



NILGIRIS DOCUMENTATION CENTRE (NDC)

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All India Workshop on Sustainable and Inclusive Mountain Development held on

Dec 29-31, 2013 at Ootacamund, The Nilgiris

Resolutions / Recommendations of the All India Workshop on Sustainable and Inclusive Mountain Development held on Dec 29-31, 2013 at Ootacamund, The Nilgiris organized by the Nilgiri Documentation Centre and supported by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, Indian Overseas Bank and Hill Area Development Programme.

Among the participants were Dr. Saumitra Chaudhuri, Member, Union Planning Commission, Dr. R.S. Tolia, former Chief Information Commissioner of Uttarakhand and presently the NTPC Chair at Centre for Public Policy, Dehra Dun, Shri. Ramachandra Guha, Environmental Historian, Smt. Rohini Nilekani, Founder Argyam , Dr. SM.Ramasamy, former Vice Chancellor, Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dr. N. Sundaradevan, former Addl. Chief Secretary, Tamil Nadu, representatives from Geological Survey of India, Union Planning Commission, Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission, leading universities of Tamil Nadu, NGOs including MSSRF, Chennai and Atree, Bangalore, community leaders and activists.

Preamble

Following the global consensus on the vital role of mountains in sustainable development; in view of the urgent need for mitigation and adaptation in the context

of climate change which impacts the mountains first; and in the context of the Twelfth Five Year Plan objective of Faster, More Inclusive and Sustainable Development, India should begin the process towards a policy for inclusive and sustainable development of its mountain areas. Such a policy should be common for the country but differentiated for each mountain range depending on the specificities of each range. India shall focus at the global and inter-generational preservation of mountain resources and their constituent societies on international standards and accountability.

Mountain Division in MoEF

As a first step, the scope of the Mountain Division in the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India should cover all the mountain ranges of India.

Inclusive development

Inclusive development of mountains while reaching out to the marginalized sections in the present should also remain sensitive to the changing economic and cultural aspirations of the mountain people.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development of mountain areas should seek a balance between the economic and commercial exploitation of the mountain resources and the ecosystem services that they provide by drawing up geological, hydrological, soil, ecological and societal thresholds that place limit on activities including damming, mining, tourism, monoculture and urbanization based on

Some of the already identified ecologically sensitive or vulnerable mountain areas can serve as reference and pilot models for arriving at threshold limits.

Relationship & compensation

The relationship between mountains and the plains which tend to be increasingly exploitative need to be made more symbiotic. Mitigative and adaptive measures

should be mandatory for all commercial and cultural practices on the mountains by the locals and the outsiders.

Compensation for ecosystem services provided by the mountains should be equitably and adequately worked out through appropriate allocation or transfer of funds by the centre and states as also by suitable monetary and fiscal measures leading to restoration activities priority basis.

Western Ghats

Following the global and national attention drawn to the Western Ghats by the declaration of the mountain range as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and publication of two significant reports- the report of the High Level Committee on Western Ghats and Report of the Western Ghats Ecology Panel, this unique mountain range is ideally suited for initiating inclusive and sustainable mountain development by all stakeholders

Indian Mountain Partnership- Western Ghats (IMP-WG)

In this context it is proposed to set up the Indian Mountain Partnership- Western Ghats Chapter (IMP-WG) which will seek to bring together all mountain stake-holders (Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations, Civil Society Organizations, International NGOs, Foundations, Private Sector Entities and Associations, Research / Educational Organizations) from the six states through which the mountains run.

The IMP-WG envisions a future with increasing public and private sector attention, commitment, engagement, and investments in sustainable mountain development (SMD) that:

- Maintain and enhance the genetic resource conservation, health, vitality and stewardship of Western Ghats mountain ecosystems for their inherent value and

for the mutual benefit of mountain communities and those who live in the larger geographic regions which include mountains;

- Improve the social and economic well-being, local food security and livelihoods of, and opportunities for, both mountain people – particularly the most vulnerable – and those who live in the larger geographic regions which include mountains; and
- Empower and enable mountain people, preferably as community based institutions as collectives and federation to be fully engaged in the decision-making processes and self-governance that determine the future of mountain communities and ecosystems, particularly in light of climate/socio-economic and global change and globalization processes.
- Identify the best practices of Community Based Biodiversity Management in the Western Ghats, recognize, reward them for their contribution in Conservation and Managing Bio-resources, scale up such CBM practices with suitable customization in similar ecological and social conditions in the WG mountain region.
- Stimulate concrete initiatives at all levels to address threats, improve quality of life and sustain healthy environments in the WG mountain regions.

Eco-restoration Plan for The Nilgiris

The Nilgiris mountains being one of the most economically 'developed' mountain areas in the country in terms of tourism, monoculture, industrialization and urbanization and at the same time being a vulnerable mountain range in terms of landslides, soil erosion, water scarcity and urban pollution, it is proposed that a Nilgiri Eco-restoration or Eco-reconstruction Plan may be evolved by a suitable agency, authority or a department at the centre and the state, which could become a model for other mountain areas of the country.

Such a plan may evolve:

- A Landslide Guide of the district for the public for preventive and protective action.

- Mandatory area specific mitigative and adaptive measures for all commercial and cultural practices.
 - Threshold limits for tourism, damming and other hydrological uses, industrialization, monoculture and urbanization.
 - A Compensation mechanism for ecosystem services and
 - A model for Inclusive development of marginalized mountain populations in tune with their changing aspirations.
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