



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FORUM UTTARANCHAL

5TH RST FORUM
11TH DECEMBER 2022



PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP ON

“ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED
ORGANISATIONS AND WOMEN IN
MANAGEMENT OF FORESTS AND CLIMATE
CHANGE MITIGATION IN UTTARAKHAND”

NAINITAL BANK
THE NAINITAL BANK LTD.



नैनीताल बैंक
दि नैनीताल बैंक लिमिटेड

DOON LIBRARY
and Research Centre

RST Tolia Lectures and Consultations

Published by Doon Library 2023

All rights reserved

Number of copies

Background

Sustainable Development Forum, Uttarakhand (SDFU), is a civil society led network platform with the mission to mainstream concerns of Uttarakhand and its people in the development dialogue of the state.

SDFU was registered as a body in 2014 and has a group of highly experienced professionals as councilors in the board. SDFU was established as a state chapter of Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI) a national level network of mountain states of India.

SDFU is engaged in organizing a number of programs voicing and networking to raise the development issues of the state in the form of workshops and seminars. Some of the notable programs are the RST forum which is held each year to commemorate late Dr RS Tolia the founder of IMI and SDFU. The RST forum invited lectures on different current topics facing the state. The lectures are then documented in the form of a booklet and circulated to all those who would like to read.

SDFU has been actively participating in the Sustainable Mountain Development Summit (SMDS) being held in different mountain states where in SDFU was the host to the 9th summit in Dehradun in 2020 which was held in on line mode.

In 2021 - 22 SDFU organized the high level stake holders consultation under the project 'Plastic Pollution in the Marine waters' supported by UNEP in September 2021 which was closed with the policy brief and recommendations in September 2022.

RST forum 2021 was held in December 2021 where the topic Uttarakhand 2020 was covered by Sri Ravi Shanker (Former Chief Secretary)

RST Forum 2022 was a day long consultation on the Van Panchayat s and their role in the present scenario with the implementation of the biodiversity village committees.

The proceedings of the consultation have already been taken up in the Van Panchayat amendment Rules and regulation by the Department of Forest Uttarakhand.

Consultation

“Role of Community Based Organizations and Women in Forest Management and Climate Change Mitigation in Uttarakhand”.

One-day workshop under the aegis of RST Forum an annual program was held in tribute to Late Dr RS Tolia. This year’s theme was **“Role of Community Based Organizations and Women in Forest Management and Climate Change Mitigation in Uttarakhand”.**

Late Dr. Raghunandan Singh Tolia, was a visionary son of mountains, scholar and beacon of action. 11th December also happened to be the International Mountain Day. It is noteworthy that one of the major contributions made by Dr. R.S. Tolia in newly established state of Uttarakhand was administrative reforms in forestry working and convergence between forest and rural development. From the very beginning the state has recognized the role of community-based organizations (CBOs) especially Van Panchayats (VPs), Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs), and women’s self-help groups (SHGs) in forest based rural development in Uttarakhand. The state has established as many as 12,064 VPs and 7991 BMCs to strengthen forest management and biodiversity conservation. In addition, a large number of eco-development committees (EDS) have been established around protected areas to sustainably manage the buffer and eco-sensitive zones. It is estimated that nearly 7,35,100 hectares of forests in the state falls under VPs that forms about 14% of the geographical area. All other classes of forests, village grazing lands and revenue land under Gram Sabhas are to be managed and sustainably utilized by the local communities through BMCs as per the provisions of Section 41 of the Biological Diversity Act (2004).

Despite a long history and experience of community-based forest management and rich legacy of women led forest conservation movements such as Chipko, the state still faces several challenges when it comes to participatory management of forests and forest resources, equitable sharing of benefits from bio-resources especially non-timber forest produces from the community forests or the village commons. It is also well established that in rural Uttarakhand women form the single largest user group of forest resources. They play a leading role in prevention of fire and protection of forests. However, scarcity of fuel wood and fodder directly affect women and their workload. There are very few schemes that encourage women to participate in forest and pasture restoration activities. Though, it is mandatory to have women representative in the VPs and BMCs, it is not so in their formation. Furthermore, out-migration of men increases their burden many times.

(*Reference: Uttarakhand Forest report as per JICA project in van panchayat. [van-panchayat | http://jicauttarakhand.org:90](http://jicauttarakhand.org:90))

Outmigration in many areas has another ramification in the form of agricultural abandonment, loss of agro-biodiversity, infestation of invasive alien species in the village pastures. The workshop provided a common platform for various stakeholders including senior civil servants, scholars, forest officers and representatives of CBOs especially women from Uttarakhand as well as outside the state to deliberate on the ways to strengthen the role of CBOs and women in management of forests also forest based climate change mitigation. Major objectives of the workshop were:

1. To revisit the role of CBOs, especially VPs and BMCs in forest based rural development in the state of Uttarakhand,
2. To identify the areas of convergence among CBOs and various line agencies for the sustainable use of natural resources and forest-based livelihoods in Uttarakhand,
3. To deliberate on the role of rural women in climate change mitigation and their role in implementing the state level climate action plans.

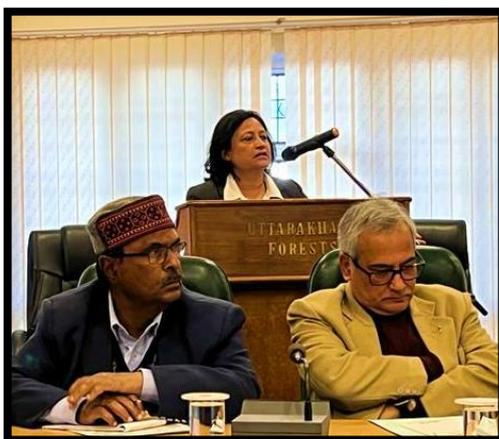
The workshop was organized in collaboration with in association with Doon **Library and Research Centre** and sponsored by the **Nainital Bank**. The day long workshop was divided into four sessions (Annexure 1) and attended by more than 50 participants (Annexure 2). Deliberations and recommendations of the workshop are summarized below.

Proceedings of the workshop

Session 1: Role of CBOs in Forest Management in Uttarakhand Session Chair: Professor A.N. Purohit, Councilor, SDFU

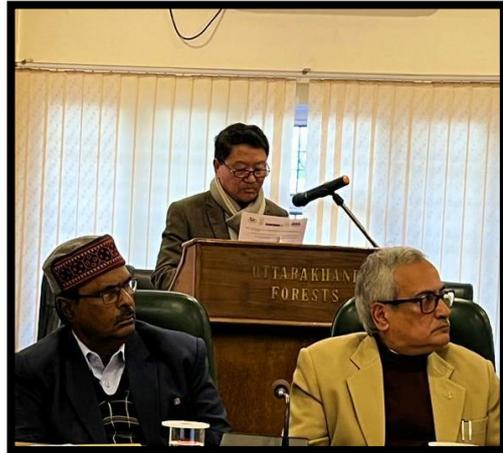


The first session of the workshop began with invitation to the session chair **Prof. A.N. Purohit**, keynote speaker **Dr. B.S. Barfal**, and other dignitaries on the dais followed brief remarks and importance of RST Forum by Professor Purohit. Following this, the chair invited the organizers to begin the proceedings of the session.



At the outset **Ms. Binita Shah**, Secretary, SDFU formally welcomed all the participants, i.e., members and councilors of SDFU, keynote speakers, and representatives of community-based organizations (CBOs). She also extended welcome to the online participants especially Shri P.D. Rai, Former MP, Sikkim and President, Integrated Mountain Initiative (IMI). Following the welcome address, she briefly introduced aims and objectives of the Sustainable Development Forum Uttaranchal (SDFU) which also serves as a Uttarakhand Chapter of the IMI. Ms. Shah also acknowledged the financial assistance received from the Nainital Bank and Dehradun-based Doon Library & Research Centre in organizing the workshop. She informed that the Doon Library has been publishing the proceedings of the RST Forums annually for the last 5 years.

Welcome address was followed by the introductory note by **Shri S.T.S. Lepcha**, Chairman SDFU. He informed the house that the RST Forum is an annual flagship event of SDFU, organized in memory of the Late Dr. RS Tolia. He clarified that unlike the previous meets this RST Forum was being organizing in the form of one-day brainstorming on the role of community-based organizations and women in participatory forest management and climate change. He said that these two issues were central to the interest of Dr. RS Tolia, who, during his tenure worked



towards framing the rules for the working of Van Panchayats (community-based forest management organizations). It is noteworthy that Uttarakhand is the only state in India where Van Panchayats exist and some of them were set up as early as 1920. Shri Lepcha explained that the idea of a day-long session was to brainstorm on the issues and challenges that hinder the execution and implementation of government bodies at the grass-roots level and come up with policy recommendations. He then gave an outline of the session plans for the rest of the day and requested all the participants to take active part in discussions.

Shri P.D. Rai, President IMI, in his opening remarks welcomed all the dignitaries and participants present in the workshop and conveyed his best wishes to SDFU for conducting a successful event to mark the International Mountain Day 2022 in the form of 5th R.S. Tolia Forum. He informed the participants that this year Sikkim and Darjeeling Chapters of IMI were jointly celebrating the International Mountain Day. Further, he said that Uttarakhand is best placed to mark this year's theme of International Mountain Day i.e., '**Women move the mountains**' as the state has the distinction of initiating several environmental movements through women including world famous 'Chipko Movement' led by the women of Uttarakhand. Therefore, the role of women and community-based organizations in forest management and climate change mitigation is immense. He reiterated that Uttarakhand needs to also recognize the immense contribution made by Dr. RS Tolia for the development of the state and extended his best wishes for the success to the women of Uttarakhand, women of Indian mountains and to the effort we all are putting together for making India proud of its mountains.

Following the opening remarks by Shri P.D. Rai, the session chair **invited** Dr. B.S. Barfal, Former PCCF and Head of the Forest Force (HoFF), Government of Uttarakhand to deliver the keynote address to be followed by speakers to present their views within stipulated time.

Role of community-based organizations in management of forests: key issues and strategies

Dr. B.S. Barfal began his keynote address by paying his tributes to Late Dr. R.S. Tolia and retraced the important contributions made by him in the area of community participation in forest and rural development. He explained that soon after the state of Uttarakhand was carved out as a separate state (year 2000), Dr.Tolia laid rules and guidelines for the functioning of the Van Panchayats (VPs) in 2001. The rules were amended in 2005. Dr.Tolia also ensured that each village had its own Van Panchayat. It was because of this decision that the state saw an expansion in the number of VPs from about 6000 to over 12000 within 2-3 years in a newly formed state. Another important milestone achieved by Dr. RS Tolia was channelizing Rs 40 crores (revenue earned by various VPs) to the accounts of all the respective VPs, which was lying unutilized with the district magistrates.



Dr. Barfal gave an overview of the history of forest management in the erstwhile Uttar Pradesh hills (now Uttarakhand). He explained that besides the state Forest Department, several other bodies may be involved in forests management depending upon the legal status e.g., revenue department, Nagar Palikas (Municipalities), Cantonment Boards, Van Panchayats (VPs), Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC), Self-help Groups (SHGs), and Eco-Development Committee (EDC). He, however, felt that there is a need to revive the concept of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) to expand participation of community in forest management. Further, he pointed out the inordinate delays in implementation of rules and functioning of the VPs and BMCs in the state and lack of clarity in functioning of these bodies. Some of the issues concerning the functioning of these CBOs, pointed out by Dr. Barfal were as follows:

1. Rule 7 (b) of VP Niyamawali states that of the 9 members of the Van Panchayat Management Committee (VPMC), 50 percent would be reserved for women. Besides, the elected Sarpanch would be on rotation (of the five year-term) i.e., men and women would be given equal chance to contest and serve as Sarpanch. To implement this rule, the Sub-District Magistrate (SDM) was expected to make a roster. However, these rules are being defied.
2. For the smooth functioning of a van panchayat, as per the laid rules, five-year plans were to be formulated in the form of a composite plan (CP) and micro plan for each van panchayat. However, this was not being executed in most of the areas.

3. Under the Rule-20 of the VP Rules (2005), the Management Committee of the VP is given status of a FOREST OFFICER but in most of the cases the elected Sarpanches are not aware of VP rules, regulations, their own duties, and responsibilities. This is one of the reasons for non-functioning of the van panchayats.
4. To generate Rural employment and to enhance income of the villagers under the mandate of the van panchayats, there is a provision of making agreement with SHGs, any other groups and individuals for various forestry activities under "Plant Maintain and Earn Scheme" which are expected to work in collaboration with VPs. However, this provision is not being utilized and several such SHGs are confined to inter-group loaning.
5. There is a considerable overlap in the functioning of the VPs and BMCs. Often, members of the two bodies are common and they are at loss when it comes to putting forward the relevant agenda. Even the Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs), who serves as the nodal officer of VP / BMCs are unaware of the functioning of the two bodies that hinders their functioning.
6. Yet another conflicting issue between the two CBOs is the lack of demarcation of areas to be controlled by the VPs and the BMCs. Because of this, the functional zones are not defined and there is hardly any coordination between the two agencies.

In order to resolve these conflicts, Dr. Barfal suggested the following actions:

- a. The geographical area within the BMCs and the VPs be clearly defined. Ideally all alpine areas outside the PA network under traditional livestock grazing and other land use practices by the local communities should be brought under BMCs. The forested tracts at lower elevations have already been covered under VP.
- b. Revive the system of joint forest management in degraded forest areas
- c. Synchronize the functioning of the Gram Sabhas, BMC, and the Van Panchayats.

Panel presentation 1: Update on Van Panchayat Rules and functioning in Uttarakhand by Ms. Jyotsna Sitling, PPCF Van Panchayat



Ms. Jyotsna Sitling, PPCF Van Panchayat in her presentation, underlined the urgent need to enhance coordination between the administration and the forest management in the field. She pointed out a few issues concerning effective implementation of VP rules which include lack of physical demarcation of boundaries of VPs in many cases, encroachment of VP land for infrastructure development and dual control

of VPs by the Forest and Revenue Departments. She informed the house that presently the state government is in the process of revising the VP rules which are being made simpler and easy to understand so that the CBOs as well as the frontline staff of the forest department can comprehend VP rules to implement it in totality. She explained that state government is sensitive enough to protect the interest of women, economically backward, SC and ST communities that has reflected in the VP rules of 2005 (amended 2012). In order to streamline the functioning of VPs, soon the Forest Department would issue booklets showing clear boundaries of VPs and Reserved Forests. Further, she informed the participants that the discussions are underway talks were underway with the Panchayati Raj to resolve the overlap between the functioning of VPs, BMCs and Gram Sabhas and with Revenue Department on updating the land records of Van Panchayats and making them available to every Van Panchayat and also measures being taken to curb the forest crimes, She assured that for smooth and effective functioning of the VPs, valuable recommendations of this Workshop will be incorporated in the revised Van Panchayat Rules.

Panel presentation 2: Recent experiences of working with Van Panchayats by Mr. S.V. Sharma, Consultant, JICA Project, UKFD

Mr. S.V. Sharma shared his recent experiences of working with 839 VPs spread over 9 districts of Uttarakhand under JICA project. He informed that the JICA funded project was being implemented in 9 districts, 36 ranges and 13 divisions of the state for a period of 10 years (2014 to 2024) that has been, in principle agreed, to be extended for two more years due to the novel corona virus disease (COVID-19). Thus, the project will continue till April 2026. The project is being implemented in participatory mode by the concerned VPs. He outlined the project objectives as follows: (i) **Eco-Restoration** (Address Forest Degradation/ Assisted Natural Regeneration, Plantation, Water conservation), (ii) **Livelihood Development** (Empowering communities through improved livelihood and Income generation for SHGs), (iii) **Disaster Risk Mitigation in Forest Areas** (through Technical Cooperation Project). He shared basic financial outlay of the project and progress made so far. He apprised the participants that a cluster approach based on forest survey maps (forest density using GIS technology) was used to select the van panchayats to implement the project. Major criteria for the selection of VPs for implementation of the project were: Past performance of VPs, Potential of Cluster formation, Extent of forest degradation, Distance from RF and Population, and Target group population. A revolving fund of Rs. 50,000/- is being given to each of 1503 SHGs, so far constituted in the project, to support them in implementation of their income generation activities, through their respective VPs. To support these SHGs to sustain their activities, 20 Cluster Level Federation (CLF) at Divisional level and a State Level Federation at State level have been constituted. Both of these Federations are registered under Self-reliant Co-operative Act, 2003. While CLFs play a major role in facilitating these SHGs in preparing their annual business plan the SLF support them

financially. A brand with the name “Have Pure” has been developed and a plastic free sale point with the name “My Re-fill store” has been established in Dehradun. Major achievements of the project, according to Mr. Sharma, were: Eco-restoration of 37000 ha. of degraded Panchayati forests, Registration of two Carbon projects, covering 18 and 7 VPs of Ranikhet and Nainital Soil Conservation Divisions respectively, for marketing of carbon stock so assessed so as to ensure financial support to these VPs; water drainage map for various watersheds for entire state; Construction of water tanks or ‘jalkunds’ which were interconnected by a network of ‘guls’ for the purpose of irrigation along with several other soil and water conservation structures in 31 selected MWS ; revival of watermills or ‘gharats’; and installation of rainwater harvesting units.

Panel presentation 3: Rehabilitation of degraded forests in and around ghost villages of Uttarakhand by Dr. Manab Chakraborty

Dr. Manab Chakraborty, Rural Finances expert addressed the participants through online mode from Delhi. He raised concern over abandoned agricultural fields in and around ghost villages as a result of distress migration prevailing in Uttarakhand. He suggested that the name of ghost villages from where mass outmigration has happened must be made available to the public; and the laws regarding felling of trees on private land and public land should be relaxed. Currently, there are 21 tree species even if grown on private land requires permission from concerned government officials before felling. If tree felling and transportation is not allowed or made difficult due to bureaucratic process, people will have little incentive to plant, nurture, and protect trees and private woodlots. He recommended that a special package should be announced to retain the people in hill districts, and rehabilitate the ghost villages. He suggested horticulture and wilderness tourism at scale in the abandoned villages.

Panel Presentation 4: Conservation of Non-timber Forest Produce by Shri S.K. Singh, IFS (Retd.) and Advisor, Hon’ble Forest Minister, Govt. of Uttarakhand.

Shri SK Singh highlighted the need for involving women in the IHR in forestry activities especially focusing on regeneration of multipurpose species and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). He suggested that a comprehensive plan should be drawn to restore the degraded forests and increase the productivity of forests, rivers and agricultural lands.

Towards the end, the session Chair, Prof. Purohit opened the house for brief discussion. Subsequently he thanked all the panelists and participants. He concluded by stating that more efforts are needed to implement the existing rules pertaining to use of forest resources in rural areas and need for policy level changes with respect to ownership of abandoned agricultural lands in the ghost villages.

Session 2: Role of Women in Climate Change Mitigation in IHR

Session Chair: Shri N. Ravishankar, Councilor, SDFU

Shri N. Ravi Shanker, Councilor SDFU, Chancellor DIT University & Director of Doon Library & Research Centre, welcomed the participants and introduced the theme of the session and stated that the society needs to recognize the crucial role played by women in the hills in managing the bio-resources as well as house hold activities under the changing climate. He said that various sectors of development viz., participatory natural resource management, agriculture, livestock management, etc hinge around grass roots workers and community-based organizations. Hence line agencies need to work towards convergence and harnessing from their strengths. Following the brief remarks, Shri N. Ravi Shanker invited the Keynote speaker Shri S P Subudhi, IFS & Director, Environment, and Panelists Dr. K.C. Sekar, Senior Scientist, GBPNIHE and Dr. Vishal Singh, CEDAR for their presentation.

Keynote Address: Introduction to State Action Plan on Climate Change by Shri S.P. Subudhi, IFS -APCCF & Director, Environment Conservation & Climate Change

Shri SP Subudhi, in his keynote address highlighted the visible impacts of climate change on mountain environment especially in Uttarakhand. He shared recent erratic trends in rainfall and temperature in the middle hills. He informed that there has been a shift in minimum temperatures and decrease in the period of chilling period affecting horticultural crops. He also shared the predictions of climate during the next 100 years, resultant changes in precipitation, availability of glacial water, etc making farmers, especially women farmers vulnerable to climate change. Hence, the role of women in mitigation is important. He said that generally the society goes for the engineering solutions to mitigate climate change but what we need is nature-based solutions. He summarized the key features of State Action Plan on climate change that identifies 14 sectors. He discussed possible mitigation measures and need for policy level changes in forestry and agriculture sectors (especially with respect to use of crops which require heavy irrigation). He also underlined the need for convergence and synergy among various schemes and more importantly need involve women in the hills in planning process.

Panel presentation 1: Rural technology for livelihood improvement in Uttarakhand by Dr. K.C Sekar, Senior Scientist, GBPNIHE

Dr. K.C Sekar discussed the simple technologies for livelihood improvement in rural areas of Uttarakhand and presented a case study from Triyuginarayan village, where the villagers benefitted from technological intervention by GBPNIHE. By introducing polyhouse technology (protected cultivation technology), there was an increase in the yield, besides better protection of crops from wild animals and pests. He said that with extreme weather events experienced by the state of Uttarakhand, shade-net technology

has shown remarkable success in peak extreme summers. A range of other rural technologies for rural women has helped in improving livelihood in a sustainable way. For example, technology like vermin-composting proved beneficial in increasing the yield and helping the farmers go organic. An organic label helped in procuring good returns. Dr. Sekar further explained how bio-prospecting could be linked to tourism. Value-added products (VAPs) could be made out of wild food like amla, kaphal, found in the region to generate income. He also discussed cost-benefits of shade-net technology, protected cultivation technology, and need for establishing more centres for demonstration and capacity building in mushroom cultivation, and bee-keeping. Dr. Sekar also shared his experiences on increasing income of the villagers through the sale of bio-briquettes made of pine needles. A good market model has been developed in Almora, which could be replicated in other areas. The villagers can be trained to use a zero-cool chamber for vegetable storage, and make water harvesting tanks for irrigation.

Panel Presentation 2: Offsetting Forest carbon in community managed forests by Dr. Vishal Singh, Executive Director, CEDAR

Dr. Vishal Singh in his presentation highlighted the need for offsetting forest carbon in community managed forests. He informed that India is the second largest supplier of carbon credits and it is opportune time to promote use of Green Energy for industrial and domestic purposes and also establish domestic tax-free carbon market. He also opined that there is a need to initiate a market-based approach to reducing emissions and harnessing various types of carbon credits (about 170 types), forestry being the largest sector. Dr. Singh also highlighted the opportunities for Uttarakhand Forest Department and CBOs for carbon conservation in the forest soil (Pedosphere), Van Panchayats and at sites of eco-restoration.

General Discussion and Comments from the Floor

- **Shri NC Tomar**, Former State President, Van Panchayat appreciated the initiative taken by SDFU for bringing the government officials and CBOs on the same platform to discuss the issues concerning management of community forests in the state of Uttarakhand. He fully agreed with the suggestions made by the earlier speakers on the need for better coordination among the Forest Department and CBOs in participatory management of forest resources. He also strongly felt that PCCF Van Panchayat does not have adequate institutional support at the level of Conservators, DFOs, Rangers and frontline staff to implement the rules and regulations of Van Panchayat and that in the absence of such institutional structure it would be extremely difficult to implement the rules.
- **Smt Kamla Kara, President**, Dwarahat Van Panchayat, District Almora expressed the concern over lack of awareness among the rural women about impacts of climate change in the mountains and also lack of capacity among VP

workers regarding management of forests. She requested the organizers of the workshop to conduct training workshops for the VP members in the rural areas about roles and responsibilities of VP and BMC members.

- **Shri C.S. Chauhan, Chairman, Eco-development Committee, Bhyundar-Pulna**, Joshimath Block (Chamoli) shared his experience on management of Govindghat – Hemkund Pilgrims’ trail in terms of cleaning of garbage and protection of forests. He said that if CBOs are organized and encouraged, they can effectively manage the forests and local biodiversity.

Following the general discussion and few remarks by the participants the session was summarized by the Chair, Shri N. Ravi Shanker. The Chair in conclusion recommended that a forum would be needed to further thrash to policy issues on above aspects and engage with the concerned departments.

Session 3: Group Works

Facilitators: Shri Anoop Nautiyal, Ms. Preeti Tolia Rautela & Other members of SDFU

After the lunch break all the participants were invited to discuss and summarize their views on three themes, viz., (i) Identify areas of convergence among CBOs and Line Agencies for sustainable forest management in community land, (ii) Identify policy and practice gaps in community-based forest management and way forward, (iii) Role of women in climate change adaptation and mitigation in IHR. Three groups were formed each represented by the members of CBOs, women participants and experts. The three groups worked in parallel sessions for 1.5 hrs. and summarized the recommendations. The recommendations are summarized below:

Recommendations of Group 1: Identify areas of convergence among CBOs and Line Agencies for sustainable forest management in Van Panchayats

- i. Many Van Panchayats in the state are defunct. Hence, there is a need to re-activate and sensitize them through capacity building workshops.
- ii. Boundaries of Van Panchayats, basic information on forest types and area statistics needs to be shared with the VP members. For future management the members of VP should participate in inventory preparation of micro-plans.
- iii. Van Panchayat areas should be used for production of high value medicinal plants and production of seeds for further propagation. All Van Panchayat areas should be kept free from pesticides.

- iv. Most of the planning for VP areas should be done following bottom-up approach i.e., local people and grass-roots workers should be involved in planning.
- v. There is a need to educate school teachers and students about role and functioning of Van Panchayats and BMCs.



Recommendations of Group 2: Identify policy and practice gaps in community-based forest management and suggest way forward

- i. The state government needs to run special programs to strengthen and sensitize Van Panchayats, BMCs and other Self-Help Groups regarding their roles, responsibilities and powers.
- ii. There is a need to make detailed inventory and documentation of forest resources available in each Van Panchayat.
- iii. Guidelines should be made for sustainable harvesting of various resources from the Van Panchayats and benefits should be shared by all the local communities equitably.
- iv. There is a need for reorganization of Van Panchayats and allocation of more forest land to the VPs which have less than five ha area.
- v. Ensure participation of community representatives and VP / BMC members in management planning as well as formulation of policy on use of natural resources from the community land.
- vi. Initiate policy of group-insurance / life insurance for the VP members who undertake work in VPs areas and often have to deal with human-wildlife conflicts.
- vii. VP members and other SHGs need to be sensitized and trained in mitigation of human-wildlife conflicts.

Recommendations of Group 3: Role of women in climate change adaptation and mitigation in IHR:

- i. Since women play a crucial role in day-to-day management of household affairs, their sensitization towards climate change adaptation and experience sharing would be very valuable.
- ii. Women in the mountain areas are central to farming, livestock husbandry, etc. Therefore, their involvement in planning and implementation of micro-irrigation, organic farming, crop protection should be ensured.
- iii. Women's role in participatory natural resource management including conservation of spring sheds and watersheds in the mountains is crucial. There is a need to document good practices related to these aspects by womens' self-help groups and replicated.
- iv. Good policies and practices need to be formulated and replicated on reducing women's drudgery and manual labor and that promote health and hygiene in the mountains. Basic devises such as smokeless cooking stoves, bio brickets, solar panels and solar cookers may be made available for the rural households to save on fuel wood.
- v. Women in mountains have proven more efficient in implementing home-stay ecotourism, solid waste management, eco-development committees and functioning of VPs and BMCs. Hence, their representation in these bodies must be ensured.

IV Concluding Session

Session Chair: Shri S.T.S. Lepcha, Chairman, SDFU

Shri S.T.S. Lepcha chaired the concluding session and invited final remarks from a few participants.



Dr. GS Rawat, Vice-Chairman & Treasurer, SDFU appreciated the valuable inputs provided by various participants and facilitators of the group work. He said that as the state of Uttarakhand is preparing for celebrating a land mark event 'Sashakta Uttarakhand @ 25' it is high time that we collectively work towards empowering the CBOs and womens' SHGs in sustainable forest management following the motto of **"Healthy forests, empowered and rich**

communities" Samrudh Van, Sasakth aur Sampann Samuday". This would require active participation of natural resource managers, ecologists, administration, and bureaucrats. He also reiterated that following the vision of Late Dr. Tolia the state needs to continuously work towards making Uttarakhand a Herbal State and revive the concept of Conservation, Development, and Sustainable Harvest of Medicinal Plants from the forests / Van Panchayats which would require participation from the CBOs. He also stressed the need for broadening the scope conservation programmes in remote areas with the help of BMCs and VPs especially for eco-restoration, pasture development and minimizing human-wildlife conflicts.

Endorsing the view of Shri N.C. Tomar, Dr Barfal suggested that for smooth and effective functioning of VPs, there is need to have an independent cadre of subordinate field staff under PCCF Van Panchayat on the line of Wildlife Wing of Forest Department.

In his final remarks Shri Lepcha expressed need for starting focused capacity building programmes for van panchayats, BMCs and other community-based organizations. He reiterated that all planning needs to follow the bottom-up approach and incentivization of local bodies for good practices, climate change adaptation and viewing all development programmes in the mountain areas from the gender perspective.

Vote of Thanks

The workshop (5th RST Forum) ended with a vote of thanks by Ms. Binita Shah, Secretary SDFU. She thanked all the Session Chairs, Keynote speakers, Panelists and Participants for their participation. Special thanks were given to the Nainital Bank for providing the financial support to conduct the workshop and to Uttarakhand Forest Department for providing the venue (Manthan Hall) for the workshop.

Key Policy Recommendations

Major policy recommendations emerging from the detailed discussions in the workshop are as follows:

1. There is a need to have an independent cadre of subordinate field staff under the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Van Panchayats on the line of Wildlife Wing of Forest Department. Without such an institutional support it would be extremely difficult to implement the revised policies and action plans for the Van Panchayats.
2. Uttarakhand State Biodiversity Board and Forest Department especially Van Panchayat Wing need to harmonize functioning, roles and responsibilities of Van Panchayats and BMCs. It is recommended that the villages or Development Blocks having very little or no area under Van Panchayats may be brought under BMCs. Independent technical committees should be formed at Block and District levels to monitor the progress of Van Panchayats and BMCs.
3. There is a need to promote the system of carbon credits and the use of Green Energy for industrial and domestic purposes in hill districts and also establish domestic tax-free carbon market at sites of eco-restoration. The revenue from Non-Timber Forest Produce (that includes water), should be allocated equitably within the local community and the government. Surplus water from the well managed Van Panchayat forests, if drawn by the local market places / towns should be levied with appropriate fees in the form of Payment for Ecosystem Services and paid to concerned Van Panchayat. Also, the right should be given to local community for participation in usage of carbon credits in the community forests.
4. The 'compensatory afforestation' should also be done in the vacant Van Panchayat lands for which the amendment of CAMPA norms / rules may be formulated/suggested by the State Government.
5. Provision in the rules of the Van Panchayats may be made for the Van Panchayats in the Urban areas. Such Van Panchayats require special dispensation within the Van Panchayat Rules and representation from the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the Van Panchayats may be provided for in the Rules.
6. The Van Panchayats as well as BMCs of the state will require regular training and capacity building programmes regarding their roles and responsibilities. The state government also needs to include community-based forest management in the school curricula.
7. The state government needs to revamp the schemes for reducing the drudgery of women in the rural areas by introducing smokeless *chulhas*, foddors, spring recharge, water supply to households, other energy saving devices so that women can spend more time for their health and hygiene.

Glimpses of the Workshop





ANNEXURE – I



RST Forum 2022

Workshop on

“Role of Community Based Organizations and Women in Forest Management and Climate Change Mitigation in Uttarakhand”

December 11, 2022

Venue: Manthan Hall, Forest Headquarters, 85 Rajpur Road, Dehradun

Programme

09 30 – 10 00 a.m.: Registration

Session 1: Opening Session: Role of CBOs in Forest Management – Key issues and strategies (10 00 – 11 30 Hrs)

Session Chair: Professor A.N. Purohit, Councilor, SDFU

10 00 Hrs: Welcome & Introduction: Ms. Binita Shah, Secretary SDFU

10 10 Hrs: Background & Objectives: Shri S.T.S. Lepcha, Chairman SDFU

10 20 Hrs: Keynote Address: Dr. B.S. Barfal, Former PCCF & Former Chairman, USBB

10 40 – 11 45: **Panel Presentations (Moderated by Dr. B.S. Barfal):**

- Updated on Van Panchayat rules and functioning in Uttarakhand – Ms. Jyotsna Sitling, PCCF Van Panchyatsng
- Role of BMCs – Dr. R.N. Jha Secretary, UKSBB
- Recent experiences of working with VPs – Director JICA Project, UKFD
- Offsetting Forest Carbon in community managed forests – Dr. Vishal Singh, CEDAR
- Rehabilitation of degraded forests in and around ghost villages – Mr. M. Chakravarty
- Himalayan Knowledge Networks – Key Lessons – Dr. K.C. Sekar, Senior Scientist – GBPNIHE

Discussion

Summary and conclusion – Session Chair (Prof. A.N. Purohit)

11 45 – 12 00 hrs: Tea break & Group Photograph

Session 2: Role of Women in Climate Change Mitigation: Experiences from IHR (Hybrid mode: 12 00 – 13 30 Hrs)

Chair: Shri N. Ravishankar, Vice Chancellor, DIT & Director Doon Library & Research Centre

Keynote Address: Introduction to State Action Plan on Climate Change Mitigation: Shri S.P. Subudhi, Director SAPCC

Panel Discussion – Experiences from CBOs of Indian Himalayan States

Summary and Conclusion - Chairperson



13 30 – 14 15 Hrs: Lunch

14 15 – 15 45: Session 3: Group work on three parallel themes:

Facilitators: Shri Anoop Nautiyal, Ms. Preeti Tolia and other members from SDFU

1. Identify areas of convergence among CBOs and Line Agencies for sustainable forest management in community land
2. Identify policy and practice gaps in community based forest management and way forward
3. Role of women in climate change adaptation and mitigation in IHR

15 45 – 16 00 Hrs: Tea Break

16 00 – 16 30 Hrs: Concluding Session

Session Chair: Shri S.T. S. Lepcha, Chairman, SDFU

Group Presentations – Key Recommendations

Concluding Remarks by the Chair

Vote of Thanks - Ms. Binita Shah, Secretary, SDFU

ANNEXURE - II

List of Participants:

A. Physical

S.no	Name	Institutions
1	STS Lepcha	Chairman SDFU
2	Dr. GS Rawat	Vice-Chairman SDFU
3	Binita Shah	Secretary SDFU
4	Dr. BS Barfal	Councilor SDFU
5	Anoop Nautiyal	Councilor SDFU
6	AN Purohit	Councilor SDFU
7	N. Ravi Shanker	Member SDFU / Chancellor DIT University / Director Doon Library & Research Center
8	Richa Ghansiyal	Member SDFU
9	Nupur Sarkar	Secretariat SDFU
10	Shirsha Pant	Secretariat IMI
11	Sandeep Gusain	SARG
12	Megha Prakash	Rapporteur, SDFU
13	S.K Singh	Advisor, Hon'ble Forest Minister (UK)
14	S P Subudhi, IFS	APCCF & Director Environment Conservation & Climate Change
15	Chandra S Chauhan	Chairman EDC BhyundarPulna
16	Jyotsna Sitling	PCCF Van Panchayat, Uttarakhand
17	Kuldeep Prasad Kala	Garhwal Environment and Education Society
18	S.V Sharma	Project JICA
19	Bhupal S Bhandari	BMC, Vikiasain Block, Almora
20	K. Chandra Sekar	Senior Scientist, GBPNiHE
21	Medhavi Kirti	Range Office, Badrigad Range Mussoorie
22	Radha Bisht	Sarpanch, Chinoni
23	Tara Devi	Adyaksh, Chinoni
24	Kamla Kara	Adyaksh, Dwarahat
25	Yashoda Devi	Community Representative, Chinoni
26	N.S Tomar	Ex- Sarpanch, Dehradun
27	Arjun Rana	BMC, Bageshwar Block
28	Pooran Singh	Sarpanch, Nainital
29	Deepa DhamaKathayat	Garhwal Environment and Education Society
30	Bhupendra Chauhan	Sarpanch, BhyundarPulna
31	Kamlesh S Chowdhry	Adyaksh, BhyundarPulna
32	Dr. Vishal Singh	CEDAR
33	Yogesh Mehta	Sarpanch Nainital
34	Pawan Sharma	Indian Journal of Forestry

35	Mamata Shah	GIZ Uttarakhand Project
36	Sanjay Singh Chauhan	Ex-Sarpanch, Bhyundar Pulna
37	Anita Chauhan	Regional Manager Dehradun, SEEDS
38	Kalyani Negi	DFO, Chakrata
39	Puneet Kumar	NABARD, Dehradun
40	Ashish Dimri	Range Officer, Teri Division
41	Jeet Singh	Sarpanch, Saliyana
42	Vijay Adhikari	Individual
43	Virendra Kumar Verma	Himotthan Society
44	Preeti Tolia Rautela	NABARD, Dehradun
45	Dr. Geetika Rawat	Individual
46	Kusum Rawat	Individual
47	Anil Maikhuri	Individual
48	Dr. BP Nautiyal	Ex- General Manager, NABARD
49	Singray Surin	Retd. Forest Officer
50	Ajeet Singh	Individual
51	Vinod Singh	Individual

B. Online

S.no	Name	Institutions
1	PD Rai	President, Integrated Mountain Initiative
2	Sushil Ramola	Former President, Integrated Mountain Initiative
3	Dr. Manab Chakraborty	Rural Finances Expert
4	Vipan Mandwal	UGVS-REAP (Climate Associate)
5	Krishan Rautela	Councilor, Sustainable Development Forum Uttaranchal
6	Dr. Smriti Basnett	Scientist, IISC Bangalore



**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FORUM UTTARANCHAL**

**25, lane 3, Teg Bhadur Road,
Dalanwala, Dehradun,
Uttarakhand – 248001**

www.sdfu.in/