

3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit

8-14th
DECEMBER
2020



Acknowledgement

We are happy to share the proceedings of the 3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit held as part of the 9th Sustainable Mountain Development Summit. It was virtually attended by over 200+ youth participants from across the Indian Himalayan states. Despite the trying times of CoVID, the enthusiasm shown by the youth participants signaled the successful commencement of the weeklong event.

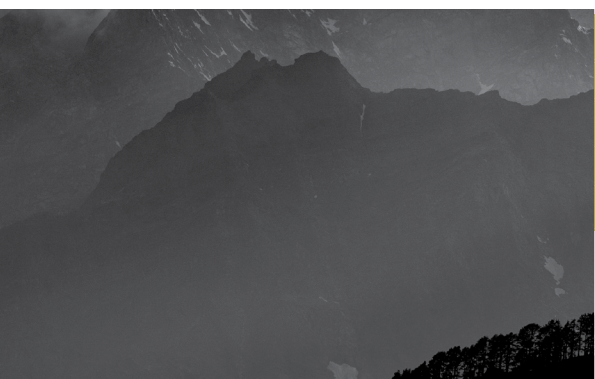
The 3rd IHYS would not have been possible without the active and full support of many people and organizations. First, I would like to extend my thanks to Mr. Amba Jamir, Convenor and Mr. Anoop Nautiyal, Co-Convenor for planning, curating, and executing the entire programme with perfection. Second, I would like to thank Ms. Bhawana Luthra, LEAD India for helping curate the Special session on “Mindfulness” and assisting IMI with the overall execution of SMDS IX. Third, the event’s success lay in the active involvement of the State Nodal Persons of IMI to bring in youth from all the states and hill districts of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR).

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to my colleagues from IMI Governing Council, SDFU and the IMI Secretariat team for tirelessly working for this event to make it a success.

Finally, it was a delight to see our young minds actively deliberate and draft the key document “Declaration of the 3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit” for submission to the Policy Makers of IHR. My utmost thanks to everyone who joined, engaged, and learned.

Prem Das Rai, Convener
Former MP LS & Governing Council
President, IMI

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The 3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit

Inaugural Plenary

December 8, 2020 at 14:00-15:40 Hrs.

The welcome address of the Inaugural Plenary session of the 3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit was delivered by Vice President of the Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) and Chairman of Sustainable Development Forum Uttarakhand (SDFU), Dr. Rajendra Dobhal, representing the event host state. The opening address and keynote address were delivered by Former President of IMI, Shri Sushil Ramola and Coordinator of Mountain Partnership Secretariat, FAO, Rome, Dr. Yuka Makino respectively. Vice President of IMI, Shri Amba Jamir delivered the introduction, and Councilor of IMI, Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente and Member of SDFU, Shri Anoop Nautiyal made the announcements and gave the Vote of Thanks respectively. The other speakers of the session were Shri Samuel Yonzon of Dairy Makarios Bous, Adventurers and Entrepreneurs, Ms. Tashi Malik and Ms. Nungshi Malik, and Advisor of the Task Force for Music and Arts (TaFMA), Government of Nagaland, Shri Theja Meru. The session was moderated by Councilor of IMI, Shri Roshan Rai.



Welcome Address

Dr. Rajendra Dobhal

Vice President, IMI and Chairman, SDFU

Dr. Dobhal began by introducing the speakers and added that a few very eminent names were joining the session. Platforms like the Indian Himalayan Youth Summit exist, not just to listen to these dignitaries, but to give a space to young people to be heard. There was representation from the different Himalayan states, with 112 delegates participating in the session. The sheer diversity and uniqueness of the platform lend to the importance of the summit and should inspire participation of mountain youth.



Introduction to the 3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit

Shri Amba Jamir

Vice President, IMI

Shri Jamir started with an overview of IMI and its chapters spread across the states. IMI's area of focus is the Indian Himalayan region spreading across 10 states, 2 Union Territories, and 2 districts from West Bengal. The focal areas of IMI are water, mountain agriculture, disaster risk resilience, and sustainable habitats.

The Sustainable Mountain Development Summit has been IMI's flagship event since 2011, bringing together researchers, academics, individuals in business, and policymakers from regions like Nainital, Gangtok, Kohima, Itanagar, Leh, Aizawl, Solan, Shillong, and Mussoorie. Along with the Indian Himalayan Youth Summit, numerous parallel events are organized. The Mountain Legislators' Dialogue and the Indian Himalayan Photography Competition are examples of such events.

A platform such as the Indian Himalayan Youth Summit is pivotal in the integration of youth, climate change action and entrepreneurship. The IHYS was first held in Kohima, followed by Aizawl and Dehradun. There was a felt need to become ecologically conscious citizens, and the first declaration was made on this issue. The second summit, held in Aizawl, discussed mountain agriculture and health. It is notable that the issue of migration discussed during those summits was out-migration, while now most of the discussions are on reverse migration.

The 3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit was the only summit so far to have representation from all the Himalayan states. The diverse group of representatives included nurses, students, research scholars, as well as people with disabilities. Given the virtual nature of the summit, PWD champions were all consciously brought together to ensure a more inclusive table.

The themes were selected by the youth themselves through consultative dialogues. In order to make the summit more youth-focused, the design of the sessions was also changed. The 2-day Summit would host many interesting moderators who would ensure the delegates could communicate what they wanted to. The call for action was not just from IMI to youth but also from youth to IMI.



Opening Address
Shri Sushil Ramola
Former President, IMI

Shri Ramola welcomed all the youth to the summit and added that all the youth were welcome, not as silent, but as active players.

Youth are encouraged to consciously leverage the opportunities in the Himalayan region. Understanding the unique opportunities of the region could help in bridging the employment gaps. Youth are a huge asset as they have the skills and the need to find work. With the help of nature which also follows solace and healing, the youth can make new ventures. There is a need to reorient oneself to look at nature and tourism and bring in young people to these areas. Mass tourism in the past has ravaged the environment and is not the desired recipe. There now is an opportunity to regenerate and reinvent tourism as nature tourism.

Youth can become development entrepreneurs and bring the ecology, economy, and equity in balance. It is important for them to work with small and rural communities who usually work with farm products. It is similarly important to work on issues like climate change, forests, food, alternative energy, tourism, bamboo, traditional arts, and crafts. The gig economy, which comprises related activities and products, holds potential today.

The region has numerous opportunities available. However, the first step to make use of these opportunities is to work on digital literacy. The other important thing is the attitude of positive action. There is a need to focus on how to build entrepreneurship. IMI has focused on bamboo, medicinal and aromatic plants, and tourism and is well placed to build networks on these frontiers and work with the youth. Government support is needed but IHR communities should not depend on it.



Youth speaker I
Shri Samuel Yonzon
Dairy Makarios Bous, Kalimpong, West Bengal

Shri Samuel Yonzon shared his story of resilience. He had been on the verge of giving up but through belief and hard work, he changed his story into one of perseverance. His story was summarized under the title - "Your Effort- Your Greatest Asset in the Armory". Working in a metropolitan city as a sound engineer, Shri Yonzon had to move back to his ancestral home with his wife and child. This shift affected him not just professionally, but financially as both he and his wife were without jobs when they returned to the mountains.

He also had to deal with failed projects which resulted in huge losses. It was through this phase that a friend, who is a successful entrepreneur, asked him what he had been doing to pursue his dream. Shri Yonzon replied that he was doing nothing. His friend then responded, "You have big dreams, but you have to start from somewhere".

This piece of advice that his friend gave him 8 years ago gave him the push he needed. Shri Yonzon had asked his friend to help him and partner with him. Eventually, they started a meat shop and a canteen for momos. It was during that time that he found a hack for preserving milk in the process. His love for milk got him interested in dairy, and today, he runs his own dairy business in Kalimpong town. It took 7 years for the business to grow, and the journey was a difficult but rewarding one. Today, his company is one of the

biggest dairy companies in Kalimpong.

Shri Yonzno's message to youth is to never quit. One needs to keep working hard. Youth must be creative. Every time one solves a problem, they are raising themselves to a higher level.



Youth speaker II

Ms. Tashi Malik and Ms. Nungshi Malik
Adventurers and Entrepreneurs, Uttarakhand

Ms. Tashi and Ms. Nungshi, the first siblings to climb the Seven Summits, spoke about their adventurous journeys as young climbers.

What started out as a love for the mountains and a sport, turned out to be a social movement on women's rights through their work. The siblings have not only completed the 7 Summit Challenge but have also started fighting against female foeticide and for women's empowerment. They have started their own foundation to fight for women's rights.

The mountains are different and more challenging than the plains. Mountain youth will have to rise to the challenge and be innovative. There are many hurdles but giving up is not a solution.



Youth speaker III

Shri Theja Meru
Advisor of the Task Force for Music and Arts (TaFMA),
Government of Nagaland

Shri Meru shared his humble journey as a musician over the past 3 decades. He has had to resort to taking up many jobs to make a living. His career milestones include Dream Cafe being launched in 2003 in Kohima and the creation of Rattle and Hum Music Society in 2017. As part of Dream Cafe, he and his team promoted music while encouraging youth to dream big and pursue this avenue. His belief is that hard work, consistency and a 'dare to dream' attitude can take anyone anywhere.

Former Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "Find your purpose, the means will follow". The youth must never stop dreaming. Coming from a very humble background, Shri Meru didn't have many resources. His parents were not rich. But one thing he had was his belief in the power of dreams. No matter how big the dream is, it can indeed come true.



Keynote Address

Dr. Yuka Makino
Coordinator of Mountain Partnership Secretariat, FAO, Rome

Dr. Yuka spoke about opportunities for the youth of the mountains via the Mountain Partnership, an official United Nations partnership to improve the lives of mountain people. The Mountain Partnership has 412

members. Dr. Makino's team does advocacy, raises awareness, and works on capacity development. They write reports on mountain development around the world. Youth can be part of her team. Young delegates should network and connect with each other to design meaningful solution-based projects.

What does it mean when we say "youth matters" in the mountains? It means the approach is youth-led, youth focused and focuses on youth empowerment. Dr. Makino's dream is that five years from now, mountain countries can produce baskets of goods. The youth can do this online and market internationally.

There is also a need for targeted investments, sustainable production and diversification of food systems in the mountains, as well as strengthening skills and value chains. Effort at the local level is integral to success. However, if these changes do not go into national policies, government plans, and investments at the state and national level, we cannot have the sizable impact we wish to have.



Question & Answer session
Moderated by **Shri Roshan Rai**
Councilor, IMI and Development Professional, DLR Prerna

- **How will youth engagement be sustained and taken forward by IMI and its state chapters?**

Shri Sushil Ramola responded that the first step is to gather data on youth and the activities they are engaged in. This is something that is being done by the IMI. Through this, institutions such as IMI can then proceed to assist the youth in a manner that is focused and relevant. There is a need to look at programs, projects, and policies to bring youth together. IMI is engaging with youth through a medicinal and aromatic plants project that is currently in its design stage. In this way, IMI would play the role of an enabler, catalyzing the building of abilities and channelizing the energies that the youth have.

Shri Amba Jamir added that there are many youth networks and youth-led initiatives. Synergies are important, and IMI's state chapters must spring into action. Creating the space to hear youth voices is one of the important steps.

- **Does anyone support new projects in Uttarakhand?**

Dr. Dobhal responded, mentioning that new policies and schemes for entrepreneurship and skill development opportunities are available in the region. We do not have the desired ecosystem as there are problems of information asymmetry and faulty infrastructure in the mountain states. He suggested getting trained in the market.

Shri Ramola added that training microentrepreneurs and building networks are important. There is also a need to have desire, passion and ideas for intervention.

- **Is agricultural support available for dairy products?**

Dr. Makino responded that it is included in the Mountain Partnership's plans and has to be something that can go from local to global. The Partnership seeks to work through partners in the country.

- **Is tourism a part of the green partnership?**

Dr. Makino responded that tourism is a part of green partnership. Her team has collaborated with the tourism ministry where they are marketing tourism products along with food-tourism.



Announcements

Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente

Councillor, IMI and CEO, L.B. Associates

Dr. Lalbiak announced the winners of IMI's Photo Story Contest which was held in the month of October 2020. The theme of the contest was 'Life Under Lockdown: Visual Stories from the hills'. This was an attempt to create knowledge through documenting, visualizing and contextualizing the experiences of local communities in the IHR during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first prize was received by Chinmaya Shah from Uttarakhand, second prize by Stanzin Khakyab from Ladakh and third prize by Nawami Gurung from Darjeeling.



Vote of Thanks

Shri Anoop Nautiyal

Member, SDFU and Founder,

Social Development for Communities Foundation

Shri Anoop Nautiyal thanked the participants, speakers, youth delegates and all who joined the plenary. He encouraged everyone to look forward to the rest of the summit. The summit really is for the youth and there is hope that the mission to bring their voices to the table is met.





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Valedictory Plenary

9th December at 1400 - 1630 Hrs.

The welcome address at the Indian Himalayan Youth Summit 2020 Valedictory Plenary session was delivered by Vice President of the Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) and Chairman of Sustainable Development Forum Uttarakhand (SDFU), Dr. Rajendra Dobhal. President of IMI, Shri P.D. Rai delivered the presidential remarks. The Special Guest of the session was Principal Economic Advisor, Government of India, Shri Sanjeev Sanyal, and the Chief Guest was CEO of the NITI Aayog, Government of India, Shri Amitabh Kant. The Vote of Thanks from youth was delivered by Youth Delegate, Ms. Rigzin Lachic from the UT of Ladakh, and from IMI was given by Secretary of IMI, Ms. Priya Shrestha. The session was moderated by Associate Project Officer, Agricultural and Natural Resources Sector, Asian Development Bank, Shri Krishna Rautela.



Welcome Address

Dr. Rajendra Dobhal

Vice President of IMI and Chairman of SDFU

Dr. Dobhal highlighted the discussions from the previous sessions and the significance of such dialogues. The recommendations provided by the youth will reach the NITI Aayog and the Government of India. There is a need to continue working and having conversations, especially through the Youth Summits even in the future.

Thematic Presentations by representatives of the Youth Delegates of the 3rd IHYS



Group I

Sustainable Eco-tourism

Shri Ankit Sood, Himachal Pradesh

Shri Ankit Sood categorized the group's recommendations into two categories - Economic and Policy. The recommendations were greatly informed by the unprecedented experiences of Covid-19.

Economic recommendations:

1. Preserve and promote indigenous practices and local products
2. Strengthen the ecosystem for micro-enterprises by providing specific financial support, and linkage to the right market
3. Diversify tourism products and ensure income distribution
4. Facilitate skill development programs (digital and green skills)

5. Promote green tourism and homestays
6. Strengthen digital infrastructure in remote areas
7. A Regional Entrepreneurship Development Institute in the mountain region.

Policy recommendations:

1. Mountain-specific financial instruments
2. Waste management policies that account for not just the waste generated by the locals, but by the tourists too
3. A specific plan on awareness building, capacity building with monitoring mechanisms.
4. Formation of an alliance between the department of all Himalayan states to work in sync with a common goal for developing the IHR as a green tourism destination
5. Regulation of natural resources and plastic consumption in the IHR
6. Identification of offbeat, potential destinations which are emerging on the tourist map and supplementing with infrastructure particularly, roads, water, electricity, homestays
7. Ecological auditing of known and not-so-known destinations to be carried out by established organizations in the Himalayan region.



Thematic Group II
Skill Development & Entrepreneurship
Shri Khagendra Pradhan, Sikkim

Shri Pradhan discussed the challenges and recommendations for skill development and then for entrepreneurship.

Skill development challenges:

1. Skills offered are not locally relevant to the mountains
2. There is a lack of skilling opportunities
3. Skills training is of poor quality
4. Trainers are not well-equipped
5. There is low safety for low-skilled jobs, and pay is below the minimum wage

Skill development recommendations:

• Government

1. Increasing the number of Skill Development Institutes and mechanisms. to improve quality of training
2. Improvements in school level skill/ vocational training
3. Development of a 'Mountain-specific Skills Policy, to be created and implemented by both the center and state governments
4. Creation of better policies to improve wages, social protection, safety, and dignity of labour for low skill and low-paying jobs
5. Provision of additional incentives for industries to use local manpower
6. Creation of internship/apprenticeship opportunities for youth in government institutions and promotion of such opportunities in the private sector through incentives
7. Introduction of a separate program for entrepreneurs to develop relevant skill sets

• Markets:

1. Taking advantage of training local people by using government schemes
2. Spending time and resources to create a skilled workforce in local communities

3. Building connections with local education institutes and creating programs. for internship and apprenticeship

- **Communities:**

1. Bring about a change in social attitudes about employment
2. Institution of Village Development Boards, such as by the state of Nagaland. At the community level, funding needs to support local skill development programs

Entrepreneurship challenges:

1. Difficulties in finding investors and initial capital, especially for small startups
2. Difficulties with approval of loans and schemes
3. Lack of fair access to government funds and schemes
4. Lack of investment in skilled local talent
5. Lack of physical and digital connectivity in the mountain states

Entrepreneurship recommendations:

- **Governments:**

1. Introduction of more policies in favour of entrepreneurs
2. Improvements in Ease of Doing Business for small entrepreneurs and start-ups
3. Ensuring fair and easy access to funds and schemes based on merit or idea-based selection process
4. States like Ladakh and Sikkim have legal treaties and acts barring investments from outside. Provision of support to entrepreneurs while keeping these treaties intact.
5. Provision of support for the creation of backward and forward linkages
6. Introduction of merit-based fellowships for entrepreneurship development.
7. Strengthening and improving border markets
8. Improvements to basic infrastructure and digital connectivity
9. Improvements to banking access, and changing attitude of bankers towards financing small entrepreneurs

- **Markets:**

1. Prioritization of bootstrapping start-ups and then looking for capital later
2. Creation of a support system to help new entrepreneurs
3. Improvement in logistics as this is a major concern for mountain states
4. Focusing on sustainable products that can have a national market

- **Communities:**

1. Acting as a support system for entrepreneurs
2. Provision of mentorship for fellow entrepreneurs
3. Introduction of community-level financing of small entrepreneurs (like Village Development Boards)
4. Development of communication skills to be able to communicate the idea to investors



Thematic Group III
Migration, Politics & Policy
Ms. Namrata Neopaney, Sikkim

Ms. Neopaney presented her group's recommendations on migration, politics, and policy.

1. Conducting research, study, and data collection on migration
2. Provision of skills training according to the needs of the region
3. Promotion of entrepreneurship to generate employment in the states
4. Addressing issues of mental health, particularly in the Covid-19 scenario
5. Focusing on healthcare systems and infrastructure to curb out-migration
6. Measures specific to women and migration, including measures related to property rights and trafficking



Thematic Group IV
Sustainable Resource Management
Ms. Khushboo Sharma, Sikkim

Ms. Khushboo Sharma presented the recommendations for Sustainable Resource Management categorised into recommendations for government and the youth.

• **Government:**

1. Transparency, Accountability & Participatory Approaches:
 - Informed decision making involving local bodies
 - Building accountability
 - Emphasizing synergy and cooperation
2. Skill Development, Capacity Building & Education:
 - Strengthening NRM foundation by Capacity Building Programs
 - Facilitation of research and funding
 - Incorporation of local-based knowledge into efforts
3. Linking Science with Policy & Practice:
 - Ensuring linkages between science, policy, and practice
 - Framing unbiased policies based on evidence
4. Resource Equity & Redistribution of Resources:
 - Ensuring proper distribution of resources
 - Implementation of community-owned resource management practices

• **Youth:**

1. Revival of traditional knowledge and combining it with modern development to achieve better resource management. Examples of this are mixed farming and subsistence farming.
2. Defending and promoting sustainable resilient food systems. by scaling agroecology as the science of natural resource management.
3. Building the capacity of youth to collect data from the ground before any major projects are sanctioned.
4. Community-based research should be focused.
5. Sharing research outcomes with locals and they should be acknowledged.
6. Promotion of centers for indigenous building crafts/identifying sustainability through evolution in architecture and building environments.
7. Education of one's communities to raise awareness about adopting sustainable lifestyles.
8. Leveraging youth alliance as a platform, bringing youth and youth-led organizations to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaborative action.



Thematic Group V
Sustainable Development Goals
Shri Rishabh Shrivastava, Uttarakhand

Shri Rishabh Shrivastava presented the key points of discussion that emerged from his group Sustainable Development Goals.

1. Data and Research:
 - Importance of a baseline evaluation
 - Data needs to be accessible, uniform and measurable
 - It is important to have region-specific data on SDG indicators
 - Digital platform for data and research
2. Balancing environment and development:
 - Local institutions need to be strengthened
 - A data repository for Indigenous Ecological Knowledge can help make informed decisions
 - There is a need to bridge Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and Science
3. Participation should be promoted:
 - Decentralized governance (73rd and 74th Amendment)
4. Society and Youth:
 - There is a need for regular dialogue through platforms. such as the IHYS, where youth can be vocal, share their experiences, challenges, and solutions
 - Capacity building for youth on issues such as what the SGD's are, how to implement them etc.
 - Importance of quality education
 - Digital access and connectivity
 - Skill mapping for return migrant youth and development of relevant employment models such as entrepreneurship
5. Economy:
 - Importance of shifting from a linear model of economy to a green, circular model
 - There is potential to learn from the Bhutan model, in particular how they have managed their tourism and resources
 - Vocal for Local
 - Market linkages
 - Equity, rather than equality in benefit sharing
 - Branding Indian Himalayan Region
 - Northeastern and Himalayan states can adopt a 'bamboo economy'

Recommendations:

1. Addressing the SDGs in a holistic manner. All the 17 SDGs are interconnected and it is not advisable to target only some of them.
2. Contextualization of the SDGs to the Himalayan region
3. Increased focus on IEC and capacity building, including through a pan-Himalayan advocacy group
4. Strengthening community governance through institutions, decentralized spaces and actions.
5. Documentation of traditional knowledge and replication of successful traditional practices

6. Promotion of a green and circular mountain economy



Special Guest Address

Shri Sanjeev Sanyal

Principal Economic Advisor, Government of India

Shri Sanjeev Sanyal is currently the Principal Economic Advisor to the Government of India. He is an internationally acclaimed economist and best-selling author and has spent two decades in the financial sector as well as the Global Strategist and Marketing Director at the Deutsche Bank till 2015.

Covid-19 has reminded us of the sheer uncertainty of the world, particularly in the mountain region, which is prone to climate change and risk besides socio-economic vulnerabilities. Both flexibility and resilience of economic and policy designs are essential, along with diversity in economic engines. Only engaging in tourism for example, in these dire Covid-19 times is hugely risky, and one needs to diversify to cope with the world.

Engaging the next generation in policy issues will lead to new paths and a more resilient future. The youth must look at the existing bureaucratic hurdles to becoming an entrepreneur rather than asking for the introduction of more government schemes. Entrepreneurship comes from a culture of entrepreneurship and cannot just be built through government schemes. Entrepreneurship needs to be inculcated in its spirit.

There should be a focus on improving the existing skilling institutions, instead of increasing the number of them.

The region's talent must be retained, while simultaneously de-clustering talent. There is a need to attract human capital even for jobs considered menial.

Other recommendations include promoting digital technology and the preservation of indigenous knowledge or civilization memory, introducing targeted systems especially on plastic issues in tourist spots, and creating a focus on mental health which is a big challenge in the mountain states especially regarding the drug and narcotics usage.



Valedictory Address by the Chief Guest

Shri Amitabh Kant

CEO, NITI Aayog

Shri Amitabh Kant is presently the CEO of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI). He is a key driver of the 'Make in India', 'Startup India', 'Incredible India', and 'God's Own Country' initiatives that positioned India and Kerala as leading manufacturing and tourism destinations.

It is essential to mainstream mountains and their agenda along with the challenges that exist. Looking into the myriad challenges and multi-folding of it in the COVID-19 world we must explore the opportunities it presents.

The NITI Aayog is committed to the 17 SDGs and the 169 targets and policies which address the so-

cio-economic and environmental dimensions of the mountain states. Several Himalayan states have performed well according to the SDG India Index. Sikkim is the first organic state while both Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim are frontrunners in the Index. Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim have led the way for eradicating poverty according to the Index. Apart from this, matrilineal tribal societies of the Himalayan states have inspired the rest of the country for a more gender-equal society.

The IHR, being resource-rich and the 'Water Tower of Asia,' holds an important and unique place in India. The NITI Aayog has identified spring revival as an important area of development in the IHR. With the rise in natural disasters on the backdrop of climate change, mountain states need to look into this more closely.

Tourism sector can be one of the key areas to bounce back post Covid-19. The Hornbill Festival of Nagaland, Loktak Lake of Manipur, Solung Festival of Arunachal Pradesh, monasteries of Ladakh, the Dal Lake of Ladakh, and religious tourism in the region can lead the charge. It is crucial that initiatives of eco-tourism are not top-down. Instead, they must be based on the participation of the community so that the benefits can circulate down to the local population. In fact, responsible tourism can be an effective tool to generate employment and income with an unlimited potential for innovation which has the interest of the young and entrepreneurial.

While the Covid-19 is a truly unfortunate event in recent human history, it has also created an opportunity for us to emerge stronger. It has exposed several vulnerabilities around us that require the energy, intelligence, drive and innovation of youth who can rise up to the challenge. The youth must explore opportunities in the areas of technology development, health care, education, social welfare, and promotion of sustainable alternatives and livelihoods that are aligned with the demands of the region.

It is necessary to identify the areas where we can improve and explore more alternatives. Government initiatives for youth like Startup India, MUDRA, etc. would be helpful in starting new ventures. Innovations from the IHR are required to unleash its economic potential, and better policy mechanisms and opportunities are needed under the umbrella of sustainability. The NITI Aayog has launched women's entrepreneurship platforms and the Export Preparedness Index which ranks states within similar categories in the spirit of competitive federalism. The Index is useful to states and Union Territories to benchmark their performance against their peers and analyze the potential challenges and prospects of developing better policy mechanisms to foster export-led growth. Export-led growth for any state would ensure high-income generation and employment opportunities for the youth in the region. All economic development in the Himalayan states must happen under the umbrella of sustainability, considering the diversity of the region, the fragility of the mountain's ecosystem, and the immense biodiversity present in the mountain regions.



Question & Answer Session
Moderated by **Shri Krishna Rautela**
Associate Project Officer, Agricultural and Natural Resources Sector,
Asian Development Bank

- **Will building IIITs, NITs and IITs in mountain regions indeed bring development and stop migration, given the absence of quality medical and technical facilities?**
- **What are the constructive changes suggested in the New Education Policy? Are there any good examples that can demonstrate the implementation of new measures based on changed policies in the mountain region?**
- **How can one expect to improve the educational institutions when they don't exist? How can one sustain talented people in the absence of opportunities?**

Dr. Dobhal responded that geographical location does not have much to do with development. There is no mountain-specific and centric educational institute. There needs to be a push towards this.

Shri P.D. Rai spoke about the existence of the digital divide and how it is related to the question of who gets educated. There is no silver bullet to solve all the problems related to education. It needs to be a collaborative approach. The need of the hour is to build better with the existing resources to improve accessibility and availability.

Ms. Rigzin Lachic added that we should be focusing on quality in the process. In doing so, culture, religion, and society should be integrally inculcated.

- **What are the pathways and possibilities for sustainable tourism in the IHR?**

Shri Sood shared how tourism assets are being used by the locals. Sometimes, conflicts arise over resources shared by communities like electricity and water. There are also issues of waste management.

Ms. Priya, the Secretary of IMI spoke on the issue of biodiversity conservation in the Himalayan Region. Some issues, such as waste management, are clearly visible and others, such as biodiversity conservation need a deeper understanding and careful approach. It is important to consider how communities benefit, who benefits the most and how resources are utilized. We must look at who gets the income from tourism.

- **In most Himalayan states, documents such as the Vision Document 2030 (Strategies and actions for achieving SDGs) are yet to be completed and made available in the public domain. Furthermore, these documents are often prepared by external consultants rather than locals. What are the speakers' views on this?**

Shri Shrivastava shared that the SDGs are very applicable and interconnected. The SDGs are principally designed in a manner where one issue aids/connects with another. It would be beneficial to contextualize each of the 17 SDGs to the Himalayan region.

Dr. Dobhal added that Vision Document 2030 exists for states like Uttarakhand, and it is up to the states to chart their own way.



Closing Remarks
Shri PD Rai
President, IMI

Shri Rai thanked all the people who were a part of and involved in IHYS 2020. The discussions were rich and will aid in charting the future of the IHR.

Youth are more vulnerable now because of the pandemic, and the girl child is even more so. According to the findings of the 'Learning During the Lockdown' report, the internet is accessible to only 36 percent of people, with large gender differences. These issues cannot be fixed in isolation and need a collaborative effort.

The youth must value the mountains and their assets, like glaciers, water, and micro-climate that support biodiversity hotspots and make us creative. We must look at sustainability in its true sense and harness our richness in a sustainable manner. Entrepreneurship is one of the key components we need to look at and

work on it. At the same time, skilling the youth and engaging with providers and addressing its downstream problems cannot be ignored. Finally, the importance of engaging with educational institutions, will lead us to better mechanisms and policy formulation

A strategic plan will be formulated, which will be taken forward in the form of a declaration by March 2021.



Vote of Thanks on behalf of the youth delegates

Ms. Rigzin Lachic

Youth Delegate, Ladakh

Presenting the vote of thanks on behalf of the young delegates and thanking all the speakers and people involved in IHYS 2020, Ms. Lachic highlighted the outcome of the Youth Summit, its discussions and recommendations.

There is an urgent need for resilience and adaptation to the changing times and the challenges it presents. The real needs of the youth, which include skilling and awareness, need to be addressed.



Vote of Thanks on behalf of IMI

Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha

Secretary, IMI

Ms. Shrestha delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the IMI.

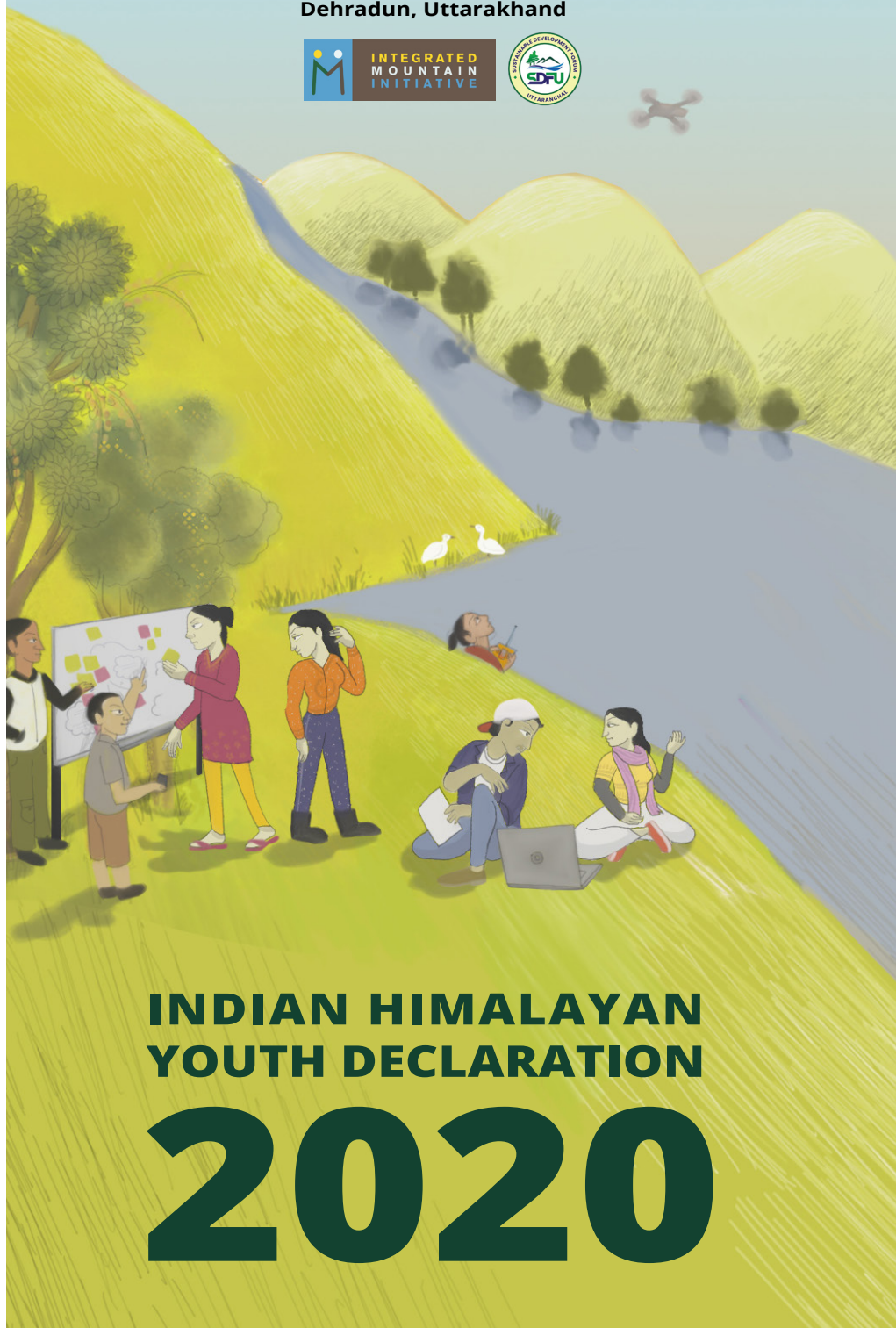
The Youth Summit can be one platform for shaping the future of the mountain states. The voices of young people are critical in policy formulation and translating them into reality. The discourse on plastic waste is more crucial now than ever. Partnerships and mass sensitization need to continue. Community participation in projects like 'Zero Waste Himalaya' are important and can continue to be successful provided we are serious about them.





SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

8th-14th December 2020
Dehradun, Uttarakhand



**INDIAN HIMALAYAN
YOUTH DECLARATION**

2020

Declaration

We, the youth of the 3rd Indian Himalayan Youth Summit, organised by the Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) and virtually hosted by the Sustainable Development Forum Uttarakhand (SDFU) on 8th & 9th December 2020 represented by the states of Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh, Darjeeling & Kalimpong districts of West Bengal, and Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam do:

REAFFIRM our commitment to adopt sustainable lifeways and systems for the well-being of our mountains and the mountain communities

RESOLVE to participate in the conservation of our unique biodiversity keeping in view the developmental processes of the region

UPHOLD the need for planning, management and governance systems that are vibrant, inclusive and sensitive to the aspirations of mountain youth

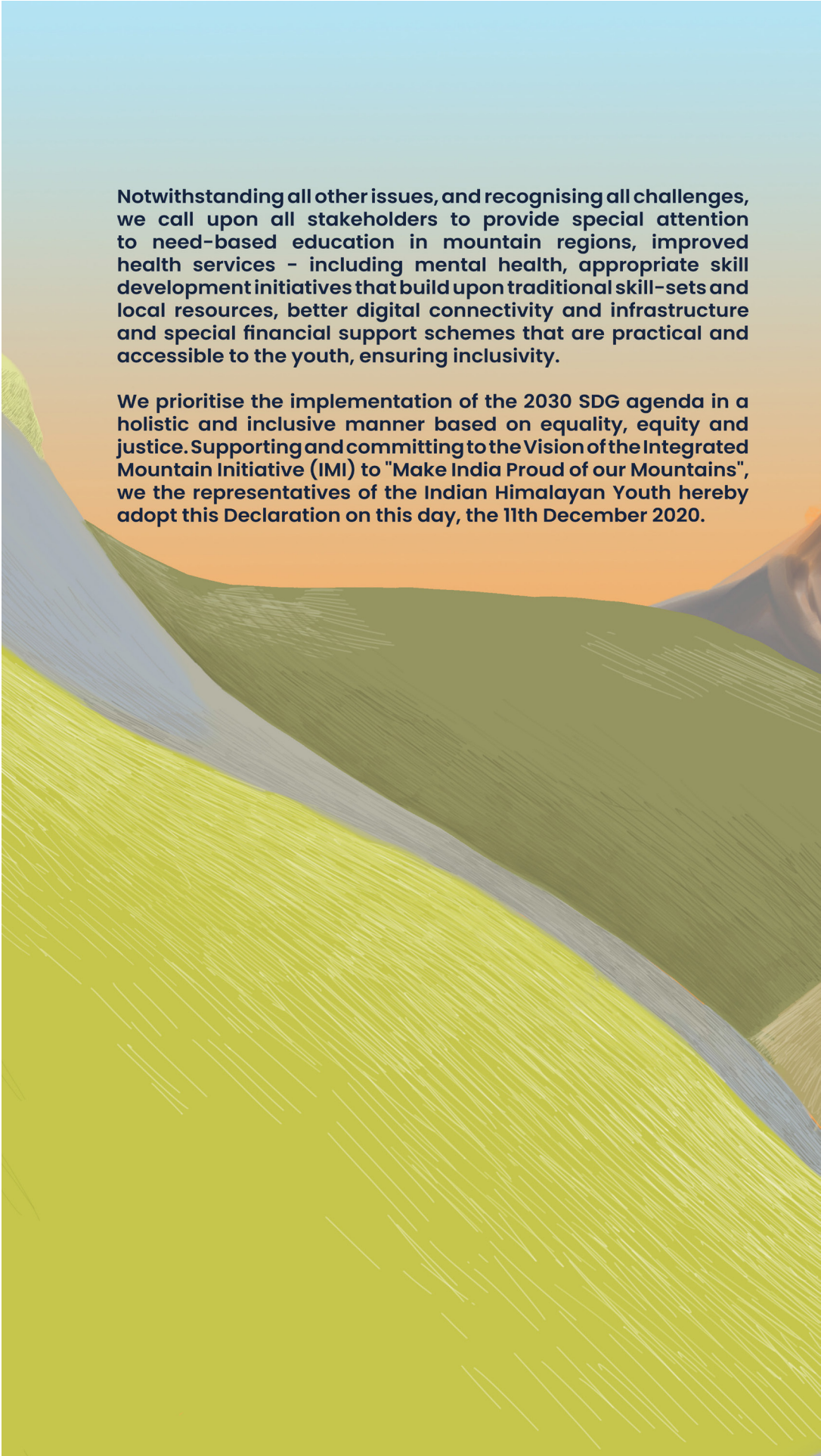
RECOGNISE the value of traditional knowledge systems, practices and values and the need to mainstream them into education and development planning of the mountains

RECALL and **REFER** to previous Youth Declarations of the Indian Himalayan Youth;

COMMIT to be active agents of change for sustainable development of the Indian Himalayan Region.

and we also do hereby

1. Recognise the rich mountain resources, as well as, the fragile geophysical structure of the Himalayas, and we call on policy makers and planners, including communities to embark a circular economy pathway for self-sufficiency and self-reliance thus ensuring sustainability;
2. Acknowledge the unique characteristics of sustainable mountain farming, resource management and inherent indigenous knowledge systems in mountain communities. Therefore, we call upon youth, governments, developmental agencies, research institutions and universities to map, document and assimilate such practices and knowledge systems into research, developmental planning and policy making for mountain regions;
3. Recommend the need to establish real-time data sharing and management platforms, harmonised with the metrics and formats required for reporting on the SDGs, their targets, and indicators, across all mountain states to access, monitor and analyse all aspects of development;
4. Strongly urge governments to ensure that skill, entrepreneurship development and capacity building initiatives form an integral part of the education system. They should be mountain specific and must be supported with appropriate and inclusive technical, financial and infrastructural mechanisms and services, which in turn strives towards accessibility, accountability and transparency;
5. Call upon society at large to take responsibility to handhold and support youth through internship and mentorship for skill development;
6. Prioritise and emphasise risk assessments and resilience building across all sectors to mitigate disasters in the IHR region;
7. Acknowledge mental health issues and recognise the urgency for the implementation of a consistent approach in addressing and creating engagement, at all levels and across all institutions;
8. Recognise the need to develop sustainable tourism destinations, encouraging responsible tourism and promote local produce and;
9. Emphasise on creation and implementation of policies on migration



Notwithstanding all other issues, and recognising all challenges, we call upon all stakeholders to provide special attention to need-based education in mountain regions, improved health services - including mental health, appropriate skill development initiatives that build upon traditional skill-sets and local resources, better digital connectivity and infrastructure and special financial support schemes that are practical and accessible to the youth, ensuring inclusivity.

We prioritise the implementation of the 2030 SDG agenda in a holistic and inclusive manner based on equality, equity and justice. Supporting and committing to the Vision of the Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) to "Make India Proud of our Mountains", we the representatives of the Indian Himalayan Youth hereby adopt this Declaration on this day, the 11th December 2020.



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