

### Third Media Workshop on Climate Change Reporting in the Indian Himalayas

25-27 March 2017; Gangtok, Sikkim

A three-day media workshop to promote climate change reporting in North-East India was held from 25-27 March 2017 in Gangtok, Sikkim. The workshop was inaugurated by Ms. Janine Kuriger, Head Swiss Cooperation Office and Counsellor, Embassy of Switzerland in India, in the presence of Mr. D.C. Sharma, Senior Science and Environment Journalist; Ms. Annu Anand, Head Advocacy, Center for Media Studies (CMS); and Dr. Surajit Baruah, State Project Manager, Sikkim, Strengthening State Strategies for Climate Change Adaptation (3SCA). The valedictory address was delivered by Mr. Prem Das Rai, Member of Parliament from Sikkim.



© IHCAP | Launch of IHCAP's training manual for journalists at the third media workshop in Gangtok, Sikkim. (From left to right) Ms. Annu Anand, Head, Advocacy, Director-General, CMS; Dr. Surajit Baruah, State Project Manager, Sikkim, Strengthening State Strategies for Climate Change Adaptation (3SCA); Ms. Janine Kuriger, Head Swiss Cooperation Office and Counsellor, Embassy of Switzerland in India; and Mr. DC Sharma, Senior Science and Environment Journalist.

The workshop is the third in a series of 12 media workshops being organized across the Indian Himalayan Region by the Indian Himalayas Climate Adaptation Programme (IHCAP), a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, and the Centre for Media Studies (CMS). The workshop brought together climate change experts and media professionals with the objective of improving reporting on climate change impacts and adaptation in the region. While inaugurating the workshop, **Ms. Janine Kuriger**, Head Swiss Cooperation Office and Counsellor, Embassy of Switzerland in India, said, "Climate change, apart from being an environmental threat, is also a social and development challenge. The Himalayas have continued to be one of the under-studied systems and very little is known about the impact of climate change on the livelihood of the local communities. This knowledge gap needs to be filled through research. Our prime objective of

conducting these workshops is to ensure that the impacts of climate change are highlighted and that the media persons are exposed to stories of adaptation activities that are taking place in the Indian Himalayan Region.”

Commending the role of the Sikkim government in environment and sustainable development, Ms. Kuriger said, “Sikkim has taken a leadership role in climate change adaptation and sustainable development.”

In his address to the media, **Mr. DC Sharma**, Senior Science and Environment Journalist, discussed the question of how best to report climate change stories. He said, “Climate change is posing new challenges in newsrooms because of the complex nature of the subject. Therefore, journalists need to be trained and equipped to handle climate change stories. They can make adaptation stories interesting and meaningful by focusing on the role of communities and including human voices in their stories.”

Highlighting the need to tackle climate change impacts in the region, **Dr. Surajit Baruah**, State Project Manager, Sikkim, Strengthening State Strategies for Climate Change Adaptation (3SCA) said, “Climate change is going to have cascading impacts on the Himalayan states on major sectors like agriculture, health, natural resource, livelihoods and the rich cultural practices of communities.”

Delivering the valedictory address, **Mr. Prem Das Rai**, Member of Parliament from Sikkim, announced that the state government was preparing an umbrella legislation for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Sikkim. This path-breaking law will be called “Well Being of Generations Act” and it is in the final stages of preparation. As many as 32 consultations have been held with experts to give a final shape to the proposed law.

“Sikkim would be the first state in India to enact such a legislation for implementation of 169 targets set under 17 MDGs which practically cover all aspects of human development,” Mr. Rai said. There will be several subordinate legislations, rules and regulations under this law for implementation of SDGs in various sectors including climate change and disaster risk reduction.

“Sikkim,” Mr. Rai said, “being a climate change hotspot provided a great opportunity for journalists to report on the subject. All such reporting should be evidence-based and not biased or based on generalisations. Journalists can play the role of a watchdog when it comes to reporting impacts of climate change on communities and implementation of adaptation projects on the ground.”

About 20 journalists from across the state participated at the three-day workshop. Senior thematic experts and policymakers interacted with journalists and highlighted the issue of climate change impacts in the state through presentations. Two training manuals - one for journalists and the other for trainers - published as an outcome of IHCAP’s Phase 1 (2012-2015) media engagement programme, were also released at the workshop.

The workshop also included a daylong field visit for journalists to the South Sikkim district where community-level adaptation was demonstrated. At the site, journalists were acquainted with spring recharge activities and the ways to identify them, specifically by using the method of geo-hydrology, placement of trenches and ponds for capturing maximum surface runoff. The field visit also provided an opportunity to journalists to interact with rural communities on the impact of spring-shed management on water security in the region. The second aspect of the field visit included a visit to some organic farms in the region to showcase the state’s organic mission and management practices.

The third day included a media roundtable which aimed at building bridges among media, scientists and the civil society. The roundtable also gave an opportunity to the participants to discuss story ideas based on the field visit, and share experiences on challenges in climate change reporting. Senior editors and journalists like Pema Wangchuk Dorjee, Nirmal Manger and Dinesh C Sharma spoke, besides Silajit Guha of Sikkim University and D G Shrestha of Department of Science and Technology, Sikkim.

The media engagement programme includes 12 media workshops in all the Himalayan states as part of IHCAP Phase 2 (2016-2019) and 12 fellowships, which will be given to journalists from the region to capture community's voices on climate change. Best stories written by state-level journalists will be awarded at the end of the programme. The media workshops will be held in West Bengal, Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.

IHCAP is supporting the implementation of NMSHE as technical and knowledge partner. The overall goal of IHCAP is to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities in the Himalayas and connect the knowledge and capacities of research institutions, communities and decision-makers. IHCAP is supporting development of a common risk and vulnerability assessment framework for Himalayan States, training and capacity building of state climate change cells and institutions on risk assessment, adaptation planning and implementation, Indo-Swiss collaborative research on climate science and adaptation to climate change, capacity building of media and media fellowship for enhanced reporting on climate change and facilitating exchange of lessons and knowledge through multi-stakeholder science-policy interface platform. For more information, please contact: Dr. Mustafa Ali Khan, Team Leader, IHCAP PMU, Swiss Cooperation Office India, New Delhi, Phone: +91 11 4995 9500 Ext. 850023; Email: [mustafa@ihcap.in](mailto:mustafa@ihcap.in)