

# MOUNTAINS CONNECT

October 2023

IMI NEWSLETTER

## NEW GOVERNING COUNCIL IN PLACE



On October 1, 2023 the new Governing Council of IMI took over the reins of the organisation. In a handing over meeting organised on 26th September 2023. Outgoing President IMI, Mr PD Rai briefed everyone on the process of exit of old GC and carrying forward by new GC members.

Secretary IMI, Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha, thanked all the GC members and the executive members of the IMI for their cooperation. She presented the work of IMI of the past 3 years highlighting the work that needed to be continued.

The Presidentship was handed over to Mr. Ramesh Negi, Mr. Roshan Rai took over as the Secretary, while Ms. Binita Shah shall continue as the Treasurer into this new term.

Ms. Fantry M Jaswal and Mr. Jigmet Takpa are the new Vice Presidents of IMI. The Council Members are Dr. GS Rawat, Mr. Rigzin Spalbar, Mr. RP Gurung, Dr. Rajan Kotru, Ms. Thingrephi Lungharwo, Dr. John Zothanzama and Dr. MP Sood.

In his speech, Mr. Ramesh Negi expressed his gratitude to the outgoing councillors especially Mr. PD Rai for his leadership and drive to steer IMI during difficult times. He further mentioned that the new council would work to further IMI's agenda and also to bring in the best kind of people from the various sectors

## IMI's Resolution in solidarity with the Teesta Floods affected people



Integrated Mountain Initiative stands in solidarity with the people of Sikkim, West Bengal and Bangladesh who have had to face the onslaught of GLOF and the flash flood.

The Glacial Lake Outburst Flood from Lhonak Lake at 5,200 m (17,100 ft) above sea level in North Sikkim and the subsequent breach of the Teesta III Dam at Chungthang on 4 October 2023 has left a trail of destruction along the Lachen Chu and River Teesta with 37 people losing their lives, 78 missing and countless property and assets washed away or damaged.

The floods have damaged critical infrastructure, important biodiversity landscapes and affected lives of people in Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong leaving a traumatic mark especially for people living in the proximity of the Lachen Chu and River Teesta. The recovery process is going to be long drawn and expensive.

The disaster once again is a reminder that the Himalaya needs mountain sensitive policies and practices that acknowledges the socio-ecological importance and fragility of the landscape. The disaster is a reminder of the impacts of development choices that we have taken in the Himalaya as well as how global issues like climate change is impacting and compounding the challenging that mountain people face

As we move from relief to rehabilitation we must mainstream disaster risk reduction and resilience building. Importantly, all policies need to be made mountain sensitive and appropriate resources allocated and developed that acknowledges the socio-ecological importance and fragility of the Himalaya.

We offer our heartfelt prayers to all affected by the Teesta disaster. .

Integrated Mountain Initiative  
Resolved at the IMI GC, 16 October 2023

## FAREWELL NOTE FROM PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear Friends,

This is my last message in Mountains Connect as President of IMI. I will have demitted office after three years of exciting and relentless effort to 'get things done'. We have faced challenging times due to COVID and the downturn in the funding ecosystem for civil society in general. During COVID we had to leave our office in New Delhi, and working from home was a new experience for us all. It was a sweet and sour experience. That we were able to scale geographies and meet each other online through zoom was the brighter side. That we were unable to get to the ground and work on a Medicinal Plant Project was the negative end. Even then, there was plenty of outreach activity and State Chapters did their best too, under the circumstances.

However, these issues apart, the Governing Council (GC) and I have had a great run with lots of cooperation and collaboration from all our members and other stakeholders. We were able to organise SMDS IX, X and XI during this period and hold the subsequent MoMS.

We also were able to advance our profile in the policy space as well and with all State Governments. We were able to make significant headway in collaborating with our partners.

Before I bid adieu, let me welcome the new Council and new President, Shri Ramesh Negi. He will bring some refreshing changes along with this team. We all wish him and the new council all the very best. Challenging times are ahead for everyone. What is happening in Manipur with deep community divide is very concerning. Furthermore, disasters seem to stalk the Himalaya like never before like floods and landslides in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. We must accept our fate but work steadfastly toward greater resilience.

I am grateful to Dr. Satyadeep Chhettri and Shri Krishna Rautela for guiding the process of putting the new GC in place. It is heartening to note the smooth transition with better gender equality in the GC. This augurs well for the future of IMI.

Finally, let me thank my wonderful team comprising Priya, Binita, Dikila and Nupur. They are the real heroines.

As they say we not only talk about it but live it too. Let us continue to 'connect' and 'integrate' despite divisions!

PD Rai

## IMI UPDATES

### 34th Governing Council meeting and 10th Annual General Meeting

The 34th Governing Council was conducted virtually on 19th August, 2023. All GC members attended with the exception of Mr. Rigzin Spalbar and Dr. Rajendra Dobhal. Secretary, Ms. Priyadarshinee Shrestha, presented the minutes of the 33rd GC meeting and the the Action Taken Report (ATR). She informed the members about the recent updates on Himachal Pradesh chapter formation, and the submission of two draft proposals on EPR and Agroecology systems to MoEFCC.

The amendment of IMI MoA on the membership clause was also discussed, and a consensus decision was taken by the GC. Ms. Binita Shah presented the balance sheet which was approved by the council. Dr. Satyadeep Chhetri, Returning Officer for the elections informed the members about the nominations received and the process of IMI election 2023.

10th Annual General Body meeting was held online on 19th August. The meeting was chaired by Mr. P.D. Rai, President, IMI and attended by thirty for IMI members.

The meeting was especially called to discuss the amendment to MoA on IMI membership. Rationale for the amendment that had been shared earlier was presented to the members and that it would help in bringing new members.

The IMI general body unanimously approved the amendment.



### SDFU workshop on Ecosystem based adaptation

Sustainable Development Forum Uttaranchal (SDFU) organised a consultative workshop on "Ecosystem based approaches for Climate change mitigation and sustainable food production in western Himalaya" on 11 August 2023 at SARG Training Centre, Ramgarh, Nainital.



The workshop brought together multiple stakeholders to discuss the issues of climate change and agro ecosystem, especially in the western Himalayan region, and the ongoing initiatives.

Talks at the workshop focused on the following

- Integrated management of forests and agro-ecosystems in the Himalayan region for multiple co-benefits,
- Challenges and issues in agro-ecosystem with special dependence on forest in Himalayas,
- Prevention of fire from pine needles as natural climate solutions, natural climate solutions pathways and baseline assessments of carbon sequestration through participatory approaches,
- Biodynamic agriculture and carbon sequestration,
- Community mobilization for soil, water and natural resource management and

A panel discussion on the policy environment and the sustainability of the agroecology of the Indian Himalayas was also organised along with a field visit to Organic Sansakt Project, Sadi was part of the workshop.



## IMI at the National University of Singapore

Mr. PD Rai, President of Integrated Mountain Initiative, gave a talk at the Residential College 4 at the National University of Singapore. The RC4 STEER Himalaya Forum has been designed by the University to ensure that students from the university get an opportunity to interact and build relationships, experiences and learning in the Indian Himalayan Region. This program at the University is being led and guided by Dr. Navarun Verma and another colleague.



The last batch of students visited Mukteshwar in Uttarakhand in late 2022. They presented their findings and possible interventions, mostly along the lines of ecotourism. Prof. Maharaj Pandit and Mr. PD Rai were the main discussants and advocated how the science to policy process works or does not work at a meta level.

It was a lively discussion and debate and the students and professors present added great value to the evening's two hour exercise for students who are looking at ways to build resilience of local people who are reeling under the fury unleashed by climate change.

## IMI signs MoU with National Institute of Urban Affairs

IMI team comprising of Mr. PD Rai, Mr. R Negi, Ms. P Shrestha, and Ms. B Shah visited the NIUA office to discuss on the areas of work and prospects for future collaboration. Background presentations on both the organisations were made by the representatives. NIUA's initiative of Parvat Manthan and Hill Forum for Sustainable cities was also discussed outlining the possibilities for collaborative work with IMI. Subsequently an MoU has been signed with NIUA for working in collaboration.

As part of the collaboration, a webinar on 'How to Plan Resilient Himalayan Cities' was organised on 21st September 2023, with the objective of bringing contextual and specialised advocacy and communication tools for urban planning for IHR. Dr. Rajan Kotru spoke about ideas about zonation and carrying capacity and the need to look deeper into how data/ knowledge/ information would actually be used for planning and management.

## PARTNER'S CORNER

### SaveTheHills documents ground situation



SaveTheHills, documented the ground situation of the affected areas in the wake of the Teesta disaster through their blog, that provides important visual and textual narrative of the GLOF, dam breach and its impact.

STH based out of Kalimpong and founded by Wing Commander Praful Rao (IMI and DHI member) has been a strong proponent of inclusion of disaster in the development discourse in the Himalaya. The popular Hazard Alert WhatsApp groups managed by the organisation has been providing important weather and disaster information in the Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalaya. The group has been an important ground up verified communication and discussion channel during the Teesta Disaster.

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### Report launch of The Himalayan Cleanup in Darjeeling



THC 2023 report was launched on Zero Waste Himalaya Day in Darjeeling organised in collaboration with the Municipality. Darjeeling specific outcomes of THC were presented as - strengthening of single use plastic bans, decentralised waste management, eating local and companies ensuring extended producer responsibility in the mountains. [READ MORE](#)

## Natural Climate Solutions strategy for India - IMI Inputs

The Nature Conservancy-India's initiative Indian Collaborative for Applied Sustainability Solutions (ICASS) has been working on the challenges through a consortium of experts (working group) to bridge the gap between policy-making and sustainability science; and lack of co-produced, multi-disciplinary solutions.

Dr. GS Rawat represents IMI in the Working Groups which has been discussing possible pathways that offer the best balance between greenhouse gas mitigation potential, livelihood and biodiversity benefits to local communities. He has highlighted the need for ecosystem based approaches to climate change mitigation for long term NCS. Ensuring upstream-downstream linkages and covering social, cultural and ecological diversity, identification of potential natural vegetation (grasslands, scrub and other ecosystems) proper incentive mechanisms for private forest owners and CBOs such as Van Panchayats for participation in the NCS, etc. are other important suggestions.

To consolidate the status of institutional mechanism for promoting landscape approach to management, the current regime of Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (GHNPCA) was assessed through a SWOT exercise, review of its management plan and Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) report. Field visit to different parts of GHNPCA covering eco-zone, selected forests, alpine meadows, past and present livestock camps (thach) were also undertaken.

Based on these, recommendations have been presented to strengthen the present institutional structure, role and responsibilities of the GHNP authorities and need for coordination with other line agencies, etc.



## ICIMOD workshop on sustainable and climate resistant tourism in the HKH

A two day regional Consultation Workshop on 17th & 18th July 2023 in Kathmandu on the theme "Co-creative scoping study for sustainable and climate resistant mountain tourism in the Hindu Kush Himalaya". The workshop focused on bringing together multi-stakeholders of the tourism industry in a collaborative exercise for a comprehensive and contextualized policy review exercise that would facilitate improved understanding of policy issues, barriers and opportunities. Recommendations for policy revisions and priorities to promote more green, inclusive and climate resistant mountain tourism were also provided by the participants at the workshop.

Mr RP Gurung from ECOSS, Sikkim and GC member participated on behalf of IMI at the workshop.

## World Mental Health Day Celebration – DLR Prerna



DLRPrerna celebrated World Mental Health Day 2023 with the theme "mental health is a universal human right." The event took place at Hayden Hall where representatives from different fields of health, education, law, art and development came together to have a dialogue on mental health and the need to bring it to the mountains. It was a zero waste event. Several speakers talked about their experiences and perspective on mental health. Local artist group from Darjeeling "Flostate" also exhibited their art in the event on the theme.

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## Red panda day celebration – WWF- India and DHI

WWF- India collaborated with DHI to celebrate Red Panda Day at Kalimpong on September 16, 2023. Schools of Kalimpong along with various Government departments, organisations participated in the event.



The program had interactive sessions, talks and contests for the participants. Dr. Sunita Pradhan from ATREE delivered the key note address sharing from her experience of working with red pandas.

## Member's write / participate

Archana Vaidya writes how the Indian Himalayan Region needs its own EIA

[READ HERE](#)

Roshan Rai participated in a dialogue on East Mojo "Development at what cost? - The Sikkim Conundrum"

[WATCH HERE](#)

## Meet A member

### Mr. Ramesh Negi



Mr. Negi comes from a family of apple farmers from the remote village of Chopal in Shimla. He joined IAS in 1984, and has vast experience of working in diverse socio-cultural environs ranging from Andaman Nicobar Islands to coastal region of Goa, Daman Diu & Dadra Nagar Haveli.

Mr. Negi retired as Chief Secretary of Arunachal Pradesh, and served the Delhi Jal Board as the CEO. He was also Principal Secretary of Delhi Urban Development and Chair of Delhi Child Right's Commission, among many others. Presently, he is Chairperson of State Level Monitoring Committee of Supreme Court on Shelterless and Homeless in Delhi.

### IMI ASSOCIATION

Mr. Ramesh Negi has been associated with IMI since 2014 when SMDS was organised in Arunachal Pradesh, and has been GC Member since 2017. He is the current President of IMI.

### IMI FUTURE WORK

Being a strong believer of cultural diversity and conservation of ecological wealth and diversity for future generations, Mr. Negi feels the main challenge is to provide collective voice to the people of IHR which presently is lost in din of development strategies, which do not address specific issues of IHR. Pan India rhetoric is exposing people to perils of progress and constant grief in the form of annual disasters.

Support of all regions and states of IHR to introspect on our existing growth strategies and to streamline criticality of Himalayan geology with conservation of precious cultural heritage is needed. All of this is in IMI's mandate and needs to be pursued with urgency in all earnest.

## Mountain matters

### Arunachal gets 3 New GI Tagged Food Products



Arunachal Pradesh has added 3 more products to its list of Geographical Indications (GI) tagged products.

The renowned Khaw Tai (Khampti Rice), cultivated by traditional Khampti tribal farmers in the Namsai region, and the prized Yak milk product 'Yak Churpi' from West Kameng and Tawang districts and Tangsa textile have now received official recognition.

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### Carrying Capacity Of 13 Himalayan States Should Be Assessed, Center to SC



MoEFCC has submitted a report before the Apex Court suggesting the constitution of an Expert Committee to determine the carrying capacity of 13 Himalayan Region States.

The Supreme Court has been considering a plea seeking for Carrying Capacity studies to be conducted in 13 Himachal States/UTs.

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