

Social Development
for Communities
FOUNDATION

**TALKS &
ROUNDTABLE
DIALOGUES**



**केदारनाथ
आपदा के 10 साल**
10 Years of Kedarnath Tragedy

A report on
SDC Foundation Samvaad

JUNE 18, 2023

UTTARANCHAL PRESS CLUB, PARADE GROUND
DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND

www.sdcuk.in



Introduction

A decade ago, in June 2013, Uttarakhand woke to incessant rains that refused to cease after a few days – they only increased in intensity. Then, on June 17, the moraine holding back the Chorabari lake at the mouth of the Chorabari glacier, gave way to the lake waters to flow down at mighty speed. Within minutes, the silt, boulders and vast amounts of water caused a flash flood in River Mandakini, leading to the terrible tragedy we remember as Kedarnath calamity.

But what lessons have been learnt a decade after this tragedy? Have the local populace and authorities changed the way it constructs its homes, hotels, shops and commercial buildings? What has the government done to not just anticipate a calamity but ensure it doesn't create as much damage and mayhem as it did in 2013?

Last year in 2022, as many as 45 lakh pilgrims plied the Char Dham Yatra route. This year in 2023, all indications point to the fact that a new pilgrim arrival "record" will be made. While it is a good thing for the economy, what about the environment? How are the several lacunae being addressed while balancing environment, climate change, tourism, development, and growth?

In short, a decade later, what have we learnt from the Kedarnath calamity?

Agenda

Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation has been on the forefront when it comes to addressing the challenges the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand faces, be it environment and climate issues, sustainability and waste management, tourism, traffic and the rapidly evolving urban sector development.

Following its vision to bring the civil society together to discuss, introspect and come up with possible solutions to the challenges, SDC Foundation held a panel discussion on 10 Years of Kedarnath Tragedy.

Social Development for Communities FOUNDATION TALKS

केदारनाथ आपदा के 10 साल

10 Years of Kedarnath Tragedy

Panelist Mani Kant Mishra IPS Commandant SDRF	Panelist Dr. Y. P. Sundriyal Adjunct Professor Department of Geology HNB Garhwal University	Panelist Hridayesh Joshi Independent Writer and Journalist	Moderator Sanjeev Kandwal Senior Journalist

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18 JUNE 2023 | **SUNDAY 5:00 PM ONWARDS** | UTTARANCHAL PRESS CLUB PARADE GROUND, DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND

Who Said What?



Panelist

Mani Kant Mishra

*IPS &
SDRF Commandant*

The 2013 tragedy wasn't limited to Kedarnath – the entire state was impacted by it. SDRF was formed on the basis of those experiences. In the 10 years since the disaster, there has been a definite change in the attitude of the administration and the public that such a disaster can take place at any time, and we have to be prepared for it.

At present, we have five companies whose members are deployed at 42 locations. It is planned such that one can reach any accident site in the shortest possible time. Now we have better forecasts too. Weather forecasts are coming up to micro level now.

With more and more people coming to Uttarakhand as tourists and pilgrims, I'd like to point out that SDRF can't decide how many people can come; our work is limited to managing the crowds in the safest and most responsible way possible. Be it the Kumbh Mela or Kedarnath, our job is to ensure that those who come to our state go back safely.

Due to the increasing number of tourists in the state, the challenges of dealing with accidents have increased. For this, the jawans are given training in personal rescue and paramedics. There is also a special team for high altitude rescue.

My advice to the local populace of Uttarakhand is to not build homes and commercial buildings close to the paths of the rivers. It has been observed that a lot of rampant construction takes place around the rivers. Those coming to the state as tourists and pilgrims, be alert about weather reports and travel keeping in mind the geography and climatic conditions.



Panelist

Dr. Y. P. Sundriyal

*Geology Expert and
Adjunct Professor,
HNB Garhwal University*

The crowds coming to the Himalayas, including Kedarnath, is only increasing. If it is not managed properly, a tragedy like 2013 can happen again.

After the 2013 disaster, we conducted a survey and found that the Kedar valley had a capacity for only 25,000 pilgrims to stay, but that night there were 40,000 people there. Now this balance has deteriorated further. The road which was earlier branded as All Weather has now been branded as Char Dham Marg project.

The way these roads are being built with dynamite blasting is incorrect. Landslides are occurring on this road throughout the year. In such a situation, gathering more and more people in Kedarnath should be avoided.

We have to take care of the carrying capacity of the Valley. We have also seen the results of unplanned development in Joshimath. On these issues, the government should listen to experts and involve them in the policy process.

Who Said What?



Panelist

Hridayesh Joshi
*Independent Writer
and Journalist*

Construction work is being done against the opinion of scientists in Uttarakhand, due to which the precariousness of disaster situations persists. There should be no fear in admitting that yes, there is a nexus between builders, contractors and the politicians.

When the all-weather road plan was passed, it was the Congress that was in power; so you can't blame just one government. Talking about roads, who is listening to the villagers? Do they want these all weather roads? No. They are asking for roads to their villages, but aren't being heard. In fact, we should insist on sustainable roads instead of wide roads.

The formation of SDRF after the Kedarnath disaster is a major achievement, but we have not been able to develop a warning system in the Himalayas as is in place in the coastal areas. What's more, we do not have a mechanism to monitor the lakes.

The 2021 Raini disaster in Chamoli is an example of an improper monitoring system. Joshimath sinking is a case in point when it comes to corrupt and inadequate development practices. Environmental concerns are brushed aside in lieu of development plans.



Moderator

Sanjeev Kandwal
Veteran Journalist

One of the major reasons behind the widespread loss of life and property in the Kedarnath disaster was the presence of more devotees in Kedarghati that dark night. Reports say that while the capacity for pilgrims staying there was 20,000, there were more than 45,000 of them on that fateful night.

Today, this is a scenario you can witness in every city and town of Uttarakhand. Unaccounted construction in narrow valleys, from river banks to mountains, is only increasing this risk manifold.

Ten years after the Kedarnath disaster, the Joshimath conundrum has proved that without planning, a town or city will not be able to bear the burden of human activities for too long. The problem is that there is less and less space for planning in our cities, while the pressure of tourism activities is increasing.

In such a scenario, proper and responsible planning of not only the Char Dhams but also the towns and cities of Uttarakhand is extremely crucial. It is even more important to honestly implement the opinion of the experts. This one step could make or break our beautiful hill state.

Acknowledgements

Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation expresses its gratitude to the three panelists in the discussion: Shri Mani Kant Mishra, IPS and Commandant State Disaster Response Force (SDRF); Dr. Y. P. Sundriyal, geology expert and adjunct professor at HNB Garhwal University; and Shri Hridayesh Joshi, Independent Writer and Journalist and author of the book "Tum Chup Kyon Rahey Kedar".

We are also thankful to veteran journalist Shri Sanjeev Kandwal, who not only moderated the session but was an integral part of the core group that envisaged, conceptualized and curated the panel discussion.

SDC is thankful to active members of the civil society, who attended the discussion and actively participated in the question-and-answer session. We are also indebted to the many media persons who not only attended the discussion but covered it prominently in their newspapers and magazines. We are grateful to the Press Club of Uttaranchal and its President Shri Ajay Rana who helped us conduct the panel discussion in their premises.

About SDC

Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation is a Dehradun, Uttarakhand-based not-for-profit, engaged in communication, capacity building and community mobilization. Founded in 2017, SDC has been working closely on issues of sustainable development and governance. SDC Foundation works with a range of stakeholders including government institutions, academic institutions, private corporations, local businesses, think tanks, international development agencies, media and citizen groups on a diverse range of issues that are critical for Uttarakhand.

Photos and Media Coverage

10 yrs of flash floods: Experts flag tourist congestions in Himalayas

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

DEHRADUN: Speaking on the occasion of 10 years of the 2013 Kedarnath tragedy during a community dialogue organised by Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation on Sunday evening, experts from various fields stressed on taking lessons from the horrific disasters in the state and expressed their concerns over the tourist congestion and indiscriminate construction in the Himalayan regions. On June 16, 2013, flash floods hit the Kedarnath Valley, claiming nearly 5,000 lives.

Geologist and adjunct professor at HNB Garhwal University, Dr YP Sundriyal said that the crowds coming to the Himalayas including Kedarnath is only increasing. "If it is not managed properly, a tragedy like 2013 can happen again," he said.

"After the 2013 disaster, we conducted a survey and found that the Kedar Valley had a capacity for only 25,000 pilgrims to stay, but that night there were 40,000 people there. Now this balance has deteriorated further. The road which was earlier branded as all weather has now been branded as Char Dham Marg project." He emphasised that landslides are occurring on this road throughout the year. In such a situation, gathering more and more people in Kedarnath should be avoided. "We have to take care of the holding capacity of the Valley. We have also seen the result of unplanned development in Joshimath. On these issues, the government should listen to experts and involve them in the policy process," he said.

Participating in the discussion, senior journalist and author of the book "Rage of the River: An untold story of Kedarnath Disaster" Hridayesh Joshi said that work is being done against the opinion of scientists in Uttarakhand, due to which the precariousness of disaster situations persists. "We should insist on sustainable roads instead of wide roads. People are asking for roads in their villages but aren't being heard. The formation of SDRF after the Kedarnath disaster is a major achievement, but we have not been able to develop a warning system in the Himalayas as is in place in the coastal areas. The 2021 Ranni disaster is an example of this. We do not have a mechanism to monitor the lakes. Environmental concerns are brushed aside in lieu of development plans," he said.

Environmental concerns are brushed aside in lieu of development plans," he said. SDRF commandant Manikant Mishra said that the 2013 disaster was not limited to Kedarnath as the entire Uttarakhand was affected by it. SDRF was formed on the basis of those experiences. In the 10 years since the disaster, there has been a change in the attitude of the administration and the public that such a disaster can come at any time, and one has to be prepared for it. "At present, we have five companies deployed at 42 locations. It is planned so that one can reach any accident site in the shortest possible time. Now we have better forecast too. Weather forecasts are coming up for the micro level. Due to the increasing number of tourists in the State, the challenges of dealing with accidents have increased. For this, the jawans are given training in personal rescue and paramedics. There is also a special team for high altitude rescue," he said. He advised tourists coming to Uttarakhand to be alert about weather reports and travel keeping in mind the geography and climatic conditions.

The audience raised questions and gave suggestions on policy issues along with indiscriminate construction and huge rush of tourists in Uttarakhand. The programme was moderated by senior journalist Sanjeev Kandwal while the inaugural session was moderated by Prerna Rastogi. On this occasion, founder of SDC Foundation Anshu Nautiyal, scientists, academicians and others were also present.



Experts stressed on taking lessons from the disasters in the state.

Control indiscriminate construction and tourist congestion in the Himalaya: experts

DEHRADUN

Experts have stressed on the need to control indiscriminate construction and tourist congestion in the Himalayas. Experts stated this while expressing their views in a community dialogue organised by Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation to mark 10 years of the 2013 Kedarnath disaster. Experts from various fields and eminent citizens also stressed on the need to learn lessons from the disasters in the State.

Geology expert and adjunct professor, HNB Garhwal University, YP Sundriyal said that the crowd coming to the Himalayas including Kedarnath is continuously increasing. "If it is not managed properly, a tragedy like 2013 can happen again," he said. "After the 2013 disaster, we conducted a survey and found that the Kedar valley had a capacity for only 25,000 pilgrims to stay, but that night there were 40,000 people there. Now this balance has deteriorated further. The road which was earlier branded as all weather has now been branded as Char Dham Marg project." He emphasised that landslides are occurring on this road throughout the year. In such a situation, gathering more and more people in Kedarnath should be avoided. "We have to take care of the holding capacity of the valley. We have also seen the result of unplanned development in Joshimath. On these issues, the government should listen to experts and involve them in the policy process," he said.

Participating in the discussion, senior journalist Hridayesh Joshi said that work is being done against the opinion of scientists in Uttarakhand, due to which the precariousness of disaster situations persists. "We should insist on sustainable roads instead of wide roads. People are asking for roads in their villages but aren't being heard. The formation of the State Disaster Response Force after the Kedarnath disaster is a major achievement, but we have not been able to develop a warning system in the Himalayas as is in place in the coastal areas. The 2021 Ranni disaster is an example of this. We do not have a mechanism to monitor the lakes. Environmental concerns are brushed aside in lieu of development plans," he said. SDRF commandant Manikant Mishra said that the 2013 disaster was not limited to Kedarnath as the entire Uttarakhand was affected by it. SDRF was formed on the basis of those experiences. In the 10 years since the disaster, there has been a change in the attitude of the administration and the public that such a disaster can come at any time, and one has to be prepared for it. "At present, we have five companies deployed at 42 locations. It is planned so that one can reach any accident site in the shortest possible time. Now we have better forecast too. Weather forecasts are coming up for the micro level. Due to the increasing number of tourists in the State, the challenges of dealing with accidents have increased. For this, the jawans are given training in personal rescue and paramedics. There is also a special team for high altitude rescue," he said. He advised tourists coming to Uttarakhand to be alert about weather reports and travel keeping in mind the geography and climatic conditions.

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FILE PIC



As seen during the rains, trash from around the city floats in the Nainital lake after being drained through various areas following three hours of rain in Nainital on Monday.

Pioneer photo

हिमालयी क्षेत्र में पर्यटकों की भीड़ पर नियंत्रण जरूरी

देहरादून, कार्यालय संवाददाता। भूविज्ञान विशेषज्ञ डॉ. चांदी सुंदरवाल ने कहा है कि केदारनाथ सहित हिमालयी क्षेत्र में लगातार भीड़ बढ़ रही है। यदि इसका उचित प्रबंधन नहीं किया गया तो 2013 जैसी त्रासदी फिर हो सकती है। 2013 आपदा के बाद सर्वे में पाया गया था कि केदारनाथ में महज 25 हजार यात्रियों के ठहरने की व्यवस्था थी, लेकिन उस रात वहां 40 हजार लोग थे। यह स्थिति और खिगड़ गई है। सरकार को विशेषज्ञों की यात सुननी चाहिए और उन्हें नीतिगत प्रक्रिया में शामिल करना चाहिए।

केदारनाथ में आपदा के 10 वर्ष पूरे होने पर एसडीसी फाउंडेशन की ओर से दून में संवाद कराया गया। विशेषज्ञों

ने आपदा से सबक लेने पर जोर दिया। हिमालयी क्षेत्रों में अंधाधुंध निर्माण और पर्यटकों की बेतहाशा भीड़ पर भी धिंता जताई। हर्दयेश जोशी ने कहा, हमें चोटी के बजाय टिकाऊ सड़कों पर जोर देना चाहिए। एसडीआरएफ कम्पाउंड मणिकोंट मिश्रा बोले, यह आपदा केदारनाथ तक सीमित नहीं थी, खलिक पूरा उत्तराखंड प्रभावित हुआ। आपदा के 10 साल में शासन-प्रशासन, जनता के नजरिए में बदलाव आया कि हमें अब तैयार रहना पड़ेगा। इस अवसर पर संस्थापक अनुप नौटियाल, हर्ष डोभल, अविनाश जोशी, सुशील उपाध्याय, मधु धरलियाल, एसपी सती, रणबीर चौधरी, गणेश कंडवाल, प्रेक्षा रतुड़ी, प्रदीप कुकरेती मौजूद रहे।

Dehradun Dehradun, 20 June, 2023 www.garhwalpost.in Garhwal Post 7

SDC Foundation organizes community dialogue on "10 Years of Kedarnath Tragedy"

By OUR STAFF REPORTER DEHRADUN, 19 June: After 10 years of Kedarnath calamity, a community dialogue was organised by Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation at the Uttaranchal Press Club, Dehradun on Monday.

Experts from various fields and eminent citizens stressed on taking lessons from the horrific disasters in the state and they also expressed concern over indiscriminate construction in the Himalayan regions and the huge rash of tourists.

Geology Expert and Adjunct Professor, JNBS Garhwal University, Dr. YP Sundralwal said that the crowd coming to the Himalayas including Kedarnath is only increasing. "If it is not managed properly, a tragedy like 2013 can happen again," he said adding that "After the 2013 disaster, we conducted a survey and found that the Kedarnath valley had a capacity for only 25,000 pilgrims to stay, but that night there were 60,000 people there. Now this balance has deteriorated further. The road which was earlier branded as All Weather has now been branded as Char Dham Mass project."

He emphasised that landslides are occurring on this road throughout the year. In



such a situation, gathering more and more people in Kedarnath should be avoided. "We should take care of the holding capacity of the Valley. We have also seen the result of unplanned development in Joshimath. On these issues, the government should listen to experts and involve them in the policy process," he said.

Addressing the gathering, senior journalist Hridayesh Joshi said that work is being done against the opinion of scientists in Uttarakhand, due to which the precariousness of disaster situations persists. "We should insist on sustainable roads instead of wide roads. People are asking for roads in

their villages but are not being heard. The formation of SDRF after the Kedarnath disaster is a major achievement, but we have not been able to develop a warning system in the Himalayas as is in place in the coastal areas. The 2021 Rains disaster is an example of this. We do not have a mechanism to monitor the lakes. Environmental concerns are brushed aside in lieu of development plans," he said.

SDRF Commandant Manikant Mishra, said that this disaster was not limited to Kedarnath, but the entire Uttarakhand was affected by it. SDRF was formed on grounds of those experiences. In the 10

years since the disaster, there has been a change in the attitude of the administration and the public that such a disaster can come at any time, and we should be prepared for it. At present, we have five companies deployed at 42 locations. It is planned so that one can reach any accident site in the shortest possible time. "Now we have better forecasts too. Weather forecasts are coming up to the micro level. Due to the increasing number of tourists in the state, the challenges of dealing with accidents have increased. For this, the Jawans are given training in personal rescue and paramedics. There is also a special team for high

altitude rescue," he said, and advised tourists coming to Uttarakhand to be alert about weather reports and travel keeping in mind the geography and climatic conditions.

The programme was moderated by senior journalist Sanjeev Kandwal while the inaugural session was led by Prema Rathi.

On this occasion, Anoop Nautiyal, Prof Dr Harsh Dobhal, Dr Avinash Joshi, Dr Sushil Upadhyay, Dr Madhu Thapliyal, Dr SP Sati, Ranbir Chaudhary, Pradeep Mehta, Sanjay Joshi, Ganesh Kandwal, Jai Singh Rawat, Rahul Koyal, Pradeep Kukreti, and many others were present.

संवाद एसडीसी फाउंडेशन ने केदारनाथ आपदा के सबक और सवालों पर की चर्चा

हिमालयी क्षेत्रों में पर्यटकों की भीड़ पर जताई चिंता

माई सिटी रिपोर्टर

देहरादून। वर्ष 2013 में केदारनाथ में आई भयंकर आपदा के 10 वर्ष पूरे होने पर एसडीसी फाउंडेशन की ओर से उत्तरांचल प्रेस क्लब में संवाद का आयोजन किया गया। इसमें विशेषज्ञों ने आपदा से सबक लेने पर जोर दिया। खंड ही हिमालयी क्षेत्रों में अंधाधुंध निर्माण और पर्यटकों की बेतहाशा भीड़ को लेकर चिंता जताई।

भूविज्ञान विशेषज्ञ डॉ. चांदी सुंदरवाल ने कहा, केदारनाथ सहित हिमालयी क्षेत्रों में लगातार भीड़ बढ़ रही है। यदि इसका उचित प्रबंधन नहीं किया गया तो 2013 जैसी त्रासदी फिर हो सकती है। 2013 आपदा के बाद सर्वे में पाया गया था कि केदारनाथ में महज 25 हजार यात्रियों के ठहरने की व्यवस्था थी, लेकिन उस रात वहां 40 हजार लोग थे। यह स्थिति और खिगड़ गई है। सरकार को विशेषज्ञों की यात सुननी चाहिए और उन्हें नीतिगत प्रक्रिया में शामिल करना चाहिए।

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जोशीमठ में भी देखा है। इन मुद्दों पर सरकार को विशेषज्ञों की यात सुननी चाहिए और उन्हें नीतिगत प्रक्रिया में शामिल करना चाहिए।

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DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND

SUNDAY JUNE 18, 2023

Social Development for Communities FOUNDATION TALKS