



International Mountain Day 2024

Theme: *Mountain Solutions for a Sustainable Future – Innovation, Adaptation, and Youth*

Youth for the Himalaya: Innovate, Inspire, Impact

Organized by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)

Background Note

International Mountain Day 2024,¹ is being observed on 11th December, with this year's theme being "Mountain Solutions for a Sustainable Future – Innovation, Adaptation, and Youth," highlighting how mountain communities have developed solutions over centuries to adapt to their harsh environments, deal with climate change, reduce poverty, and protect or restore biodiversity. While dealing with climate change's pressures on mountains, adaptation becomes imperative for building resilience and reducing vulnerability. Adaptation strategies include ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk reduction and the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems. Lastly, the active participation of youth is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of mountain solutions.²

The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), a crucial part of the Hindu Kush Himalaya, boasts rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, playing an essential role in local ecosystems and livelihoods. However, it faces severe threats from climate change, unsustainable development, and loss of traditional practices, leading to a decline in its ecosystems with widespread repercussions, affecting downstream.

As climate change continues to escalate environmental pressures on mountains, the active, meaningful and inclusive involvement of youth in decision-making is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of mountain solutions. This presents an opportunity to underline the issues and challenges facing the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) and the crucial role of young changemakers in addressing these issues. This vision aligns with the Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) movement launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC). Mission LiFE encourages individuals to adopt sustainable practices and become 'Pro-Planet People' through collective and individual actions.³ Young changemakers are not only committed to climate action but are also driving innovation that plays a key role in adaptation efforts and tackling the complex challenges these regions face. With their fresh ideas and energy, young changemakers serve as critical "agents of change" within their communities, raising awareness about the significance of mountains and actively engaging in local initiatives.

Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development and conservation efforts in India, particularly within the Himalayan region. The ministry works through several institutions, notably the Govind Ballabh Pant 'National Institute

¹ <https://www.fao.org/international-mountain-day/en/>

² <https://www.un.org/en/observances/mountain-day>

³ <https://missionlife-moefcc.nic.in/>



of Himalayan Environment' (GB Pant NIHE). GB Pant NIHE is identified as a focal agency to advance scientific knowledge, to evolve integrated management strategies, demonstrate their efficacy for conservation of natural resources, and to ensure environmentally sound development in the entire Indian Himalayan Region (IHR). The Institute attempts to maintain a balance of intricate linkages between socio-cultural, ecological, economic and physical systems that could lead to sustainability in the Indian Himalayan Region. Under the aegis of the MoEFCC, International Mountain Day (IMD) 2024 event seeks to amplify youth engagement in promoting mountain sustainability.

IUCN project 'Himalayas for Future' is also working towards this common vision and objectives. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)-TATA project, 'Himalaya for the Future' (HFF), supported by the TCS Foundation, TATA Group, aims to develop a strong basis for nature-based solutions underpinning development, which will result in a significant legacy of improved social, economic, and environmental conditions in the Himalayan region. This initiative focuses on seven thematic areas— *Forest, Livelihoods, Wildlife conservation, Water Resources, Clean Energy, Urban Resilience and Waste Management* tied with the 5 cross cutting areas: *Gender, Climate Change, Nature-based solutions, Disaster Risk Reduction and Traditional Knowledge*.

Involving school students in such events is crucial for promoting early awareness and nurturing a sense of responsibility towards environmental conservation. Engaging young minds encourages proactive participation in discussions and actions related to climate change and sustainability. According to the International Mountain Day (IMD) initiatives, focusing on youth helps create informed future leaders who are capable of championing the cause of mountain preservation and sustainable development.

Youth for the Himalaya: Innovate, Inspire, Impact:

The International Mountain Day 2024 event '**Youth for the Himalayas—Innovate, Inspire, Impact**' will bring together students, particularly those aged 14-18 years. The event will be conducted in a hybrid format, allowing participation across the Himalayan region and Delhi NCR. By including these students, the event aims to bridge perspectives between those living near the mountains and those in metropolitan areas, reinforcing their shared connection and responsibility towards preserving the Himalayan ecosystem.

The objective of the event is to highlight and support youth-driven innovations that contribute to the sustainability of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) catalysing youth action on ground. Additionally, event encourages the integration of traditional knowledge with modern technological solutions, with the goal of enhancing resilience of Himalaya communities and ecosystems.

The event brings together young changemakers from the government, civil society, and academic and research institutions, including those from IITs/IIMs/NITs/IIITs etc. It will also feature young innovators from the private sector, technology entrepreneurs, and media representatives. Panel discussion and select presentations by young changemakers showcasing their projects and ideas will contribute to meaningful dialogue and collaborative action on themes such as sustainable livelihoods, waste management, eco-tourism, and biodiversity conservation.