



MOUNTAINS CONNECT

IMI NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY

Women move Mountains

The International Mountain Day has its roots in 1992, when the adoption of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development" at the United Nations (UN) Conference on Environment and Development put a milestone in the history of mountain development.

This year the theme for International Mountain Day - Women Move Mountains. This year the theme for International Mountain Day - Women Move Mountains. Women play a key role in socio-ecological development in mountain areas. They are often the primary managers of mountain resources, guardians of biodiversity, keepers of traditional knowledge, custodians of local culture and experts in traditional medicine. Yet mountain women are often invisible due to unequal access to decision-making spaces, power and to resources. To trigger real change towards sustainable development, it is important to engage in gender transformative change.

IMI observed this event through social media engagement highlighting women of the IMI network. State Chapters of Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Darjeeling observed the day through events.



The 5th RST Forum was organised on the occasion of International Mountain Day, on December 11, 2022 by the Sustainable Development Forum Uttarakhand with a workshop on "The role of women and community-based organizations in forest management and climate change mitigation". Representatives from the Government, community-based organizations, private sector, Universities, and NGOs participated to discuss on the issues of climate change in the mountains, role of women in climate mitigation, and Van Panchayats. These were issues central to the interest of Dr RS Tolia.

The workshop highlighted that women of Uttarakhand had played a significant role in forest conservation and climate change mitigation as exemplified by the well known Chipko Andolan. Lack of coordination between the administration and encroachment in forest areas were discussed as key issues. The workshop discussed on setting up Van Vikas Kendras, forming new cadre for Van Panchayast to monitor and implement rules, devising inclusive women-centric policies and to bring coordination between the Biodiversity Act and the rules of Van Panchayat.

The Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative and the Sikkim Chapter of IMI hosted a panel discussion, sharing the journeys of three women engaged in various sectors in the Sikkim- Darjeeling Himalaya. Ms. Kamlesh, an educationist, environmentalist, anti-trafficking activist, football and hockey coach; Ms Shanti, a river guide, rescuer in the turbulent River Teesta and the Koshi floods and a social activist; and Dr. Sunita, a pioneering conservation biologist whose work in red panda is seminal and continues to work on human-wildlife interactions, biodiversity and zoonosis.

The discussion enabled critical contextual discussion on gender in the Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalaya through the life stories of the panelists and offered inspiration for our society. Personal achievements and journeys of the speakers highlighted the enabling factors and support systems they fell back on. Systemic inequity that does not acknowledge, recognise the contributions of women in our society were the barriers that needed to be broken, so as to provide equal spaces and opportunities.

DHI also hosted an online Conversation Series with Kalimpong TV featuring women from the field of academia, film, conservation, organic farming, etc.



IMI UPDATES

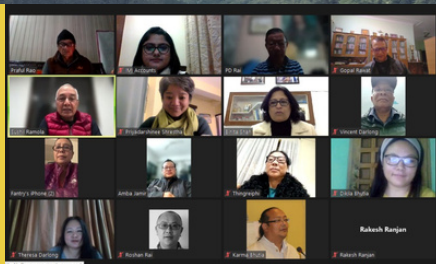
9th Annual General Meeting of IMI was held online on 17th December 2022, chaired by Shri PD.Rai, President, and with 17 members in attendance. After the President's welcome address, Secretary, Ms. Priyadarshinee presented the action taken report of 8th AGM, followed by a brief on IMI activities conducted. Ms. P.Shrestha, Ms. B. Shah and Mr. Rai presented about SMDS XI including MLM 2022 and Youth Summit. International Mountain Day events organised by SDFU and DHI with Sikkim Chapter was also presented.

Northeast Journal, by PD Rai A joyful visit to Arunachal Pradesh(AP) and Nagaland(NL)



This visit by us to the furthest eastern part of our country is thanks to the IMI's network plus liberal sprinkling of friendship cultivated and nurtured over the years. Thanks to Ms. Fantry Mein Jaswal and Mr. Alemtemshi Jamir who very kindly agreed to host us; Sushil Ramola, Bharti Ramola, Ramesh Negi and Jean, my better half.

We assembled at Dibrugarh on the 25th November, 2022. The first leg included visiting the Namsai area of AP. Our second was seeing Mokokchung and Kohima in NL. We had planned this for a long time but never realised what a delightful trip would ensue until it happened! Fully engaging with the local community, history and culture every step of the way. It was immersive and a deeply learning experience, especially since none of us had seen Eastern AP and the Mokokchung area, home place of Mr. Amba Jamir, our very own GC Member. Mr. Ramesh Negi, former Chief Secretary of AP peeled off after our AP leg. He had more pressing meetings in Itanagar. He was able to drive on the Trans-AP Highway to Itanagar, which is an awesome infrastructure built in recent times. What a pleasure to drive on that highway on our visit of Roing.



Key discussion points

- Upcoming Meet of the Mountain States, to be held at IISc Bangalore with Divecha Center for Climate Change.
- Endorsement of Leh Declaration with State Chapter and member support.
- Funding related issues and IMI's strategy for fundraising
- Review of IMI membership

Visit highlights in AP were Namsai and the Golden Pagoda area; Roing is the place from where the erstwhile Chief Minister Mr. Mukut Mithi hails. He hosted a wonderful local traditional lunch along with visits to some of the interesting sites including the excavation of an 1,600 AD Palace of a Sutiya King. A good amount of quiet research is going on there which is very interesting. The Idu Mishmis and the Khamtis have been living in harmony for centuries.

In Namsai we met Mr. Chowna Mein the current Deputy Chief Minister, who was so kind to make us really feel so much at home. Under his guidance the famous Golden Pagoda has been established. Buddhist Monks from Thailand and other places regularly visit this place.

Furthermore, we met more Khamti clan members on our sojourn. A picnic was also thrown in; on the banks of the Lohit river near Parshuram Kund.



We visited the eastern most part of India, the Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve, but only into the buffer areas. Biodiversity is immense and secure. Little wonder why the North East houses more than 30 percent of India's biodiversity resources.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear friends in our IMI Network or outside it.

Yet another year has passed and we have entered 2023. Seven short years to 2030 when we have to fulfil many of our promises, like the SDGs, and make a significant reduction in our carbon footprint (CFP) if we are to keep the earth from warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius. This is the real challenge that we must address. We are reminded of this every time by the UN Secretary General, António Guterres.

I am an optimist. We still can do it if we work in unison and change our personal, institutional and corporate behaviour.

We have to start somewhere. So how? We begin with individual behaviour change and progress to our workplace. For instance let us trim our eating by cutting down on meat and consume more vegetables and reduce carbohydrates. Let us look for food that is locally produced and which is traditional. Like our fermented foods. These are good for our health as well as for the planet. That is what science is now reaffirming. Our forefathers were always right.

I am eating only locally grown organic food. Eating less too. So combined my CFP is showing reduction.

Institutionally, IMI will have to do more. Less travelling for our summits. More work has to be done by the State Chapters in their local areas. We can meet more through webinars. We have discovered the process during the pandemic which we are using to good effect.

So, if we are to make one difference let us watch our own carbon footprints and reduce them systematically. Corporates will do it if there are financial incentives or disincentives. Another way is to use less plastic too. Stay away from processed foods. Say no to all forms of plastic. Let us strive for zero waste.

Finally, think about it and write back to us with what can be done or what you are doing in your States. Others would love to hear that too. We all can contribute our mite to this humongous challenge in front of us.

With warm regards and wishing you and your families all happiness in the year unfolding.

PD Rai,
President IMI

In NL we were grateful guests in the home of Mrs. Banou and Alemtemshi Jamir. They were so gracious and kind to show us that part of NL which is otherwise invisible. We were witness to the wonderful work the communitisation process has ushered in. The trust that has developed with communities and the work that they are doing that is seen in public goods like primary and sub-primary health care. Zero waste Himalaya has taken deep root in the village of Mopungchuket. The way young people are taking charge of their lives was a wonderful experience in itself.



These models are worthy of being emulated in other parts of the Indian Himalayan Region. We also enjoyed the famous Hornbill Festival with all its cultural extravaganza.

The Honey Mission, the Bamboo mission and the Organic Mission - we were able to see in person.. Organic Mission is another great wonder. We saw the full flow of local people and their produce including an array of millets. And not to forget great wine.

The food and fruits during the entire trip can be described as medicine. Such good fruits and vegetables grown locally made us healthier.

PARTNER'S CORNER

Future Earth, Divecha Center for Climate Change at COP27

Future Earth had both an onsite and virtual presence at COP27, which was attended by one hundred Heads of State and Governments, and more than 35,000 participants from 6 to 20 November 2022 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.



Future Earth's role at COP27 was to put science at the heart of negotiations and released the 10 New Insights in Climate Science 2022. New Science on Dangerous Tipping Points", and Global Carbon Budget 2022 were also launched.

At COP27, more than two dozen agenda items were agreed upon and among them was a long-discussed fund for "loss and damage", in which richer countries pay poorer nations to help them handle the damage caused by climate-related disasters. There has been no agreement yet, on who will finance the fund and how, and a committee is supposed to help with the details to be decided at COP28 in Dubai. Governments reaffirmed their commitment to limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and tipping points were mentioned for the first time in the COP27 Implementation Plan.

While leaders did not agree to phase out fossil fuels, governments did strengthen national action to cut emissions and adapt to climate change. Governments also agreed on approaches to establishing a Global Goal on Adaptation.

As reported by Dr. Smriti Basnett

Visit of CM and Home Minister to EB Nature Project

The Nature Project initiated by Mr. Egam Basar in Soi village, was visited by the Hon'ble CM of Arunachal Pradesh, Mr Pema Khandu along with the Home Minister, Mr. Kiren Rijiju in December. In the last decade, the project has worked on reviving springs and water bodies which were on the verge of drying up. Deforestation in key water catchment areas had led to reduced flows in small streams and rivulets feeding the main rivers. The project focused on reforestation and spring recharge through digging of pits and trenches by mobilizing youths from Soi and neighbouring villages.

The success story of EB-Project Nature had been presented in the Legislator's Meet-2018 organised by IMI to raise awareness on climate change. Both of them lauded the effort and success of the project that had not only revived the drying springs but also positively impacted biodiversity, while generating livelihood for local communities through tourism.

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Kiren Rijiju @KirenRijiju · Follow

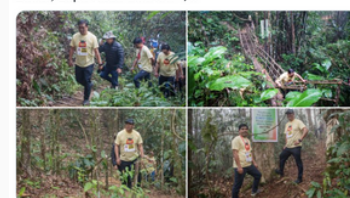
Besides conservation of bio-diversity and wildlife, the project is working on medicinal plants, orchids and spring rejuvenation as integrated activities. Now eco-tourism activities have also emerged as major attraction!



Pema Khandu @PemaKhanduBJP

A Few Great Moments Amid Nature!

A great experience to have trekked to EB-Project Nature along with Hon Union Min Shri @KirenRijiju ji, Hon Min Shri Mama Natung ji, Hon MLAs Shri Gokar Basar ji and Shri Kardo Nyigyor ji near Soi village, Basar, Lema Rada district. 1/3



Zero Waste Himalaya - return to sender campaign

Students of Darjeeling and Sikkim participated in a global 'Return to Sender' campaign run in India by Zero Waste Himalaya on November 12, 2022, by collecting plastic waste and sending it back to the companies. Students wrote strong messages on Companies needing to be more accountable and responsible for the plastic waste that they were sending to the mountains.

The Campaign was organized across the globe to mark five years of a global brand audit conducted by Break Free From Plastic (BFFP) to highlight the need for systemic changes and corporate responsibility to redress the plastic waste crisis

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Break Free From Plastic released their 5th annual Brand Audit report. It analyses which corporations have been responsible for the majority of plastic pollution for five consecutive years. IMI has been part of the global brand audit through The Himalayan Cleanup Campaign since 2018.

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Save the Hills documents Pathing landslide in Sikkim

Pathing, a small village in South Sikkim with a population of just 600, has been constantly affected by a very rare form of landslides for decades now. Weak rock formations and the steep incline of the slope are suspected as reasons why the landslide remains active with no rainfall.

In November 22, things took a turn for the worse forcing many of the villagers to relocate.

Mr. Praful Rao, Save The Hills (STH) and President DHI visited and documented this very active landslide that had huge boulder rolls every five minutes. The situation was highlighted through the creation of various communication materials shared as [YouTube videos](#) and [STH blog](#) including Prof. Dave Petley's [Landslide Blog](#), bringing global attention. This communication facilitated help from the government, NGOs and other sources. STH has taken the lead in pushing for responsible rehabilitation of these villagers.

The Pathing slide seems totally a natural phenomena and STH believes it unlikely to be solved through application of any engineering solutions in the field of landslide prevention/mitigation. The only solution seems to be to wait and hope that the unstable mass slides down fully, and nature starts the healing process on its own, like in the case of the once active landslide of Ambotia, Darjeeling which is now dormant.

The impact of the landslide on people of Pathing and on their livelihoods such as tourism, agriculture, etc. was immense. Villagers were afraid of working in the fields due to the constant raining of boulders and many cattle had been killed. Children in the village were not able to attend school regularly or focus on their studies. People's income were severely affected, pushing them into the vicious cycle of poverty.



Cities and urban areas receive attention from various sectors, but rural areas are still ignored, therefore STH intends to carry out more thorough studies on impact of landslides in rural communities.

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Member's write

Roshan Rai, IMI member writes in Mariwala's monthly journal- Reframe on Climate Change and Mental Health.

[READ HERE](#)

Dr. Sarala Khaling, co authored an article on springs in Sikkim and their management.

[READ HERE](#)

Meet A member Ms. Fantry Mein Jaswal

Ms. Fantry Mein Jaswal is a founding member of IMI. She hails from Arunachal Pradesh. She joined the Indian Revenue Service in 1976, and has the distinction of being the first woman to join the civil service from her state. She is recipient of the President's award for "Meritorious Record of Service" in 2005.



After a career spanning 35 years, she retired in 2011 as Chief Commissioner of Customs & Central Excise. She was appointed as Chairperson of the Arunachal Pradesh State Finance Commission from 2012-2014. Her desire to give back to the mountain community led her to join the IMI, to work on issues concerning the mountain states in the Indian Himalayan Region.

IMI ASSOCIATION

She has been volunteering her time to the organisation since 2012. She was the Secretary of IMI from 2014 to 2020 and helped build the institution in its formative years.

CURRENT AFFILIATION

Ms. Fantry Mein Jaswal is also the Chairperson of Sustainable Development Forum of Arunachal (SDFA), a state chapter affiliated to IMI. She continues to be actively associated with IMI and believes that there is a lot more that needs to be done for the IHR region.

IMI FUTURE WORK

She believes that IMI's focus should be to continue the work that was initiated in the areas of climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable habitats, etc. that were earlier charted out.

Mountain matters



**2023
declared
as Year
of
Millets
by
UN**

On 6th December 2022, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organized an opening ceremony for the International Year of Millets – 2023 at Rome, Italy. The event was attended by a delegation of senior government officials from India.

Millets are important for the Himalaya for food & nutrition security, climate resilience as well as religio- cultural significance.

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**150
casualties
in last 5
years in
Himalayan
expeditions**

At least 150 people have lost their lives and over half a dozen are still missing while undertaking mountaineering and trekking expeditions in the Indian Himalayas in the past 5 years.

The data has been collated by TOI from industry bodies like Indian Mountaineering Federation and other sources.

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