us in the February 2012 meeting at FAO, Rome.

11. After completing a study of documents and discussion with a wide range of stakeholders, we conclude that: (i) the MF website is active, with many members and good knowledge sharing activities. However, there is no reason for it to continue as a separate activity from the MP, and the activities of MF and MP can be taken up under the same banner by all the Dhs, (ii) the DHs are active and connected to the respective governments and key stakeholders and are indeed key in advancing the Mountain Agenda, therefore continue to merit support, (iii) with regards to MPS, the relationship, accountability and cost efficiency issues are not likely to be resolved, given that some of these are not related to individuals but inherently structural.
12. Concerning MF, MP, MPS, and probably SDC, as far as effectiveness, purposefulness and relevancy are concerned, some basic pending issues, or questions must be raised: is the concept of mountain as a development driver sufficiently established? Is the concept and perspective of SMD sufficiently delineated? Sufficiently as to shape effectively a change project or action? Are the two seminal concepts of partnership and forum clearly understood and conceptualized? To what extent are the stakeholders and actors concerned, locked up in an impoverishing problem solving conception of the development? What theory of change actually irrigates the networks involved, even implicitly? To what extent is the key question of being political –and not only policy-led–effectively taken into consideration, if at all? All in all, these very basic and crucial issues may help understand the rather poor achievements and the difficulty to outline clear-cut impacts at large.
13. Along these lines of reflection, in considering the whole range of our findings, and in admitting that mountain and more basically SMD are valuable as drivers for development actions, we underline four crucial prerequisites: (i) do support a dynamic, not a structure, (ii) help provide a stronger mountain-wise conceptual and strategic ground, (iii) in particular help provide a stronger action profile to SMD and (iv) help experiment a strong society change-driven approach. The role of SDC in such a strategic landscape can be put in a nutshell: (i) help actors invent or innovate, (ii) help exert a strong and structured influence at global level and (iii) identify the right actors
14. From that, the SDC has to consider two rationales for continuing its support to the MP/MF. The first one is developmental, and the second political.
 - a. The development rationale leads towards donor support for sustainable livelihoods of mountain communities. This can be achieved by direct support to networks who host the decentralised hubs, and some of these have the capacity to broker national and regional projects... Some activities to strengthen mountain communities and organisations, and strengthen voices from below, can also be funded through SDC's development portfolio.
 - b. The second and equally important reason for Switzerland to stay engaged with the MP/MF is to lead the global Mountain Agenda. The global and regional hubs are important in carrying through this agenda, and demands that the global dynamic (under the form of a centralized hub) collate the views and experiences of the countries in different regions, and consolidate them globally to create a powerful voice for mountain communities at the global level. Such a global hub or dynamic is important to locate in a UN agency, which has a convening power to mobilise national governments, and play an important role in changing the "rules of the game" and improve the enabling environment by influencing international covenants and resolutions.
15. The strategies by which Switzerland would like to take forward the development and political agenda for SMD need to be articulated afresh, and for this, it is important that the funding to the MPS be stopped in the near future. The months from now until the end of the year would give the SDC time to explore a good way to continue its support to keep the Mountain Agenda alive globally, and give it a stronger direction. Equally, it will give time to MPS in FAO Rome to plan its activities and long-term fundraising strategies.

16. Switzerland has been a global leader in the field of SMD, and in order to retain this leadership, SDC is advised to find ways to further both the political and development agendas. The way forward could imply three streams of funding:
 - a. Knowledge sharing, joint experimentation and capacity building: This can be allocated to the DHs, who are in the best position to coordinate with local, national and regional actors in SMD
 - b. Partnership initiatives in participatory action-research-driven SMD with a particular emphasis on both, conceptual and strategic innovation, and deepening an inclusive / contributing conception of mountain identity and dynamics: A new forum such as the SMD Marketplace could lead the initiatives for sustainable livelihoods of mountain communities. The innovations can be implemented in close collaboration with DHs.
 - c. Policy Advocacy and Influence: This is best done by a group of political actors, who will have a strong voice in influencing national governments and at the global level. The main recommendations for SDC derive from taking seriously its responsibility in leading the SMD agenda both nationally and globally. For this, SDC needs to push and promote SMD in Switzerland through active interactions with other policy actors and decision makers. To influence global policy, SDC can make good use of relevant Swiss foreign policy instruments, such as the Swiss Permanent missions to the UN (NYC, GVA, Nairobi). In particular, SDC can promote SMD through alliances with Swiss negotiators from other Units within the Swiss administration such as Federal office for Environment or Federal office for Agriculture, and those at conferences of CSD, RIO +20, UNFCCC and other relevant fora
17. In order to make a relevant breakthrough in the field of SMD, which would be understood as a major contribution to sustainable development at large, the key word for further pursuit must be innovation.

1 Introduction

This report presents the results of a joint evaluation of MF and MPS, two key global initiatives funded by the Swiss government for the past twelve years. The evaluation pertains to the past four years, with a particular focus on the past two years, from 2010 to 2012.

1.1 Objectives

Mountain regions are considered a crucial issue in the framework of a global strategy for sustainable development. The SDC supports two important structures dealing with SMD for a long time, the MPS and the MF. Since the last evaluation of the MPS in 2007, time has come to assess what has been done so far, what new challenges are to be taken into consideration and what could be the involvement of the SDC in the near future.

SDC contracts with the MF (6th phase) and the MPS (3rd phase) on September and December 2011 respectively have ended, and further credit extension has been provided for both the MP and MF till the end of 2012. This marks an opportunity to evaluate a) the performance and achievements of these institutions during their last contract periods and, b) the effectiveness of SDC's financial contribution to SMD through the support given to the MF and MPS in the past years. More precisely, the evaluation will support strategic reorientation, adjustment in management structures and processes that will enhance the MPS and MF impact on promoting SMD globally. The evaluation will simultaneously provide SDC with strategic guidance to strengthen planning processes at its Mountain Program, and increase the effectiveness of its investment on SMD through more targeted funding.

The main objectives of the evaluation are the following (as formulated in the Terms of Reference, see Annexure 1, volume 2):

- *Objective 1:* To review the achievements and performance of the MF and MPS during the period of their latest individual contracts with SDC against indicators specified for objectives, outcomes and goals in the respective Project Documents and logframes (Phase 6 for MF and Phase 3 for MPS).
- *Objective 2:* To analyze the institutions, processes, mechanisms and practices that strengthened or constrained goal and outcome achievement by the MF and MPS during their latest contracts with SDC.
- *Objective 3:* To provide strategic guidance to the MF and MPS on operational and structural changes that would increase their impact on global SMD promotion.
- *Objective 4:* To elaborate options for SDC's future support to the MF and MPS based on the results of objectives 1 to 3.
- *Objective 5:* To provide SDC with recommendations on how to improve the efficiency and impact of its global SMD promotion funding efforts.

1.2 Methodology

The evaluation team was composed of two international consultants with relevant professional experience in project program evaluation and impact assessments, and ground knowledge of development issues at large.

In order to reduce the travel expenditures, it was decided that the major part of the evaluation work would be done by email or telephone. Nevertheless, it needs to be mentioned that the evaluators benefited from their informal participation in a three-day meeting in Rome¹. It was a good opportunity

1-Monday 27/02/12, a meeting of the mountain partnership consortium (MPC) and of the steering committee (SC). Tuesday 28/2/12, a meeting of the development group (DG) and of the advisory group of the strategic initiative on mountains and climate change (SIMCC). Wednesday 29/02/12, joint MPC steering committee & development group/SIMCC meeting.

to meet some members of the MF and MP in Rome in late February and also to visit the MPS team hosted by FAO.

A stratified randomized email survey was carried out in order to contact some MF users and MP members (see the questionnaires Annexure 4 and 5). This survey principally served to collect basic information on the life of the forum. The number of people who were contacted and responded through each of the three methods is given in the following table:

Table 1 Evaluation Survey and Interview Respondents

Method/ tool	No. of people contacted	No. of people who responded
Survey of MP members	60	14
Survey of MF Users	300	4
Interviews Face-to-face, or by phone or skype	23	23
TOTAL respondents in the evaluation	383	36

Of the 191 MP members, 64 were contacted, expecting that if a quarter of them respond, there would be 15 responses. In addition, some on the interview list were also requested to fill the questionnaire. Of more than 750 identified members of the MF, 300 were contacted for a response to the questionnaire, assuming that even with a response as low as 10%, there would be 30 responses.

The responses from MP members and MF users were lower than expected. The reasons for this were identified and appropriate action taken, as follows:

- MP members may not have had a good internet connection and may have lost the data they had filled in online. Therefore, to allow them to fill the questionnaire off-line, it was sent to them in a Word format.
- Lack of sufficient time: The time period /deadline for the survey was extended (thereby a week) to enable members to respond to the questionnaire.
- Members may not have been comfortable with writing in English, so an email was sent stating that they could write the responses in any language they were comfortable with, and the evaluators would translate the responses.
- When governments are MP members they tend to respond to surveys only when they are sent through formal channels, in this case it would mean sending the survey questionnaire through MP Global or Decentralized Hubs. This was done by Latin America DH as they identified this problem, but was not possible for other Hubs due to lack of time.

These additional measures resulted in increasing the initial response of 6 members, to 14 by mid April.

In addition, 15 to 20 interviews were planned with key stakeholders and individuals considered key informants, these were done either face-to-face in Rome, or by phone or skype in March and April. A total of 23 interviews were completed. The names of interviewees are given in Annexure 2.

All in all, the poor reactivity could probably be interpreted, at least partly, as a sign revealing a facet of the networks to be assessed.

When contacting the MP, MPS or MF members, the evaluators followed the structure of questioning suggested by the 5 objectives. In practice, the evaluators shared with the persons interviewed the questions mentioned in the TOR. This means that the spirit of the evaluation was not a matter of judging or normatively assessing what has been done. The challenge was rather how to generate a "momentum" that actually gives an opportunity to have a fresh look at the past but also at the future. Their comments, interviews, and other valuable additional information form the basis of the findings are presented here.

The main activities can be summed up as follows:

- Study of relevant MF and MPS documents (February, March, April);
- Review of End of Phase Report drafts of MF and MPS contracts (February, March);
- Email survey among members of the MP and the MF (March, April and May);

- Interviews and discussions with representatives of the MF, MP and MPS members, donors, and other external actors / SMD stakeholders (March, April);
- Writing the report (end of April) and sending it to the relevant persons (May);
- Presentation and discussion of findings and recommendations to MF, MPS and donors, included the identification of issues that would require further investigation (May, June);
- Preparation of final report following comments from donors and partners (by the end of May).

The list of the interviewees and sample selection are given in Annexures 2 and 3.

The report is organized in two short volumes. The first one brings together the main analyses and recommendations. The second is documentary and brings together the data from the reference questionnaire. All the methodological details and descriptive information (facts, evidences) is gathered in synthesis tables brought together in the Annexures.

1.3 Limits

Clearly the exercise was not free of restrictions. A lot of our findings and recommendations were directly influenced by our methodological options (notably activities and time allocation). We underline here some of the major limits to keep in mind when reading this report.

- Only a few members were contacted. We tried to establish a direct contact with all the most active or relevant members, but it was not always possible.
- As it was not possible to have in-depth field visits, our main resource remained what contacted people thought or believed about what they were questioned. Quite often, there was a serious gap between what people imagined it was and what it was in reality. Uttered reality (words), felt reality (feelings or sensations), and lived-through reality (immediately observed and experienced) definitively delineate three different domains of reality with no necessary links. From the very beginning of this evaluation, we were forced to rely on representations or indirect traces (reports but also impressions or opinions of interviewed members). In practice, despite our ongoing triangulation concern, we were not able to categorically affirm that what the interviewed people \ explained corresponds precisely to what actually had occurred.
- A telephone interview (skype, fix or mobile phone) allows direct access to the informant but nevertheless does not help avoid communication obstacles (for example, it takes a much longer time to establish a mutually confident relationship, if any). It is clearly poorer than a face to face exchange.
- Apart from some rare occasions during our stay in Rome, we met the members principally on an individual basis. These individual interviews helped deepen some issues but did not allow the benefit from contradictions, disagreements, debates or discussions among members. This was done indirectly by checking the divergences and points of disagreements in the individual interviews.
- Finally, the lack of time was an important factor in limiting the number and type of consultations. Given more time, perhaps more in-depth interviews could have been conducted; perhaps more institutional members and individual users could have been motivated to respond to the questionnaire survey. As any further time extension would have resulted in inadequate time for data analysis, data collection had to be brought to an end on April 16.

Of course, after taking into account all these limitations, we have gathered a lot of evidence from the direct contacts through interviews and emails, to make a holistic evaluation.

2 Mountain Partnership (MP)

The MP is a Type II UN partnership that was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, in 2002. The governments of Italy, Switzerland, the FAO and the UNEP organized a collaborative partnership to strengthen cooperation and to effectively address the needs of mountain people and environments worldwide. Since its launch, the MP has grown to encompass 191 members including civil society groups and intergovernmental organizations.

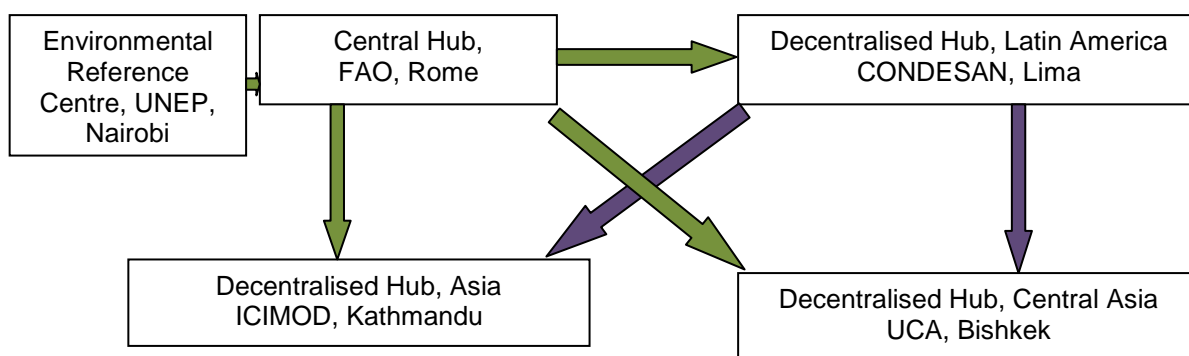
2.1 Objectives of MP and MPS²

The MPS is expected to:

- Influence policy for SMD at international level (CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC and ISDR), and at national levels;
- Network among members, for knowledge sharing and strengthening SMD initiatives;
- Facilitate planning and funding of new partnerships in the field of SMD, especially for sustainable livelihoods of mountain communities.

The structure of the MPS and MF are given in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1 MF and MPS Structure



The Mountain Partnership Secretariat coordinates the Mountain Partnership with Decentralised Hubs in Latin America, Central Asia and Asia. The Mountain Forum has its central node located in CONDESAN, Lima, with regional nodes in UCA, for Central Asia, and ICIMOD, for Asia³.

The different mechanisms for governing the functioning of the MPS have been the Steering Committee, a Bureau and the Mountain Partnership Consortium.

The MF was earlier managed by ICIMOD, and the global secretariat of MF has now shifted to Latin America, with CONDESAN managing it.

While the MF and MP have increased members in Asia, Central Asia and Latin America, the progress in African countries has been limited.⁴. The UNEP, being headquartered in Kenya, can fulfil this role and has been keen on supporting knowledge sharing in Africa.

2- Extracted from appendix 1 of the contract binding SDC with FAO (dated 14/11/2007, page 2). This sub-section is deliberately short as the readers are supposed to know the MP. If more formal and factual information is needed, just have a look at <http://www.mountainpartnership.org>.

3 The green lines denote the linkages for Mountain Partnership and the purple lines for Mountain Forum.

4- At the end of 2011 the MPS CH in close collaboration with UNEP re-launched the MP members in Africa

2.2 Outputs and achievements

Since 2008, the achievements of MPS have been in the following areas (for full details, see the tables in Annexure 6.4, volume 2):

- **Knowledge sharing and networking:** publications, documenting and reporting on the MP, advocacy and awareness rising and participation in international conferences and events.
- Organization of training, meetings and workshops which **enhanced the capacity** of MP members and stakeholders to integrate mountain issues into a selected political agenda and process it at all levels.
- Providing **information and communication tools** to members and the general public.
- **SMD initiatives**, including field activities and programmes.
- Activities run by **decentralised MPS hubs** – ICIMOD, Central Asia Hub, CONDESAN.
- Giving **representation and voice:** The MP has brought together 191 institutional stakeholders, of which 50 are governments, 16 intergovernmental organisations and 125 major groups and NGOs. This has strengthened the voice of members and given MP the legitimacy to speak on behalf of its members to the UNCSO. UNCSO has registered MP.
- **Increased recognition of Mountain Development Agenda by governments:** The most concrete achievement, as per MPS, has been the attention and increased recognition by governments, that mountains are important eco-systems. They are marginal areas where poor people live, and that for poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods of mountain communities need attention. Significant achievement in terms of recognition of importance of mountains is claimed to be achieved, with specific mention to Chile, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia and countries in the Himalayan region.
- The **wide range of thematic interests:** climate change, fight against poverty, food security, and forestry are purposefully formulated and developed in wise and specific terms of challenge, resource, and potentiality at the benefice of the other world regions.
- The **multilevel nature** of the whole programme of activities from field level to the governmental and international levels.
- Remarkable **mountain characteristics or assets** are properly put on the frontline, for example mountain resilience processes and its importance, the upstream / downstream relationships, the necessity to conceive and make best value of the links between separate areas, the shift in perspective that should trigger any consideration of mountain realities
- A large number of activities are carried out in close collaboration with diverse national or international development agencies. This collaboration makes these partners more mountain-sensitive, if not pro-mountain, which is precisely one of the goals pursued by the MP initiatives at large. In this area, it is worth underlining the preference for **joint initiatives** ("*undertaking with...*" instead of "*undertaking for...*". "*Doing with*" is probably one of the most persuasive means to influence the others and to match their reality).
- As a general rule, all these endeavours are made known through a wide range of appropriate **advocacy-led media** targeting different segments of audience (policy-makers, development agencies, NGOs, CSOs, wide urban and rural audience).
- A wide variety of activities showing the concern to mobilize, inform, train, involve a **vast range of actors** (officials, local elites, farmers, women and men) through a broad set of means (video, leaflets, web pages, papers, manuals,) or situations (sessions, meetings, workshops). A specific look at the decentralized hub activities, pay attention to some more aspects:
 - In Asia, emphasis is put on training and information (this is no surprise as ICIMOD and the University of Central Asia are precisely research and education organizations).
 - In Latin America, the network nested in CONDESAN is much closely linked to field activities and organizations, notably grassroots structures (that does not mean that CONDESAN neglects action directed toward Governmental institutions, for example through preparing synthesis document or circulating policy briefs, organizing meetings involving political actors.)

- A considerable number of activities have led to **broaden the sphere of influence**. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing the shared concern to strengthen the links between all these geographical anchorages in order to ensure solidarity, common agreement and coherence.⁵
- Perceiving a capacity building gap at the national or country level, so MPS Central Hub has organized for three years a two week capacity building programme - IPROMO, where staff of NGOs and governments can participate and learn and maintain an active knowledge network (on the course's theme). The decentralized hubs have carried out various training activities that can be easily related to SMD (see Annexure 6.4, tables 8 to 10).
- **Demonstration through Technical Cooperation Projects**: at the regional level, the MPS feels that the MP has been able to show the importance of policies for sustainable mountain development⁶. For instance, the recognition of a balance between traditional agricultural practices, and protective innovative practices could make mountain agriculture more environment friendly.

Another example of linking local government to mountain development issues was ICIMOD's project in Ecuador, where FAO was able to involve the Ecuador government to bring about a dramatic change in the situation of intense deforestation. These experiences have resulted in requests to MPS for Technical Cooperation programmes. An example was a project in Morocco for saffron production, where the FAO project created women's cooperatives to avoid middlemen. This project ended in 2011.

2.3 Barriers

Some barriers were stressed by many interviewees:

1. Structural barriers: Lack of political and technical support from within FAO;
2. Financial: (a) insufficient donor support, (b) some donors provide support for projects and not for core functions, while others support core functions but provide insufficient funding for activities, (c) short term donor support, Italian Development Cooperations's funding cycle is only one year at a time.
3. Coordination / Managerial: Some donors have a hands-off style, providing funding once a year, and demanding reporting after one year. Some have a more hands-on style with more reporting requirements. The donors who engaged did so because they did not get satisfactory responses to their expectations. Yet, some others felt that donors should contribute money year after year, and not engage in implementation.

At the same time, if the barriers are clear, at least as they were expressed, it is not clear to establish how members, or the MPS, strive to circumvent or overcome these barriers.

An important constraining factor has been the **FAO structure**. The first unfulfilled expectation here is that of technical inputs from FAO of the MPS. Since the formation of the partnership in 2002, the FAO has undergone a major restructuring. The structure of the Forestry Department, within which the MPS is placed, has also changed. While there is cooperation within the department, there is a question about effective supervision, making governance from within the organisation difficult.⁷

5- Obviously, all the members do not share the same appreciation concerning the effectiveness of these liaison activities but few contest the endeavours made to help link the members and to create a sort of common spirit (and in particular the spirit to be member of a community of interests).

6- Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) projects are FAO funded/implemented projects. One regional TCP is active in the Andean countries and was elaborated and is being technically followed by the MPS Central Hub in Rome.

7- This point of view is not shared by all the actors concerned. Some think that the reporting lines are clearly defined: formally, the Coordinator would be directly supervised by the Director of the Forest Assessment, Management and Conservation Division at FAO for daily supervision and all administrative matters (e.g. travel authorizations, etc). As the Director post was in transition in February 2012, the Officer in Charge of the Division was the acting supervisor of the Coordinator at that time.

Further, the FAO programme on Mountain Development and Watershed Management, which started in 2003-4, works closely with MPS. This collaboration as such is of course desirable, even a close collaboration, but what should be questioned here is the margin of manoeuvre that this collaboration implies: is the MPS a structure at the service of FAO department, and then depending on the dynamics, strategy and rationale of these overarching departments? Or is the MPS free enough to build its own identity and agency style according to autonomously defined mission according to what the 190 other members expect from such a secretariat hosted in Rome⁸?

Overall, the MPS seems to be fragmented within the FAO. It could have had better links, and technical support and oversight from within the FAO, which has not happened. The lessons from FAO's own programmes and knowledge sharing communities, such as the Red Emission Programme, or others, have not been brought on board in the management of the MPS.

The next issue is the size and contribution of the MPS team in FAO Rome. The present team in MPS consists of eight members, which is an increase over the previous years. Only one expert is permanent, meaning that the whole team depends on conjectural (uncertain, short term) financial resources. Part of the team is clearly involved in communication activities (including the website management⁹). Some members are more concerned by administrative activities, one is partly in field project follow-up (in Morocco¹⁰ or in Latin America). A question still remains without a clear answer: is the whole team completely devoted to strictly MP activities?¹¹

A third issue relates to financial accounting. It has been difficult to match activities with budgets spent on these, and this renders the structure financially unaccountable to its donors¹².

2.4 Shortcomings and criticism

It appears that a lot of activities of several kinds have been carried out. The tricky questions now are (i) to assess what concrete (preferably sustainable) achievements correspond to this diverse set of activities, (ii) to clearly establish to what extent all these activities make best value of the specificity of SMD and, in doing so, what global, or specific, effects are triggered off thanks to these activities.¹³ These are key issues. As far as we are well informed, these structures (the so-called MPS global and decentralized hubs) do not explicitly utilize tools or approaches likely to clearly and rigorously assess these kind of outcomes or effects¹⁴. One question would be of a great interest: to what extent do all

8- It has to be noted that some MPS members have another opinion. They emphasize that the MPS work closely with and takes full advantage of the technical linkages and support provided by other units at FAO. They believe that MP members have had little input with respect to the functioning of the Secretariat, although they did endorse the concept of a Secretariat when the MP was first established. The opinions on this issue are widely divergent, and with insufficient engagement of the general membership, are difficult to resolve, yet existence of these opinions provides the evidence of fragmentation of key actors.

9- About the website, it must be underlined that it is regularly updated and rich of various resources (data, publications) or links likely to satisfy anyone interested in SMD. The newsletter is one of the tool that make this website living.

¹⁰ The project has been closed, however, since end 2011

¹¹ There is no way to prove the engagement, as reporting is not done in a way that such engagement can be verified.

¹² MPS-CH staff inform that FAO financial accounting follows the rules established by its governing bodies and is fully accountable. The difficulty is that FAO reporting is done by budget lines (e.g. staff, consultants, travel, equipment, overhead, etc) as they are defined in Oracle (FAO financial system), rather than by activity. This is problematic, since some donors prefer to know expenditures by activity, but FAO's financial services can only report by category.

13- Here one should especially be interested to detect / highlight if there is a MP specific manner to implement the SMD activities and how this specific manner to proceed possibly contributes to produce better development achievement effects. In other words, is there any specific know-how or skill produced, disseminated and widened by and through the MP networks? It would be another way to tackle the positive and promising side-effects of the MP.

14- It must be noted that CONDESAN has supported and contributed to some actions especially designed for identifying and applying indicators of change in Andean regions (for example, in 2010, when supporting a project aimed at evaluating the tropical Andes conservation condition through a range of concrete indicators). But, as a matter of fact, from what has been investigated, there is no specific reflection within the framework of MP (and at

these activities – taken as a coherent whole – contribute to restrain, or to slow down, or to mitigate, or to eradicate, temporally or definitively, the problems they are called to treat? Is it a global corrective or mitigating action?

While there are a lot of activities taken up by the MPS, there is lack of a link between them and the value they add to SMD. MPS global and decentralised hubs have neither explicitly developed, nor utilised tools or approaches which contribute specifically to SMD¹⁵. Overall, they seem to address short term problems more than display a strategy which is impact led. Further, the concern for such a strategy does not seem to emerge from the network, indicating that the members have not been engaged in a debate to address long term issues specific to SMD.

Given that in the past years, and especially over the last year, many activities, meetings and events have been organised, giving the impression of achievements. Yet, the feeling among many interviewed stakeholders is that there is a lack of thematic follow up, and of concrete evidence of outcomes and impact of these meetings.

Despite our investigation¹⁶, some significant aspects remain unclear and would probably require special attention:

- To what extent do all the members actually share the same background and agenda?
- To what extent are the members promoting on their own initiative, the messages and views promoted by the MP?
- To what extent are they involved in activities that give practical forms and strength to the main messages conveyed?
- In other words, to what extent are these members more than just recipients of inputs produced by the core nucleus of MPS's proselytes, that is, more than passive members?

From our interviews, it seems that MPS has no particular means, scheme or device at hand that could help answer these questions¹⁷. We do not find that MPS holds a clear strategic list of targets that it could have identified in order to exert a focussed influence.

At the end, a question remains: to what extent does the MPS action rest on a clear cut landscape of strategic purposes and targets? What should these targets be that MPS should have identified in order to exert an influence? These questions are debatable. But the debate is slow in coming.

2.5 Networking action and life

MP has to be seen as a network. A lot of MPS's endeavours are explicitly led to shape a function of so-called "networker". Some key questions rise here:

- What sort of networking dynamic is promoted?
- Is the MP a network of active members, *proactive network*? Or is it just a list of people likely to be informed when necessary, *opportunistic dormant network*?
- Is this enough to claim partnership?
- Is the MP network a social and living fabric likely to exert a diversified influence through mobilized membership?

MPS level) concerning the best way to follow up effects, impacts or changes that can be reasonably attributed to their action.

15- It must be added that CH state that formally speaking the MPS was never established to "do" SMD as such, but rather to facilitate a functioning partnership, in which the members actually engage in SMD activities. The MPS brokers and facilitates action, but does not develop/utilize tools/approaches for SMD. Some TCP projects, which are linked to the MPS, are actually carrying out SMD, but these are FAO-led activities (FAO as a member of the MP).

16- Partly because we did not have the possibility or the means to probe it directly.

17- Monitoring does not seem to be a major preoccupation. We are not particularly keen on M&E tools and settings, but as far as change is concerned, it is wise to develop one or two instruments that make you more capable to follow up the formation of effects or impacts in the footsteps of the activities you carry out. This could help better steer the whole MPS "machinery" and develop a reflexive stance about its action (at the end, to what are we contributing to? To what change? Or to what non-change (meaning that one could be an unconscious obstacle to change)?).

However no clear answers are seen emerging here.

Another side of a network life concerns the extent to which innovations circulate and expand. This is a classical function of a network: help innovation make a breakthrough, among members and beyond. This is another rather obscure area: apart from global messages about SMD, the very necessity of SMD and so on, what operational or strategic innovations have been circulated and, consequently, improved (as the most direct way to make an innovation improved is to enlarge its field of practical experimentation)? On first sight, several areas of innovation would be accessible:

- Innovating in SMD practices (technical or operational innovation),
- Innovating in SMD strategy (how to build relevant and impact-producing programmes),
- Innovating in the best way to exert a decisive influence or mobilize stakeholders,
- Innovating in communication or networking.

We do not find a lot of information likely to provide convincing answers in this area.

2.6 SDC's contribution to the impact

SDC has played a “hands-on” role as a donor in the MP (see Annexure 6.10, volume 2). At first, as the MPS was not perceived to deliver value, as there was a general lack of activity and loss of connection between the MP members and MF users. This led to SDC deciding to get more engaged, setting up the Mountain Partnership Consortium (MPC), which then was mandated with strategic guidance, approving the action plans and the annual budgets. The emphasis on key issues was brought in, and MPS was required to deliver against these.

One of the deliverables was an active presence and role in the Rio+20 Conference, which was facilitated very strongly by SDC. The SDC has also kept up a pressure on the MPS to show results.

On the good side, this active engagement had the effect of more activities being initiated. It has, however, also had a negative implication, in the perception among some key stakeholders that such engagement by a donor has reduced the space available for the implementing agency to initiate action. These divergent perceptions have led to an erosion of relationships among the key MP stakeholders.

2.7 Efficient use of SDC's financial resources

This is a touchy issue. So far, FAO has not been able to give us costs related to outputs¹⁸. The only certainty is what SDC has invested financially, CHF 4,200,000 in the past years. We do not have any information of how MPS practically did allocate the Swiss contribution. As far as our understanding of what was explained by MPS, the Swiss financial part was added to a set of several other financial contributions, such as the Italian one, in order to complete a global allowance / budget. But what budget exactly? What financial structure? What balance between the several budget lines? How are these lines justified? In a word, what has been paid, where, how much, by whom, in addition to what? So far, it is a cloudy area indeed. SDC should be concerned¹⁹.

18- Despite several pressing requests, despite endeavours made here and there by some MPS officers in February in Rome and later by email it was impossible to get any financial information. This is clear evidence of the inability of the FAO structure to produce such financial information as required for accountability.

19- In order to make this issue clearer, but not necessary more acceptable, it should be pointed out that FAO financial accounting follows the rules established by its governing bodies and consequently would be fully accountable. The difficulty is that FAO reporting is done by budget lines (e.g. staff, consultants, travel, equipment, overhead, etc) as they are defined in Oracle (FAO financial system), rather than by activity. This is problematic, since some donors prefer to know expenditures by activity, but FAO's financial services can only report by category.

2.8 Contributing key players, processes and mechanisms

The documents, interviews and surveys show that the major achievements can be attributed to the cooperation of many actors. First of all, SDC has been very engaged as a donor, and has played a key role in mobilising the energy for important contributions at the global level. SDC has played a key role in overseeing the achievements of the MP, and has helped mobilise the more active organisations into an MPC, that then guided the work of the MP and MPS.

The hubs have been the pivots at the regional level, and it is their activities that have been showcased by the Central Hub. Some of them, e.g. ICIMOD, have made major contributions at the global level, and all the Decentralised Hubs, Central Asia, Asia and Latin America, have been successful in mobilising national governments and NGOs²⁰.

Sometimes, competition and event conflicts can help networks or partnerships become more effective. However, in the particular case of MPS, we are at pain to find out any advantages of related instances (and others we are not inclined to elicit here).

2.9 Governance issue

In some organizational contexts, it seems that the best way to wrap up the emptiness of a structure is to launch a diverting game around the governance: how to share the decision making process, how to share privileges, and the like. This is probably the case with MPS. Yes, there is a governance issue. However, in our mind, this is mostly a symptom of something deeper that we try to explore in chapter 4. The governance issue is all the more embarrassing because the vision, strategic orientation and purposefulness are blurred. However due to the weight of this issue when interviewing, we have gathered together our reflections and related conclusions about this still touchy issue in Annexure 6.9.

2.10 Conclusions²¹

A 2007 mid-term assessment of the MPS carried out by Heather Creech and Ken Caplan of IISD²² at the request of SDC had already concluded that the MPS suffered from lack of strategic focus, had a blurred idea of the partnership, lacked evidence related to achievements, outcomes and effects, lacked tools to monitor projects launched under the flag of MPS, and particularly lacked ownership on behalf of the members and had a low level of membership participation at large. They already recommended to, i) refine the purpose of the MP, ii) redefine the purpose of the secretariat, iii) introduce measures of governance, strategy and accountability, iv) review the hosting arrangement for the secretariat, v) consider decentralizing secretariat functions, and vi) plan for closure with an agreed time frame.

Five years later, the vast majority of these derivations are still highly purposeful. The findings from our own interviews still show a lack of shared vision about the MP, and the majority of our informants cannot elicit clear cut achievements, outcomes and effects. After 10 years of formation, the MP should have been at the stage of maturity, with clarity about goals, partners, a sense of ownership, and a representative Steering Committee confident about its guidance to the MP. Instead, there is not a strong agreement about the degree and nature of achievements, and there is still a poor cooperation between key individuals and institutional stakeholders in the Mountain Partnership.

²⁰ There has been support from the FAO and UNEP in quite successfully in organizing major events at UNFCCC, UNCCD and UNCBD meetings, to the decentralized hubs alone. This was one of the major reasons why SDC initially favoured having the MPS hosted at FAO, also given the lead agency role for mountain issues that FAO has been tasked with since the 1992 Earth Summit. It is also why the MP was established – to bring governments, civil society and IGOs more closely together through new partnerships to achieve SMD. However, over time, the UN role is seen to have become significantly less effective.

21- See Annexure 7 (section 6.7, volume 2) for more details and a more elaborated conclusion.

22- IISD : International Institute for Sustainable Development

3 The Mountain Forum (MF)

In this chapter, we bring together all the information and analyses relevant to the MF²³. This federation of networks, devoted to the promotion of mountains through sharing information, mutual support and advocacy at all levels, bringing together expertise and knowledge, has existed and developed itself since 1995. Its main features can be summarized in a few key words: a website with specialized news, an on-line library and a calendar the same of the MP's.

The MF began with the intention of those interested in “mountain” issues, to communicate amongst themselves. It was described as “...an innovative and integrative bridge between diverse nongovernmental, governmental, intergovernmental, scientific, and private sector organizations and individuals. The purpose of the Mountain Forum is to provide a forum for mutual support and for the exchange of ideas and experiences. This will empower participants to raise mountain issues on local, national, regional, and international agendas and to promote policies and actions for equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development”²⁴.

As a network of networks, The MF was originally organized around the following 5 regional networks:

- Europe: European Mountain Forum (EMF)
- North America: North American Mountain Forum (NAMF)
- Latin America: InfoAndina - Latin American Mountain Forum
- Africa: African Mountain Forum (AMF)
- Asia-Pacific: Asia-Pacific Mountain Network (APMN)

The central task of facilitation of the network and the global-interregional activities were carried out by the MFS hosted originally in USA and then moved to ICIMOD in Kathmandu, Nepal.

In 2009, at a meeting in Cusco, the earlier organisational structure was replaced by a Global Node, with the purpose of coordinating an integrated network across the regional nodes. The coordination was then shifted from the MF Secretariat in ICIMOD – Nepal, to CONDESAN in Lima, Peru, which is currently acting as a Global Node.

The relation between the MFS and regional networks is basically that the MFS focuses on central supporting tasks for the overall network and facilitation of activities at the global and interregional level. The regional networks carry out the various tasks at regional level, and participate and contribute to the global and interregional activities.

3.1 Achievements and performance

Achievements and performance were gleaned from the activities and actions of the MF, as well as from the survey with users. The question about the achievements of the MF that reflect its importance was asked to the respondents of the e-survey. The major responses related to achievements about:

- Networking with the mountain research communities and enabling connectivity²⁵;
- Access to and dissemination of information (topical and thematic), about sustainable development and socio-economic issues in mountain regions globally, through events such as e-conferences²⁶;
- Fostering Mountain issues at international meetings, agreements, and policy making,
- Maintaining a calendar of events, known as the Mountain Calendar,
- Preparation for the Rio+20 convention.

In order to deepen as far as possible this global assessment, we have probed two additional aspects, the *benefits to users* and the *initiatives* taken by them in the framework of their involvement in MF. The

23- For more details, please look at the Annexure 5, volume 2.

24-Byers, Elizabeth; 1997. (<http://www.mtnforum.org/en/content/mountain-forum-learning-communicate-within-pluralistic-network>)

25- For mountain research, MRI is in charge of their network.

26- The popularity of e-conferences seems to have diminished somewhat recently

benefits mentioned by users were related to being better networked, gaining broad information about mountain issues, dissemination of research results in scientific networks and keeping up with action/perspectives of different regions. The initiatives taken by members were related to participation in MF meetings and local SMD work.

The barriers to benefiting from MF are related to lack of internet accessibility in some mountain regions, and the need for translations across different languages. Further, there is confusion between MF and MP, as individual users registered in MF may also be part of organisations which have MP membership.

3.2 Perceptions about coordination

The MF global node sends out regular emails to its users. They link the activities and data sources of different networks through their website. The website is however, only as useful as members want to make use of it, and it is often the updating of links of networks that keeps the website updated, rather than the traffic of individual member contributions.

The move to CONDESAN is seen by some to have resulted in improvement in planning and reporting. By contrast, it is seen by others as having made communication more difficult, even though inter-regional cooperation is expected from all the regional nodes. The planning was not viewed as participatory, not having given sufficient time to the other regional nodes to contribute effectively. Other contentious issues relate to the relatively skewed division of resources across the regional hubs. The planning processes for activities and responsibilities are not universally perceived to be inclusive, which results in unequal allocation of resources.

There was also mention of perceived conflicts, or overlaps between MF and other networks' activities, which prevented some activities being taken up by the MF. Being a network of networks, this kind of a conflict has been part of the fabric of MF, and is indicative of a competitive spirit²⁷.

The MF needs to seriously re-position itself through collaborative effort, and work in an inclusive and decentralised style. A full restructuring and revival is needed, which can come about if the Mountain Forum reconnects with the users, becomes more demand driven, defines its core strengths, offers services that provide value added over other networks, attends to the language needs in different regions and ensures regionally equitable distribution of power and resources. Such renewal is seen as desirable by most of the respondents of interviews. The users also prioritise actions that enhance sustainable natural resource management (e.g. land, water, energy, minerals) and improved livelihoods of mountain communities. All these can be done more efficiently if the activities of the MF are integrated with those of MP, especially in the decentralised hubs/nodes, as the same organisations manage the activities of both MF and MP.

27- Similar undercurrents are prevalent in MP as we have already seen in chapter 2.

4 Basic pending issues and questions

Properly interpreting the performance of the MPS and the MF demands an analysis of the rationale and the conceptual foundations on which these structures build their action. It is not possible in this two-page section to explore such touchy issues in depth. This was not the purpose of this evaluation. But it should have been the first preoccupation of networks such as MP or MF to convincingly establishing such an evidence. That was not the case. This is why we feel necessary to "open that box", at least for a short while.

The reader will find more and better structured arguments in Annexure 6.6. In this section, we have just tried to capture the very essence of our concern in a few words.

Before doing that, we need to clarify that our intention is not to rudely cut the branch on which the whole MP and MF dynamic is nested, nor to deny any value to the great efforts made over 10 years under the banner of mountains. We just want to help in doing what should have been done more rigorously by such networks from the very beginning, consolidating the backgrounds of what still remained so far simply as promising intuitions.

4.1 Is mountain a development concept?

Is there really something special about the mountains? Can the whole range of specific mountain-driven actions be justified just by the concept of mountain? This is the first question to be addressed. What is special about mountains? What is special about mountain society? What is so special as to generate specific worldwide programs and dynamics? Mountains play an important role with regard to biodiversity, forestry, water and soil conservation, and climate change; but is their role more important than any other area? Why should mankind be more attentive to mountains than any other place in the world? These questions are clearly uncomfortable. But they are crucial. Without any satisfactory answer, one is at pain to establish the ultimate meaning of all the endeavours made so far under the banner of MP and MF.

Conceptually, it appears that all mountain-based dynamics promoted by MF and MP are highlighted and eventually justified by another more global suitcase-like concept. For example, poverty or biodiversity or climate change. Is poverty in the mountain specific? So specific that it should raise strong interests elsewhere? Is mountain biodiversity so special so that it would be impossible to address this basic issue without any mountain-prone considerations? The same would be stated for a long queue of development concepts such as gender, marketing, water management, health, governance, and the like. Apart from conjugating the mountain with all these cross-cutting concepts, where is mountain specificity to be found?

4.2 Is sustainable mountain development (SMD) more than a fashionable conception?

This question derives directly from the previous ones. The concept of SMD is widely used within the framework of the two networks (MP and MF). Again, to what extent is the SMD specific? What does the perspective of development actually mean as far as mountains are concerned? How far must the concept of sustainability be shaped in order to match the particular context of mountains? To what extent and how do these two crucial concepts need to be adapted to the mountain context?

These questions are all the more relevant that both seminal concepts, development and sustainability, are not questioned as such. The terminology, SMD, has been used, without a strong articulation of what this should mean in terms of action.

4.3 Partnership and forum, two other rather confusing concepts?

Two more important key words. Ultimately the role of a secretariat such as MPS is to contribute to build a strong partnership, an impact-producing one, effectively making a difference, particularly in the domains where the so-called partners are not in the best position to do it themselves (lack of time, of means, of mandate). The same applies for MF, but from a different angle of view. Now, what does one mean exactly by partnership or forum? What is the vision behind *and* beyond these fashionable

words? To what extent do the MF and MP networks contribute to enrich or renew these perspectives? How do they innovate in these fields? Key questions still without answers.

4.4 At the end, what perspective on change? What strategy to promote what change?

As a general rule, the horizon of strategic change is absent. Where do all the endeavours lead to? To what crucial change? How and to what do they make a difference, particularly at society level? What contributions to what transformations do they make in the way mountain societies function, politically, socially, environmentally, culturally, and economically? More precisely, to what extent does change promoted in mountains areas contribute to change at global level? This is a key question.

Change. Another rather confusing word. Never explained, not conceptualized, and not even specifically elaborated. What is meant by this concept in the realm of MP and MF? Change in forms? What forms then? Change in structures? What structures, conditioned by what processes? More basically, what *theory of change*, that is, how the way MP and MF work are destined to trigger off what change process targeting what society workings along with what context and trend analysis? What functional diagnosis provides some strategic orientations or guidance?

So far SMD programmes backed up in the framework of MP or MF seem to be principally managed to solve located problems here and there, problem-driven, meaning that there is no clear view, nor strategy about how while solving this particular or isolated problem one helps solve a wider range of more global problems. As a matter of fact, beyond purely conventional and rather vague rhetoric exercises, no answer is available within the framework of MP and MF to such basic questions: no conceptual or factual resources are available at MP or MF level to rigorously address such fundamental issues. Consequently, and this is no surprise, there are no means no devices, no setting, no tools to monitor targeted transformations.

4.5 Are MP and MF political enough, if at all?

All that we have raised here can be summarized in one question: are these networks political? Yes, they are policy-driven, somehow. MF and MP declare that they strive to influence national and international policies. They actually do so, more or less. This is principally in transforming mountain into a new decisive concept and decision criterion likely to structure environmental and global policies. Is that the right challenge? Just making the policy more mountain-wise, more mountain-sensitive, more mountain-prone? Is the mountain destined to be a new fashioned concept?

As will be explained and detailed in Annexure 6.6, in our mind, being political means, and implies, much more than that. Being political means utilizing one's field of action, one's original position in the world, for example the fact that one lives in mountain areas, to question the global society, its rationale, its functioning, its structures, its processes, from an original point of view that adds a specific and enriching contribution to global debates and concerns. Being political, in this sense, supposes that networks like MF and MP elaborate their own context and society analysis. Their own change theory. Their own conception of change. This implies that they derive some relevant orientations directly from this particular, specific and original analysis. Some orientations are likely to inspire concrete actions and programmes, and likely to feed innovation and action research processes.

In our mind, these aspects and all the questions raised above in this chapter are of prime importance as they propose ultimate and highly significant indicators likely to help the SDC make a decision about the relevance of its support to such networks. The core mission or the ultimate added value of such a secretariat as MP or such a forum like MF lies precisely at that level: developing strong political signification and motivation, that is, helping mountain people write down a new global world history.

All the questions raised in this chapter should constitute the crucial part of the work carried out by MP and MF, the very foundations of their mission. This basic task should have been institutionally, intellectually and strategically supported by MPS. However, such is not the case. This is why we have the strong feeling that there is a structural lack of innovation, because the conceptual and political base is still to be elaborated.

5 Options and recommendations

Paradoxically, despite all what we have underscored above in sections 2 to 4, we think that the time has not yet come to "close the whole shop". We sincerely think that there is something relevant still to do. Yet, without strong meaningful and specific orientation, *raison d'être* and background, without any clear-cut identity, without any in-depth conceptual clarification, notably on the role of mountain as the main coalescing factor, we are at pain to find and legitimize a place for structures as such MP or MF and consequently to ground the role of SDC in that story.

From our investigations through MF and MPS (summed up in the previous sections), what should SDC continue to fund, if any, why, whom, where, how, and along with which key targets and strategic criteria? These are the key points we need to tackle here.

These questions will be quickly addressed in section 5.2. After that, we will say a word on what could be the future of SDC with MF and MPS, at least in the short run (sections 5.3). However, before doing that, we must clarify some unavoidable prerequisites, that is, eliciting the preconditions that should be *absolutely* fulfilled beforehand, ideally. This is the purpose of the crucial section 5.1²⁸.

5.1 Basic prerequisites

They are numbered, but this does not indicate any order of priority nor strict sequencing, just an indication.

(1) First: *do support a dynamic, not a structure*. A structure is just a means to serve a goal. The key issue is that goal, and the dynamic to make it live as a reachable and desirable reality. If SDC has to support a structure, it should be because this structure seems to be the best way to foster an ever-evolving process-like dynamic

(2) Second: *help provide a strong conceptual ground*, on which build a mountain-wise dynamic, that is, a dynamic that does not aggravate the society fragmentation process and that helps carve an inclusive identity (see sections 6.6.1 and 6.6.6, Annexure 6, volume 2). This is probably the starting point that apparently, appears to be the missing link from the very beginning of the MF or MP initiatives.

(3) Third: in the wake of this basic dynamic, *help provide a stronger action profile to SMD*. As far as we have understood what it is all about, SMD is still a box to be fulfilled. This means that the basic SMD concept and vision is still to be fine-tuned (see the sections 6.6.2, 6.6.5 and 6.6.6, Annexure 6, volume 2). Sustainability is a fashioned concept, so that from now on apparently everything should be sustainable or sustainability-producing. SDC should help more sharply elicit what this concept means, or should mean when combined with mountain development²⁹.

(4) Fourth: *help experiment a strong society change-driven approach making best value to neutralize basic mechanisms affecting mountain societies* (see section 6.6.4, volume 2, our allusion to a six-step setting). We particularly emphasize the role of (i) backing up tentative change theory working-out and (ii) from this tentative change theory helping derive concrete change monitoring approaches (in order to clearly see what is at stake beyond the elegance of institutional rhetoric).

28- Let's precise that our recommendations are principally addressed to SDC and accordingly formulated. Thus they are not directly addressed neither to MPS, nor to MF. In particular, here we are not keen on the way to improve their current situation, structure or assets. We are more concerned by the rationale and the underpinnings of a SMD initiative.

29- There was a strong intuition in Johannesburg, 10 years ago. This intuition has still to be elaborated, conceptualized and experienced. Metaphorically: the "suitcase" of the so-called SMD concept must be fulfilled and loaded in processes.

5.2 Three basic questions

What should SDC continue to fund, if any, why, whom, how, along with which key targets and strategic criteria?

5.2.1 What should SDC continue to fund, if any?

Does SDC have something to do in the field of SMD? Our answer is yes. Two "things" are to be done:

- First: *help invent or innovate*. That is, help elaborate clear cut tangible perspectives to the four prerequisites mentioned in section 5.1. In other words, help innovate in actual *action research processes*. That is, SDC should fund innovative action research processes. SDC should help innovative actors (i) mitigate risks of innovating and (ii) widely share their innovation outcomes and processes.
- Second: in the direct wake of this innovating undertaking, help *exert a strong and structured influence at global level*. That is, SDC should fund innovative dynamics likely to exert a strong, if not decisive influence.

Precisely, SDC should help *effective and genuinely involved actors* innovate and exert a strong and structured influence at any relevant level, including global level, so that in practice the four prerequisites become a tangible and widespread reality. This means that something more has to be done beforehand by SDC: *identifying the right actors*, the actors that are likely to give life and strength to these two lines of action as effectively as possible, actors that have an actual added value (in terms of creativity and innovation skills, but also at political level).

What we outline here basically concerns the very role of SDC at large, facilitating the development of *incubators of relevant breakthrough-generating innovations* in the main fields of society change, political, policy-led, technical, societal, economic, social, and cultural. Such an innovative format of SDC is all the more relevant that the development sphere is in crisis and in need of profound renewal.

5.2.2 Whom should SDC fund?

Let us stress immediately on two lines of reasoning: (i) what matters here is the dynamic not the structure and (ii) the two functions underscored in section 5.2.1. are not necessarily to be carried out by the same actors. Some could be experts in innovating and experimenting in the field of SMD in order to make this conception as concrete, as strong, as feasible and as effective as possible. Others, could be excellent at influencing the right authority at the right time, at the right place, at the appropriate levels, with the right means. Here the challenge is (i) to find out and test new ways to elaborate an operation properly SMD-wise targeted agenda and (ii) to make this agenda take place in, and transform, the reality.

From those two questions we can derive two questions that we are unable to answer here: practically who are the best actors likely to innovate in the conceptual and action field of SMD? Who are the best actors likely to make things actually "move" in the institutional spheres in order to make a significant difference in the political domain? In other words, where to "nest" the necessary parts of the initiatives to be reconceptualized? These are questions to be put on the SDC agenda. It is up to SDC to identify these actors and help them be effective.

5.2.3 How, along with which key targets and strategic criteria should SDC continue to fund?

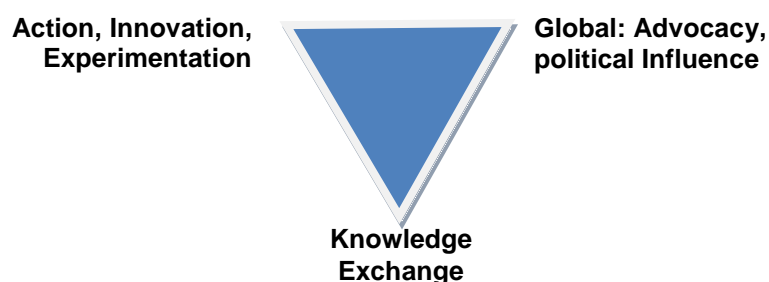
In the realm of the "how to do", the first concern for such an institution as SDC in the field of the so-called SMD must be *creativity* (that is the capability to imagine but also elaborate and experiment new issues, new ways of doing but also new ways of thinking (construing) what has to be done. At least at the two levels underlined above, (i) action research (the field of SMD conceptualization and at the same time the level of action) and (ii) influence (political level). In practice, what innovation should the SMD-wise action research test? To what extent is it really an innovating breakthrough? Does it actually help to enrich the SMD strategy? Creativity must be the first guiding criteria. Creativity was precisely the weak link from the very beginning.

Then, as far as a theory of change becomes part of the process, SDC must be demanding on the side of the strategic elaboration in the direct line of all we have introduced in section 6.6.4. The key criteria here is the added value in terms of change: to what extent does the SMD backed-up initiative, help change what is basically at stake beyond the fashionable mainstreamed mottoes? In practice, this means that actors are elicit change processes and show to what relevant difference they contribute.

5.3 In practice, what should SDC do with MPS and MF?³⁰

The Swiss Development Cooperation needs to promote its Mountain Agenda through three domains of influence, as shown in Figure 2 below:

Figure 5.1: Three Domains of Influence



Networking and knowledge exchange

This work primarily originates and is managed by the regional hubs / nodes. They collect information from MP members/ MF users in the regions, which they put on websites, and provide cross-links between different hubs. There are occasional thematic meetings at national, regional levels. Knowledge products are generated in the form of common publications. Publications are also brought out by the global hub of MPS. Knowledge sharing activities need to be supported first and foremost in the regions, keeping only a small role for MPS global hub, relating primarily to a discussion of issues that need to be collated and canvassed at the global level.

Community level innovations and action

Action projects on SMD, which promote sustainable livelihoods of mountain communities, can be undertaken through many means, of which an important one is the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) mode of working. Such partnerships can be brokered at a regional level, and some may be from a global level, at the instance of the specific donors. A forum such as the World Mountain Forum, could launch partnership initiatives for sustainable livelihoods of mountain communities with tools e.g. a SMD Marketplace. The innovations can be implemented in close collaboration with DHs.

Policy advocacy and influence

The task of advocacy and influencing policy, at national and regional levels may be well cared for by national and regional organizations and networks. However, at the global level, an international agency is best placed to coordinate. The global hub requires a UN Agency with the ability to mobilize governments, provide technical inputs, and act as a secretariat for putting together knowledge and draft points for UN resolutions.

SDC would be well advised to focus on the decentralised, regional hubs/nodes as the first two domains of influence, knowledge exchanges, and action innovations. In doing this, it would be good to ensure equitable power and participation in decision making across regional hubs, with the newer hubs, such as Central Asia, being built up systematically to grow in operations and influence, similar to the Asia Pacific and Latin American hubs.

30- See Annexure 6.8.

For the advocacy/ policy influence agenda, SDC would be well advised to move from funding the FAO Rome, and find an alternative mechanism in the near future. This is best done by a group of political actors, who will have a strong voice in influencing national governments and at the global level.

The main recommendations for SDC derive from taking seriously its responsibility in leading the SMD agenda both nationally and globally. For this, SDC needs to push and promote SMD in Switzerland through active interactions with other policy actors and decision makers. To influence global policy, SDC can make good use of relevant Swiss foreign policy instruments, such as the Swiss Permanent missions to the UN (NYC, GVA, Nairobi). In particular, SDC can promote SMD through alliances with Swiss negotiators from other Units within the Swiss administration such as Federal office for Environment or Federal office for Agriculture, and those at conferences of CSD, RIO +20, UNFCCC and other relevant fora.