

# MOUNTAINS CONNECT

October 2024

IMI NEWSLETTER



## The Himalayan Cleanup 2024



**121739**

pieces of waste picked,

**106857 (87.7%)**

plastic

Only **24.8%**

recyclable

### Top 5 polluters of the Indian Himalayan Region for 2024.

PepsiCo India, CG Foods, Parle, Coca Cola India and ITC

### Top plastic polluters of the Himalaya revealed in THC report

The report of The Himalayan Cleanup 2024 was released on Zero Waste Himalaya Day on August 8, 2024 in a webinar hosted by IMI, followed by a workshop organised on August 12, 2024 in Gangtok. The Himalayan Cleanup (THC) campaign was conducted across mountain states in which volunteers cleaned up various sites and audited the waste collected.

The event in Gangtok, organised in collaboration with the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) had the presence of Deputy Mayor - Gangtok Municipal Corporation, the Chairperson of Darjeeling Municipality, Councillors from GMC, Secretary RDD, Secretary Food and Civil Supplies, Mission Directors SBM - Urban and Rural, State, State Pollution Control Board, Education Department and RDD officials, civil society organisations from Darjeeling and Sikkim, educational institutions and individuals.

THC since 2018, with a waste and brand audit, names the companies that pollute the Himalaya and calls them out to take responsibility for their plastic waste through the Extended Producer Responsibility(EPR) rules under the Plastic Waste Management Rules. EPR rules however finds little to no implementation in the mountains. This year, more than 15000 volunteers participated in the campaign cleaning up more than 350 sites, and auditing waste in over 150 sites to raise their voices against these plastic polluting companies. Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalaya had the highest number of cleanups conducted.

Food packaging was consistently the highest trashed item at 84.2% of all plastics, which indicates the high consumption of ultra processed food that has been linked with ill-health.

IMI Secretary, Mr. Roshan Rai highlighted that existing policies and practices are not sensitive and sufficient to respond to the waste crisis, and that there is a need to acknowledge the socio-ecological importance, fragility and challenges of the Himalaya.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear friends from the IMI network and others,

You are reading the October 2024 issue and we are happy to bring this to you, as an update on our activities and initiatives. The Himalayan Clean-up report was launched in collaboration with Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Grameen), Sikkim. As we all know that plastic pollution is now certainly a priority area for change and the movement strengthens our demand for mountain sensitivity in policies and producer responsibility to address the Himalayan waste crisis. We must give up our addiction to single use plastic and the Extended Producer's Responsibility (EPR) needs to be enforced fully in the Himalaya.

IMI has also initiated a project under National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS) of MoEFCC. The project focuses on the state of agro-ecosystems in selected border areas of the IHR to document climate-resilient farming practices and develop strategies for upscaling good practices covering the states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim.

We are also conducting with ICIMOD a "Macro level stocktake assessment on solid waste management and promoting a circular economy in Uttarakhand" focusing on emerging hill towns and cities of Uttarakhand, to analyse potential opportunities and gaps to help promote a circular economy.

This year's International Mountain Day theme is "Mountain Solutions for a Sustainable Future, Innovations, Adaptation and Youth", and I would request State Chapters to facilitate effective dialogue with youth on the theme.

I would also like to welcome Mr. STS Lepcha of Uttarakhand and Dr. Debashis Chakraborty of Tripura as new members of IMI.

IMI as an institution must bring viewpoints from all across the Himalaya as this is our mandate as well the need of the hour. We do hope to report on this regularly through this newsletter. Please send your articles or write in with all your comments on the newsletter and how we might improve it.

With best wishes,  
Ramesh Negi  
President, IMI



Various organisations from Sikkim and Darjeeling such as WWF India, TIEEDI, Friends of Chongay, Little Green World, DLR Prerna, who had conducted the campaign spoke on their insights and experiences. Various schools presented their THC insights through poster presentations.

In her address, the Deputy Mayor, Gangtok, Smt. Tshering Palden mentioned the challenges faced in waste segregation and lack of people to work in waste due to the stigma attached. She also mentioned the importance of working on bringing behavioural changes amongst citizens.

The Darjeeling Municipality Chairperson, Shri Dipen Thakuri mentioned that the municipality was working with a vision for 20 years, highlighting that efforts for undoing the damage done by his generation and the need to redress the waste crisis by all with all seriousness.

Participating organisations and schools gave key suggestions on moving towards systemic solutions, on tackling the issue of high junk food consumption and how EPR could be made more effective for the mountains. The event ended with a unanimous call to the plastic polluting companies to take responsibility for the plastic trash they were dumping in the mountains.

[Read more](#)

## IMI UPDATES

### President IMI on News 9

Mr. Ramesh Negi joined Air Marshal GP Sharma on News 9 and the editor to discuss issues of climate change. They discussed on the topic - Climate change is real and here - what needs to be done to stop or slow it down?

Unprecedented rainfall, such as the ones in Mumbai had flooded roads and railway tracks, disrupting flights and local train services forcing schools and colleges to shut. They also discussed that there was a rise in disasters globally as well mentioning disasters in Brazil, Switzerland and northern Italy.

Switzerland saw more than 100mm rain, while Italy received between 100mm and 200mm rainfall. Such events are unfolding across the country and the world with increased frequency.

[Watch here](#)



### President, IMI at ICIMOD's event, Kathmandu.

Mr. Ramesh Negi participated as a panelist in ICIMOD's "Scoping assessment on sustainable mountain settlements in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region".

The scoping assessment on sustainable mountain settlements in the HKH region is an effort to improve the resilience and sustainability of human settlements in the region.

[Read more](#)

## Partner's Corner



**Creating Highways for Sustainable Entrepreneurship** – a Youth Network & Sensitisation Workshop was organised by **Sustainable Development Forum Uttarakhand (SDFU)** with support of the Doon University and Nainital Bank on June 21st-22nd, 2024. The workshop attended by over 60 youths aimed to develop a network of young environmentally conscious persons in Uttarakhand.

The main objectives of the workshop were to establish a network of young individuals and provide mentorship opportunities; Sensitise young entrepreneurs to current trends in start-ups and self-employment opportunities, vocations, highlight the issues and challenges faced and to charter the future course of action.

Various technical sessions highlighted sustainable entrepreneurship, including design, social work, homestays, apiary, media, cinematography, agri-preneurship, etc. The workshop proposed a youth platform aiming to empower youth in Uttarakhand to become agents of change and contribute to sustainable development and entrepreneurship in the state. Through networking, mentorship, and dialogue, the platform seeks to create a supportive environment for young people to thrive and make a positive impact on their communities.

Chief guest of the inaugural session was Mr. Ravi Shanker (Ex Chief Secretary- Uttarakhand) and the workshop was attended by Dr. Mangal Singh Mandrawal (Registrar, Doon University), Dr. Avinash Chandra Joshi (NTPC Chair Professor CPP, Doon University), Dr. HC Purohit (Dean Student Welfare Doon University), Mr. Sunny Mehra ( VP, Nainital Bank), Mr Prahalad Adhikari (Secretary, HAST), Mr. Shubham Tomar (The PSA office, Delhi), Dr. Malavika Chauhan (Himnotthan Society), Mr. Anoop Nautiyal (Founder SDC), Ms. Priyanka Tolia (TRIFED), Mr. STS Lepcha, Dr. GS Rawat and Ms. Binita Shah from SDFU, among others.



**Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative** presented the photo exhibition - **Lest We forget the Teesta Disaster, 2023** during Sikkim's State Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Day on October 4th, 2024. The event was organised by the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) under Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, at Chintan Bhawan, Gangtok as a commemoration of the October 4, 2023 GLOF disaster that affected the Sikkim Darjeeling Himalaya.

The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri PS Tamang, who was the Chief Guest at the event visited the photo exhibition that documents the Teesta Disaster through photographs taken by Mr. Praful Rao and Praveen Chettri of Save the Hills. IMI Secretary, Roshan Rai while presenting the photo exhibition spoke about the need for transboundary approach with a longer term vision.

### Amba Jamir at the Food System Summit India 2024 New Delhi.

Amba Jamir, policy and development strategist and founder of Sustainable Development Forum Nagaland, delivered an eye-opening critique of the Public Distribution System (PDS).



He explained its unintended impacts on traditional farming and sustainable diets in India's northeastern states. While the PDS has long supported food security, Jamir highlighted how its subsidised food distribution, especially rice, has reshaped agricultural practices, reduced biodiversity, and altered local diets, particularly in the ecologically diverse and culturally rich hills of Nagaland and beyond.

[Read more](#)



**Himachal Pradesh Sustainable Development Forum** organized The Himalayan Clean Up campaign in association with Mahila Mondal, Palampur

### DISA, Tripura

The clean up action on 5th June 2024 by DISA Tripura chapter along with Forest Dept and FRCLE ICFRE Tripura centre.



## Zero Waste Himalaya strengthening workshop 7, 8 October 2024



18 organizations deeply concerned about the Himalayan waste crisis met in Buddha Pada, Kalimpong as part of the Zero Waste Himalaya platform with the objective to strengthen and build the zero waste movement in the Himalaya. The workshop was supported by GAIA Asia Pacific, an organisation working with the objective to move away from the current linear and extractive economy and towards a circular system that supports people's right to a safe and healthy environment. The organisations taking part in the workshop were Waste Warriors (UK/ HP), Little Green World (Ladakh), AMYAA (Arunachal Pradesh) Youth NET (Nagaland), Sambhavna, Deer Park Institute (Himachal Pradesh), Green Circle, WWF India, ECOSS, KCC (Sikkim), TIEEDI, Anugyalaya, DLR Prerna (Darjeeling), Budhha Pada, SaveTheHills (Kalimpong) Rural Development Department (Sikkim), Integrated Mountain Initiative and Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (Bhutan).

The workshop had the presence of the Regional Coordinator of GAIA Asia Pacific – Froilan Grate, who provided deep insights into the global waste crisis and the work of GAIA to address the issue. He threw light on the crisis of narratives that blamed Asian countries for the plastic problem when the source of the plastics were in developed nations. He also highlighted the link between the waste crisis and the climate crisis, mentioning that 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions are embedded in the life-cycle of all products.

## MOUNTAIN MATTERS!



2023 GLOF in Sikkim's South Lhonak was a wake-up call: PK Mishra

The need for working together across borders and disciplines to create a safer world and the importance of collaboration in addressing global challenges

Risk reduction is not just about responding to disasters but also about building resilience.

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Himachal Pollution Board Tightens Grip on Companies for Failing Plastic Waste Management

1,100 companies were issued notices for failing to comply with plastic waste management regulations by the HPPCB.

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## MEET A MEMBER STS LEPCHA

Mr. S T S Lepcha is the Chairperson of SDFU and member of IMI. An IFS batch of 1983, he was the PCCF of Uttarakhand and served over 35 years being involved in livelihood development, non-timber forest products such as bamboo, natural fibre and MAPs, spring rejuvenation, etc. He was instrumental in setting up the Spring Shed Consortium in Uttarakhand.



Following a successful tenure in Uttarakhand as an Indian Forest Officer till April 2018, he has continued his services as the Environment Expert in the National Highway Authority for a year along and as Executive Committee member of the National Bamboo Mission under the Ministry of Agriculture.

### ASSOCIATION WITH IMI

Mr. Lepcha had a long association with Dr. RS Tolia from the early 90s when his work on bio-fencing to manage elephant conflict caught Dr. Tolia's attention. He was then involved in watershed projects and JFMC projects to eventually become the first CEO of the Bamboo and Fiber Development Board of Uttarakhand. His involvement with IMI goes back to 2011 when the first SMDS was held, and since then has been actively engaged in all the programmes. He was also part of the IMI Bamboo focus group.

### CURRENT AFFILIATION:

At present Mr. Lepcha provides voluntary support to 11 organizations in livelihood, environment, climate change, ecosystem services, cultural issues. He is editor-in-chief of the Journal of Non-Timber Forest Products published from Dehradun and also a member of the Rongring Lepcha Culture and Welfare Society headquartered in Kalimpong that is involved in the revival of the endangered Lepcha language using digital pedagogic classrooms. RLCWS was the sole winner from India in the United Nations World Summit Award in the category 'Culture and Heritage' on 17th April 2024.

### CHALLENGES:

Balancing the developmental needs and conservation of the mountains is a major challenge. Development of the Himalayas on account of the modernisation wave is inevitable, and in many ways, necessary. It mitigates migration and contributes to local economy, but also catalyses the frequency and scale of disasters and has also added fuel to the fire in aggravating climate change. The line to balance development and conservation in the Himalayas is very thin. Nonetheless, I am convinced that it is through sustainable development practices and the involvement of the grassroot stakeholders on a micro level, especially the contemporary youth, that all of us can walk this delicate margin together and craft more feasible solutions to these issues.

### IMI FUTURE WORK:

IMI should focus its commitment on the Developmental Disability Index of the IHR highlighting the relationship between forest areas and development activities to seek appropriate compensation for the mountain state for their green cover. An exclusive Ministry committed to the mountain states for policies to remedy issues of the respective mountain states are formulated. Blue and black bonus could be awarded to communities for protecting springshed areas and soil carbon from forest fires.

Youth engagement to make them aware and empowered in the field of green economy which would encourage sustainable start ups to support local economy and the environment. IMI should focus more on participatory action initiatives and research to acknowledge as well as amend the plethora of issues that the mountains are facing today.