



**EVENT
REPORT**

Uttarakhand Idea Exchange on Climate and Constitution

A series of three strategic convenings
held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand

August - October, 2024



Introduction

My generation has largely failed until now to preserve both justice in the world and to preserve the planet. It is your generation that must make us be accountable to make sure that we don't betray the future of humankind.

— *United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres*

It is not just the United Nations' Secretary General who feels that the youth are not only victims of climate change but also becoming the harbingers of hope by taking positive, proactive climate action. From taking part in the COP summits and voicing their opinions on climate crisis and being heard, to working at the policymaking and the grassroots level for climate action, the youth are sincerely trying to ensure that the planet they inherit is a cleaner, greener and a safer one.

As the UN Knowledge Management Hub (UN-KMH) for Asia-Pacific says, "Climate action demands innovation and new approaches, and nowhere is the need for accelerated climate action more urgent than in Asia and the Pacific. Youth are in a unique position to contribute as their energy, creativity, and passion are a force for action, and youth are also more likely to view climate change as an urgent issue."

And with half of the global youth living in Asia and the Pacific, it makes the youth the banner-bearers when it comes to the "crisis of rights" as the UN-KMH correctly calls climate change. The youth need to understand this crisis at hand and learn the tools – both legal and social – to mobilise communities for action and activism, and also ask for urgent action from those who are at the helm of decision-making that impacts the health of our planet, and consequently, us.

Background

Climate crisis and the need to take urgent action is more true for Uttarakhand, other Himalayan states and coastal areas, than anywhere else. The direct link between unsustainable development, apathy and climate change can be seen here very clearly.

If we talk about Uttarakhand, the youth of the state need to be empowered and facilitated to make decisions regarding climate action, design robust advocacy and action interventions and be able to spotlight their concerns at various public platforms.

In keeping with this thought and commitment, Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation and Doon Library and Research Centre (DLRC) collaborated for “Uttarakhand Idea Exchange on Climate and Constitution”. The partnership aimed to bring together diverse stakeholders and mainstream the voices of those concerned about climate crisis issues and sustainable development in Uttarakhand and the Himalayas. By uniting experts, community leaders, policymakers, and citizens, the UIE’s agenda was to foster a collective dialogue and develop actionable solutions for a more sustainable and resilient Himalayan ecosystem.

A series of  three unique programs was curated for a two-month period. This included:

- Workshop on "Empowering youth: Tackling the climate crisis in Uttarakhand": August 17, 2024
- Panel discussion on “Right against the adverse effect of climate change: Discussing the implications of the Supreme Court's landmark judgment”: September 14, 2024
- Roundtable dialogue on "Forging a collective front to fight climate change: Learnings from the ground": October 4, 2024



Acknowledgements

SDC Foundation is extremely thankful to Doon Library and Research Centre (DLRC) for collaborating in this one-of-a-kind Uttarakhand Idea Exchange programme. Its commitment to the cause was indispensable during all three events held at the center's auditorium. We would also like to thank Mr Chandra Shekhar Tiwari, Program Associate, DLRC, who was not only present for the events but also facilitated them by introducing the speakers and ensuring they continued smoothly.

About Doon Library and Research Centre

The Doon Library & Research Centre came into existence formally on March 16, 2006 with its registration under the Societies Registration Act. It became functional on December 8, 2006 when its present premises in the Parade Ground were inaugurated by the then Chief Minister Uttarakhand Narayan Datt Tiwari. It is an autonomous institution managed by a Governing Body with the Chief Secretary, Uttarakhand Government as the Chairman. The other members of the Governing body include Secretaries of the Departments of Finance, Planning, School Education, Culture and Higher Education of the Uttarakhand Government, eminent educationists and personalities nominated by the Governing Body.

About SDC Foundation

SDC Foundation is a Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group engaged in communication, capacity building and community mobilisation in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. Its key functional domains include climate and environmental conservation, sustainable urbanisation, and solid and plastic waste management. The foundation works in partnership with institutions of Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand, and other stakeholders such as research and academic institutions, community groups, civil society, media partners, NGOs, businesses and trade bodies, schools and colleges in the state.

Program Highlights

Workshop: Empowering Youth: Tackling the Climate Crisis in Uttarakhand

August 17, 2024, 10 AM - 1 PM



At the beginning of the workshop, Gautam Kumar, Assistant Professor at UPES School of Law, and Fellow at SDC Foundation highlighted the landmark case of *M K Ranjit Singh vs. Union of India* by the Supreme Court of India in April 2024. The case recognized the right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change as a distinct right. Gautam mentioned that recognizing citizens' fundamental rights against climate change marks a significant development in India's environmental jurisprudence, which will accelerate our climate action efforts. He also provided detailed information to the youth about the workshop's context and process at the start of the workshop.

Anoop Nautiyal of SDC stated that UIE aims to understand and delve deeper into the far-reaching implications of this crucial information. Chandra Shekhar Tiwari of DLRC welcomed the young participants and said that this is an innovative effort by SDC Foundation. He expressed hope that the exchange of ideas in this workshop would help the youth develop their original creative thinking to tackle the local climate crisis along with national-level issues.

For group discussions, the 40 members made groups of six, and used chart papers, pens, and colors to create their creative ideas on climate change, which they then presented in the session. The youth expressed their ideas in various creative and art-based forms, such as drawing, painting, sketching, poetry, songs, and words.

Certificates were also awarded to the participants at the end of the workshop.

This session aimed to understand the climate and green expectations of youth in Uttarakhand and how they wish to drive climate action along with the government and non-government stakeholders. It included a focused group discussion and learning mode where 40 young men and women did active brainstorming amongst themselves in small groups, on the climate crisis in Uttarakhand.

They then presented their ideas in an open forum followed by a capacity-building talk on youth empowerment and engagement in climate solutions in Uttarakhand.



Key Discussion Points:

- *Youth perspective and understanding of the climate crisis in Uttarakhand*
- *Dialogues, strategies and way ahead for youth engagement in climate action*
- *Publishing Youth Charter on Climate Action in Uttarakhand*

The workshop saw participation from students of UPES, Doon University, Mahadevi Kanya Pathshala, Jigyasa University, Garhwal University, DAV College, Shri Guru Ram Rai College, and the Doon Library, all from Dehradun.

The primary aim was to exchange information related to climate change in Uttarakhand, assess the present and future, and encourage innovative thinking and problem-solving among the youth regarding climate-related challenges. Additionally, the workshop aimed to promote leadership skills to inspire and organize youth, advocate for policies addressing the worsening climate situation, and encourage youth participation in environmental issues in Uttarakhand.

Panel Discussion: Right against the adverse effect of climate change: Discussing the implications of the Supreme Court's landmark judgment

September 14, 2024, 11 AM - 01:00 PM



By recognising the right to a clean and healthy environment as integral to the right to life, the Supreme Court has set a powerful precedent for climate justice. This ruling mandates that the state must take proactive measures to mitigate climate change and safeguard the environmental rights of its citizens, particularly in the context of vulnerable regions like Uttarakhand, which are on the frontline of the climate crisis.

This panel discussion was aimed at understanding the implications of this key judgment, learn and unlearn some other major legal-environmental principles, discuss the state of climate litigations and how stakeholders in Uttarakhand can leverage legal advocacy in conserving the Himalayan ecosystem.

Key Discussion Points:

- *Decoding the full judgment and identifying the actionable items*
- *Mapping the evolution of environmental jurisprudence in India*
- *Understanding judicial action in Uttarakhand on climate justice*
- *Preparing a strategy for climate advocacy, litigation and action*

The event commenced with a welcome address by Chandrashekhar Tiwari of DLRC, who briefly introduced the Uttarakhand Idea Exchange initiative and welcomed the esteemed panellists.

The panel discussion was moderated by Gautam Kumar, Assistant Professor at UPES School of Law, and Fellow at SDC Foundation. Gautam set the context by discussing the Supreme Court's 2021 order regarding the Great Indian Bustard and the importance of making power transmission lines underground. He then moved to the 2024 MK Ranjitsinh vs. Union of India judgement, emphasising the Supreme Court's recognition of climate change as a constitutional concern and its implications for environmental rights.

Aman Rab, Legal Advisor to the Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board, offered insights into the legal dimensions of the judgement. He explained that the Supreme Court did not create a new right but rather recognized an existing right under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. He noted the challenges the state would face in implementing these rights but lauded the judgement as a positive step for climate litigation in India.

Varsha Singh, a senior journalist, provided a ground-level perspective on climate change, especially its impact on mental health, particularly in schoolchildren. She also highlighted the gendered effects of climate change, noting that women are disproportionately affected. Through her reporting, she emphasised the media's role in bridging information gaps and fostering greater awareness of environmental rights.

Dr. Harsh Dobhal, Visiting Professor at Doon University, spoke about the community impacts of the recognized right, emphasising how different social groups are disproportionately affected by climate change. Drawing from his field research, he highlighted the increasing necessity of cooling systems in Uttarakhand, where heat waves are becoming more common. He also focused on the need for effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Aditya Rawat, Assistant Professor at UPES, took an overarching view of the judgement, pointing out its anthropocentric approach. He noted the Court's departure from its earlier ecocentric jurisprudence, especially given that the case concerned the protection of a bird species. Aditya also discussed how the judgement failed to address the rights of animals and nature, as well as the identity crisis faced by Indigenous communities due to the climate crisis.

The audience, comprising students from various universities, climate practitioners, civil society members, lawyers, and professors, engaged deeply with the panellists. The discussion extended into questions about tourism's contribution to climate vulnerability and the role of the government in fostering collaboration with civil society to address these issues.

In conclusion, Anoop Nautiyal of SDC Foundation, summarised the key points of the discussion and delivered the vote of thanks. He acknowledged the panellists for their insightful contributions and expressed gratitude to the Doon Library for co-hosting the event. He congratulated all participants for their active engagement in the discourse, underscoring the need for continued dialogue on climate-related constitutional rights in Uttarakhand.

SP Subudhi, Director, State Environment Conservation and Climate Change Directorate (SECCCD), Government of Uttarakhand, Prof. HC Purohit, Dr. SP Sati, Dr. Rajendra Kathait, Vaishali Singh, Jaya Singh, Rajendra Koshiyari, Arunima Naithani, Jaya Singh, Ekta Sati, Jagmohan Mediratta, Abhinav Singh, Brig Khati (Retired), Prateek Panwar, Sanjeev Srivastava, Paramjit Singh Kakkar, Hari Raj, students from Doon University, Doon Library, UPES, Graphic Era and many others were present during the panel discussion.



Round Table : Forging a collective front to fight climate change: Learnings from the ground

October 4, 2024, 11 AM - 02:00 PM



Civil society plays a pivotal role in the fight against climate change, particularly in regions like Uttarakhand, where local communities are both stewards of the environment and the first to experience the impacts of climate crises.

This round table gathered representatives from various civil society organizations (CSOs) to share their experiences, challenges, and successes in fighting climate change at the grassroots. The focus was on extracting valuable insights and learnings that can guide future efforts in sustainable development and environmental protection.

Representatives from key organizations, and academicians discussed case studies and stories from the field, highlighting how grassroots initiatives have made a difference. This included sustainable urbanization, renewable energy, waste management, sustainable agricultural practices, and disaster resilience programs.

The discussion addressed the challenges faced by civil society in climate advocacy, such as limited funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and resistance to change. Participants also shared strategies and solutions that have helped them overcome these obstacles.

The session began with a welcome address by Chandra Shekhar Tiwari, Program Associate at DLRC, followed by an introduction from Anoop Nautiyal, Founder, SDC Foundation, who highlighted the initiative's earlier held youth workshop & panel discussion. He underscored the initiative's focus on collaborative dialogues addressing Uttarakhand's pressing climate issues.

Gautam Kumar, Assistant Professor at UPES School of Law, and Fellow at SDC Foundation, set the context for the discussion, stressing the need to incorporate grassroots experiences into policy discourse and highlighting the necessity of integrating local knowledge into climate policy to ensure sustainable development in the region.

Vishal Singh of Center for Ecology Development and Research (CEDAR) opened the conversation by critiquing the tendency to attribute environmental degradation solely to climate change, emphasising the role of poor governance. He called for stronger enforcement of environmental regulations and collaboration between civil society, academia and the state.

Deepak Mahanta from BAIF Development Research Foundation shifted the conversation to sustainable agriculture, advocating for climate-resilient farming practices like diversified cropping and soil regeneration. He also touched on the need for greater support from both state and non-governmental organizations in educating farmers about sustainable practices that can reduce their vulnerability to climate shocks.

Rohit Joshi of Recykal shared information about an innovative waste management solution implemented in Kedarnath, where a deposit return system for plastic waste has led to a 90% recovery rate. He also stressed the need to create "hype" around the work being done on waste management, turning it into a mainstream issue that receives consistent attention and action from both the community and local authorities.

Ayush Joshi from IDEAL foundation expanded on waste management by discussing the need for household-level waste segregation and engagement with corporate producers through extended producer responsibility (EPR) frameworks. He further pointed out the need to create a marketplace around waste management, which would allow both local communities and businesses to benefit economically from participating in sustainable waste disposal practices.

Tarun Sharma of Nagrik shared his in-depth experiences of working with smaller cities, while emphasising the criticality of knowledge gaps, lack of citizen engagement and low levels of existing internal capacities in government institutions.

Pankaj Kargeti from CEEW emphasised the need for increased awareness and adoption of solar power. He noted the significant lack of awareness among government officials and local communities about the benefits of transitioning to renewable energy and stressed the importance of educating both government officials and local communities.

Jeet Bahadur from Burans, focused on mental health impacts of climate change in Uttarkashi, where changing weather patterns have destabilised agriculture. He also shared his experience of working with local communities to address these mental health issues, noting the importance of bridging the knowledge gap between climate change and mental well-being. He highlighted that women tend to engage more actively than men in such community-level dialogues and initiatives, attributing this to their closer day-to-day interaction with the environment. Jeet also stressed the need for community engagement and emphasised the importance of public pressure in driving policy change.

Anil Joshi of Ingenious Foundation Anil Joshi introduced a different dimension to the discussion by focusing on the economic empowerment of Himalayan communities through traditional knowledge. He advocated for creating local businesses that leverage the indigenous knowledge systems of the region, particularly in agriculture and handicrafts. According to Anil, incentivizing these traditional practices not only ensures the preservation of local culture but also offers a sustainable business model for communities in the face of climate change. By empowering local people to profit from their expertise, he argued, communities could become active participants in climate resilience strategies while also improving their economic standing.

The discussion covered intellectual property rights (IPR) with Vaishali, Professor of Law at UPES, who argued for protecting traditional knowledge through IPR laws. She highlighted the potential of using technology to promote entrepreneurship among indigenous communities.

The session concluded with an open dialogue, where participants discussed the next steps for engagement with the state and local communities. Participants agreed on the importance of continued dialogue and collective action to address climate change in Uttarakhand.

Anoop Nautiyal closed the event by reaffirming the importance of collective action to address climate change in Uttarakhand. Young professionals like Arunima Naithani, Aditi Dimri, Kiran Rawat, Sumit Singh and Vasish Kumar along with Sundar Singh Bisht from Doon Library attended the round table dialogue.

Actionable agenda from Uttarakhand Idea Exchange on Climate and Constitution

Youth Empowerment in Climate Action:

- Continue to engage and empower youth in Uttarakhand through climate leadership workshop and actionable interventions.
- Facilitate platforms for youth or create a community group to spotlight their concerns and ideas regarding the climate crisis.

Strengthening Climate Justice Advocacy:

- Implement and promote legal advocacy initiatives around the Supreme Court's recognition of the right against adverse effects of climate change
- Conduct educational sessions amongst student communities that decode recent climate-related judgments and identify actionable legal advocacy paths.
- Map the evolution of environmental jurisprudence and educate stakeholders on judicial tools available for climate litigation in Uttarakhand.

Collaborative Climate Solutions:

- Foster continuous dialogue among civil society, academia, and the government to integrate grassroots knowledge into policymaking.
- Encourage community-level climate initiatives, such as waste management innovations and sustainable agriculture, that build local resilience.
- Engage corporate stakeholders in extended producer responsibility (EPR) frameworks to encourage household-level waste management

Experts deliberate on constitutional rights and climate change

PNS • DEHRADUN
A panel discussion on constitutional rights against the adverse effect of climate change was organized at the Doon Library and Research Centre (DLRC) on Saturday. The event was organized under the aegis of the Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation. Experts of different fields deliberated on the implications of the recent Supreme Court judgment in *M.K. Ranjith v. Union of India* (2024), which recognized fundamental rights of citizens against the adverse effects of climate change. The legal advice to the Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board, Amn-



menting these rights but leading to climate litigation in India. Senior journalist Varsha Singh elaborated on the impact of climate change particularly on school children. She also highlighted the gendered effects of climate change, noting that women are disproportionately affected. Visiting professor at Doon University Harsh Dobhal said that different social groups are disproportionately affected by climate change. He highlighted the increasing necessity of cooling systems in Uttarakhand, where heat waves are becoming more common. Dobhal also focused on the need for effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. The founder of the SDC Foundation, Anoop Nautiyal delivered the vote of thanks. He said that there is a need for continuous dialogue on climate-related constitutional dimensions of the judgment. The director, State Environment Conservation and Climate Change Directorate (SECCCD), SP Rajendra Kahlari, SP Seta Rajendra Kahlari and others attended the programme.

जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रतिकूल प्रभावों के विरुद्ध संवैधानिक अधिकार पर चर्चा

18 अक्टूबर को, एक अंतर-विशेषज्ञ चर्चा कार्यक्रम का आयोजन किया गया, जिसमें संवैधानिक अधिकारों के संदर्भ में जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रतिकूल प्रभावों पर चर्चा की गई। कार्यक्रम में, विशेषज्ञों ने जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रतिकूल प्रभावों के विरुद्ध संवैधानिक अधिकारों के संदर्भ में चर्चा की।

उत्तराखण्ड में जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रतिकूल प्रभावों के विरुद्ध संवैधानिक अधिकारों के संदर्भ में चर्चा की गई। कार्यक्रम में, विशेषज्ञों ने जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रतिकूल प्रभावों के विरुद्ध संवैधानिक अधिकारों के संदर्भ में चर्चा की।

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SDC, Doon Library hold discussion on Constitutional Rights against adverse effect of Climate Change

Urgent need for effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategies: Harsh Dobhal

BY OUR STAFF REPORTER DEHRADUN, 18 Sept
A thought-provoking panel discussion on the topic "Constitutional Rights Against the Adverse Effect of Climate Change" was held today at the Doon Library and Research Centre, as part of the Uttarakhand Idea Exchange on Climate and Constitution. The event, organized in collaboration with the Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation, brought together experts from various fields to deliberate on the implications of the recent Supreme Court judgment in *M.K. Ranjith v. Union of India* (2024), which recognized fundamental rights of citizens against the adverse effects of climate change.

The event commenced with a national address by Chandra Shekhar Thakur, Programme Associate of Doon Library, who warmly welcomed the Uttarakhand Idea Exchange initiative and welcomed the distinguished panelists. The panel discussion was moderated by Gaurav Kumar, Assistant Professor at IIT Roorkee. Doon University, Uttarakhand, and the SDC Foundation, Uttarakhand, were the co-organizers of the event.

Dr. Harsh Dobhal, Visiting Professor at Doon University, opened the discussion by highlighting the significance of the judgment under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. He noted that the challenge for the state would be to implement these rights by addressing the climate change through both mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Uttarakhand, a mountainous state, is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, especially in terms of water scarcity, health issues, and loss of biodiversity. He also noted the need for effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.



Dr. Anoop Nautiyal, Founder of the SDC Foundation, summarized the key points of the discussion and delivered the vote of thanks. He acknowledged the panelists for their insightful contributions and expressed gratitude to the Doon Library for hosting the event. Anoop emphasized that all stakeholders must be engaged in this critical dialogue to address the climate-related challenges and ensure a sustainable future for Uttarakhand.

The audience, comprising students, faculty, and community members, was highly engaged and participated actively in the discussion. The event concluded with a Q&A session, where participants raised questions about the state's role in implementing these rights and the need for effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

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