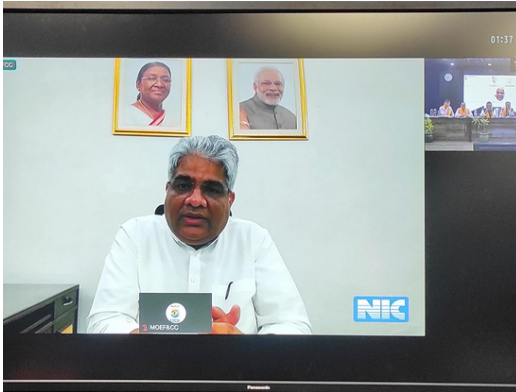


MOUNTAINS CONNECT

April 2023

IMI NEWSLETTER



10TH MEET OF THE MOUNTAIN STATES

IMI's flagship event Meet of the Mountain States (MoMS) was organised at the Ganga Auditorium of the Ministry of Environment and Forest and Climate Change on March 23 - 24, 2023. The event was organised this year in collaboration with the Divecha Center for Climate Change and the MoEFCC. The Chief Guests for the first day were Hon'ble Ministers for State - MoEFCC, Shree Ashwini K Choubey. And Hon'ble Minister for State - Tourism - Shree Ajay Bhatt. The special guest was Shree Tashi Gyalson, Chief Executive Councilor-Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. The event had participation of over 50 delegates from all the mountain states of India and members of various organisations and institutions.

THEMATIC SESSIONS

- Outcomes from SMD SXI - Sustainable Tourism in the Mountains
- Plastic management with special focus on extended producer responsibility
- Agroecology in the Indian Himalaya - Resurgence of millets

Shree Ashwini Chaubey commended the work of IMI in bringing the stakeholders from across the mountain states together and highlighted the fragility of the Himalaya with a personal account of his own experience of having lived through the 2013 tragedy of Kedarnath. Shree Ajay Bhatt mentioned that disasters were a common thread that ran across the mountain states. Tourism is an important economic activity but a cautious approach has to be adopted.

Shree Tashi Gyalson stressed the need for actualising extended producer responsibility for managing plastic waste in the mountains. He mentioned that companies were taking the mountains for granted, and they would have to do more on EPR for the mountains.

In his address, Shree PD Rai, President IMI, highlighted the importance of the mountains and how IMI has been working for more than a decade for furthering the agenda for sustainable development in the mountains. The outcomes from SMD SXI were shared by Mr. Jigmet Takpa PCCF- Ladakh and President - Sustainable Development Forum of Ladakh which highlighted the need to mainstream the theme of sustainable tourism across the IHR. Prof. Satheesh, Chair of DCCC gave an overview of Divecha Center for Climate Change, highlighting how mountains would have a higher degree of warming than other parts.

On the second day, Hon'ble Minister for MOEFCC Shree Bhupendra Yadav joined the meeting virtually as the Chief Guest and the Guest of Honor was Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Education. They were also joined by legislators from Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Uttarakhand.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear friends in our IMI Network or outside it.

You are reading the March Issue of 2023 – the 4th edition of our newsletter. Quite an achievement for our small team.

I am happy to report that we had a very successful 10th edition of our Meet of the Mountain States held in the Ganga Auditorium of the MoEFCC in the Indra Paryavaran Bhawan. Thanks to the efforts of all and especially Shri Jigmet Takpa, PCCF Ladakh, we received permission to hold it in this venue on the 23rd and 24th March, 2023. Quite an achievement. I had said in my welcome address that “it helps us get to the heart of the Policy Makers.”

We also have to recognise the participation of Co-Host, the Divecha Centre For Climate Change, IISc, Bangalore for funds to offset some of our major expenditure incurred. They also made a large number of presentations which are useful as research work helping and guiding the policy work of IMI. We have an MoU with them which was signed a year back. Dr. Satheesh and Dr. Smriti Basnet are helping us attain greater heights. We on our part will take their science to the people of the Himalaya.

We are especially grateful to our Chief Guest, Hon'ble Union Minister, Shri Bhupender Yadav for signaling full support to the work and direction of IMI. Furthermore, we had the blessings of Hon'ble MoS, Dr. Rakesh Kumar Ranjan. Hon'ble MoS Shri Ashwini Choubey and Hon'ble MoS Shri Ajay Bhatt attended our first day deliberations as Chief Guests and also launched our SMDS XI proceedings. This report is also available on our website. Many MLAs and MPs joined us to understand IMI's recommended Policy directions.

The MoMS deliberations were on Sustainable Tourism, Plastic Waste EPR and Millets. They will be reflected on more deeply elsewhere. Our Partners' Meet on the 24th along with a dinner was well attended. We hope to ensure that we can get more funding for our future programs.

Before signing off, I want to thank everyone who joined us in New Delhi from our IMI fraternity. We now need to coordinate State Chapter action with our plans that are outcomes from this MoMS. Let us reinvigorate our work!

PD Rai
President IMI

PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT- EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE IHR

The session highlighted the importance of EPR implementation and that producers need to do more for mountain states. Panelists from State PCBs, CSOs, and others from across the Himalaya shared the challenges of waste management in the mountains and implementing EPR.

- Mountains have higher costs for managing waste due to remoteness, geography, land availability, etc.
- Infrastructure limited and non implementation of segregation at source makes it challenging.
- Linkage to recycling and processing is poor - only high value plastics collected.
- Limited understanding and awareness of EPR among relevant authorities.
- Alternatives to SUPs are not made available or made viable.
- Linkage of increased packaged food consumption and plastic waste.



WAY FORWARD

- A narrative shift from end of the pipeline solutions to systemic circular systems.
- A need for acknowledgement that mountains need special focus for EPR.
- Task force to revisit EPR framework from a mountain lens that include targets specific for mountains, investments in infrastructure, viable rates, rural inclusiveness and focus on awareness.

AGROECOLOGY IN INDIAN HIMALAYAS- 'RESURGENCE WITH MILLETS'

The session brought together scientists, farmers and agri-entrepreneurs to discuss how millets aptly named *Sri Anna* could occupy an important space in mountain agro-ecology. The speakers highlighted the diversity of millets across the Himalaya and its cultural significance, India was the biggest global player in terms of millet production. Speakers also highlighted the challenges-

- Replacement of traditional millet culture through promotion of rice and wheat.
- Marginalisation of millets by branding as poor man's crop, coarse, kala anaj, bada anaj.
- Challenges of post harvest techniques, processing and access to markets
- Limited popularity.



WAY FORWARD

- Reclaim the lost agro-ecological space of millets in the mountains through concerted efforts as well as building on traditional knowledge and practice.
- Highlighting diversity, nutritional benefits, as well as climate resilience benefits of millets.
- Access, propagation and availability of post harvest technology for mountains.
- Popularise local names and refrain from use of the word millets, which is reductive.
- Increase millet consumption -culinary innovations, collaboration with chefs, etc.
- Documenting / Sharing of best practices including practices like 12 anaaj .

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"From the conference I had the opportunity to learn the success stories of tourism in Lakdakh; burning issues of plastic waste management and the urgency to revive Millett cultivation. Also happy to meet and made new friends in the conference. Under your leadership we must continue to market the challenges of Himalayan mountain states. They are national issues."

Ram Muivah (IAS ret'd)
MLA -Ukhrul,
Manipur

It was a joy to co-organize the Meet of the Mountains in Delhi along with IMI. We look forward to the continued partnership in shaping the narratives and informing dialogues on Science-Policy linkages. Our efforts to inform policy decision through Science and knowledge generation will be made priority during the SMDS and MOMS processes.

Smriti Basnett
Deputy Director, Future Earth
Global Secretariat Hub South Asia

IMI UPDATES

State chapter meeting

On 13th January 2023, an online meeting was organized with all State Chapters of IMI. President, IMI- Mr. PD Rai welcomed all the members and stated the objectives of the meeting. Secretary, Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha gave an overview of the process of membership review and shared the comments and feedback that had been sent by the members. She mentioned that with the cap on membership, there was no opportunity to bring in new members. Therefore the review of current members of IMI was an evaluation process for removal of old inactive members to make way for new ones.

Other issues around higher engagement with state chapters, bringing uniformity in the structure, were also discussed. Treasurer, Ms. Binitia Shah apprised the members on the current status of funds, and also placed the idea of state chapters contributing to fund raising. Suggestions on having a dedicated person for fundraising and organizing fundraising events were discussed. As a follow up, meetings were conducted with individual state chapters in which Meghalaya, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Uttarakhand and NCR participated and shared their opinions and suggestions. In these meetings, names of members from the respective states were shared and opinion sought on their engagement. Some of the suggestions that were placed were

- Letter to be sent to all members seeking their interest to continue.
- Honorary or associate membership to be offered to inactive members.
- IMI's MoA might need to be reviewed and amended to enable this process.
- More clarity on State Chapters and their link with IMI.

IMI Publications

The coffee table book of IMI and DHI - Farmed Foraged Fermented was released during MOMs in Delhi. The book is a celebration of local food cultures of the mountains and a compilation of photographs from the Indian Himalayan Photography Contest from SMDSX in Darjeeling.

The policy brief - Plastic waste management in the IHR was also released during MoMS. This was developed by IMI as part of the UNEP Counter MEASURESII Project.

IMI members meeting

A meeting of IMI members was organised as part of the 10th Meet of the Mountain States on March 24, 2023. The objectives of the meeting were to discuss and reflect on future strategies for IMI. Members discussed future positioning of IMI as an institution, and the various risks and advantages associated. For the future, exploring corporate partnerships could be a key focus, along with team strengthening was also a key takeaway.



Networking dinner

A networking dinner was organised on the sidelines of MOMs in Delhi on March 24, 2023. The dinner was organised with the objective of introducing IMI and its activities to new partners to explore avenues for fund raising, and revitalising relationships with old partners and collaborators. Organisations such as KfW, UNEP, WWF India, TNC, corporates like TATA motors, TITAN, etc. and high net worth individuals attended the dinner event.

Meeting with Divecha Center for Climate Change

A meeting with Divecha Center for Climate Change (DCCC) was organised in Delhi as part of Meet of the Mountain states on March 24, 2023. This was organised to take forward the ongoing MoU between IMI and DCCC.

Presentations from DCCC members outlined some of the future possibilities for collaborative action. As a way forward, a 5 year strategy shall be drafted for which a meeting would be hosted in Bangalore by DCCC for IMI members.

PARTNER'S CORNER

Mizoram Sustainable Development Forum organized a Round Table Discussion on Water Security in Mizoram on 24th March 2023 to discuss on the water status and water security in the state with funding from the PMU-PHED,

The program chaired by Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, President MSDF and Prof. Lalnuntluanga, Vice-President MSDF was attended by various other experts from PHED, Forest, IWR Dept, SIPMIU, Save Mizoram Rivers, Agriculture Dept, CYMA, Synod Social Front, MPCB, BIOCON and Mizoram University.

A compendium (in book form) of all the presentations in article form will be published and disseminated free of cost to the various stakeholders in the state.



DLR Perna hosted the 18th annual Permaculture Design Course facilitated by Rico Zook at Mineral Spring, Darjeeling from 25 Feb to 12 March 2023. Permaculture is a design system to create regenerative, sustainable systems based on principles of care for earth, people and fair share. The participants were hosted by members of Mineral Spring SVS, the first certified organic small farmer collective of Darjeeling.

Two documentaries made by **Save The Hills** were featured in the Film Festival on 'Exploring Risk', at Durham University (UK) on 16. -17 Feb, 2023 by Institute of Hazard, Risk, and Resilience.

The two documentaries were on the Pathing Landslides in Sikkim that Save the Hills had documented.



DISA, Tripura organised a hands on training on composting techniques in March 2023, at their center as part of their ongoing initiative to popularise vermicomposting among schools and colleges adjacent to farming communities.

ATREE Eastern Himalayas participated in Eat Right Millet Mela organized by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in Darjeeling on 27th February. The diversity of millets of the Darjeeling region was showcased at the mela, as well as put up for sale. Awareness about its nutrition as well as on climate resilient qualities were provided.



GB Pant Institute organised a regional workshop on 'Himalaya Calls for Action: Scoping regional cooperation and knowledge networking' at Gangtok from 16 -18 March, 2023. The Orchidarium developed by Regional Centre under Nature Learning Centre project was inaugurated by Shri Lakshman Acharya, Honorable Governor, Sikkim

MOUNTAIN MATTERS!



Ngopa, Mizoram, bags second best performing gram panchayat

Ngopa stood second after Karanataka's Mullusoge as the best-performing gram panchayat in the National Panchayat Award 2023 based on performance including poverty-free and enhanced livelihoods panchayat, clean and green panchayat and panchayat with good governance.

Ngopa is located in the northeastern part of the state bordering Manipur about 182 km from Aizawl.

The village houses about 1,000 families with a population of 4,600. It is administered as a village council with 7 members.

[READ MORE](#)



Arunachal Pradesh farmers' body rejects hydropower plan on Siang River

Two Arunachal Pradesh-based organisations, including a farmers' collective, have asked the State Government to scrap a deal for executing a proposed 10,000 MW hydropower project on the Siang River.

Siang is one of three rivers that meet to form the Brahmaputra in Assam downstream. Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum (SIFF) and the Indigenous Rights Advocacy Dibang (IRAD) threatened to launch a stir if the project is not scrapped.

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Palm oil expansion - a disaster in the making

The priority regions earmarked for oil palm expansion are the Northeast Indian states and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Both these regions together encompass three Global Biodiversity Hotspots, host a multitude of species that are globally threatened, range-restricted or endemic, and continue to retain some of the most extensive tracts of forest in India.

[READ MORE](#)

MEET A MEMBER DR. VINCENT DARLONG

Dr. Vincent Darlong is serving his 2nd term as Governing Council member of IMI. He is also a advisor to Meghalaya Integrated Mountain Development Initiative (MIMDI), the IMI chapter in Meghalaya.

IMI ASSOCIATION

His first introduction to IMI was in 2013 at Kohima SMDS III, where he represented the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), in which the theme-Forests, Water and Mountain Agriculture were aligned to thematic areas of IFAD for the Western Himalayas.

CURRENT AFFILIATION

Currently Dr. Darlong is the Director, Centre for Sustainable Development Studies, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong. He is also the National/Deputy Chief Technical Adviser, Indo-German Development Cooperation Project, Govt of Tripura, and a life Member, Rotary International through the Rotary Club of Orchid City, Shillong.

FUTURE PLANS

Securing adequate and meaningful collaborative partnerships with diverse stakeholders from the Himalayan Region and beyond to ensure sustainable programmatic activities and fund flow.

Making MIMDI a sustainable and vibrant entity to enable it to demonstrate and reflect as a meaningful, viable, and vibrant State Chapter of IMI, a network of the State Chapters of IMI of the Eastern Himalayan Region for exchange of experiences and learning.



Dr. Darlong has been part of every SMDS since 2017 when the summit was organised in Aizawl. He was actively engaged in organising SMDS VIII in Shillong, as the then Vice Chancellor of Martin Luther Christian University which was the main collaborator for the event.

CHALLENGES

There is limited engagement with institutional members of IMI as well as with State Chapters which needs to be enhanced through organic linkages, programmatic association for visibility of IMI. IMI secretariat also needs to have a functional office building with dedicated staff.