

MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Changing Mountains

2020





CONTENTS

About Mountain Spirit	3
Executive Committee	4
Advisors	7
Life Members	9
General Members	10
Associate Members	12
Projects and Programmes	13
A Letter From the Editor	19
Changing Predators Presence in Sagarmatha National Park, Khumbu Rural Municipality, Nepal	20
Changing Mountains: Is There a Price for Prosperity?	26
Vipassana Meditation: An Art of Living	29
Changing Mountains: Its Impact On the Lives of Mountain Indigenous Peoples (IPs)	32
Global Warming: Changing the Himalayas	34
Holmo Language: The Foundation of Identity and History of Living Civilization	36
A Visit to the Forbidden Kingdom of Lo-Manthang	43
The COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities for Mountain Communities of Solukhumbu	46
Bridging the Digital Divide in Nepal's Education Amid the Global Pandemic	52
Nepal's Obvious Concern: Changes in the Snow Pattern	53
Will You Be My Voice?	54
Let's Be Still, Listen, and Redirect Our Ways	55



ABOUT MOUNTAIN SPIRIT

Mountain Spirit (MS) is a member-based non-governmental organization that advocates for social justice, human rights, and environmental conservation by supporting indigenous mountain communities. It was registered in 1996 under the laws of Nepal by a group of like-minded people from different mountain districts. The organization aims to improve livelihoods, protect the environment, and conserve mountain cultures through capacity building, awareness, empowerment, and sustainable development initiatives with the participation of local communities

The strength and spirit of this organization lies in its members. MS consists of more than one hundred members representing 14 different mountain districts of Nepal. Members hold diverse expertise in issues related to health, education, gender sensitization, conservation, eco-tourism, community-based planning, and entrepreneurship. Its pool of experts have proven track records of successfully implementing Appreciative Participatory Planning Action (APPA), designing and conducting quantitative and qualitative research, and monitoring and evaluating projects.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa, Chair



Ms. Sherpa is a development professional and the founder of Mountain Spirit (MS). She has served MS as the chairperson from 2016 to present. She is one of one thousand peace women across the globe and is active in various organizations, such as participatory networks, women's philanthropic organizations, indigenous people's networks, and conservation focus organizations. She is a human rights activists for social justice, Mountain People's rights, and women empowerment. She has served as an advisor for the National Human Rights Magna-Meet and was one of the visiting scholars of the Human Rights Advocate Program (HRAP) at Columbia University in 2016. Ms. Sherpa earned an MA in Rural Development in 2019 from Tri-Chandra Multiple Campus, a post graduate diploma in Rural Extension & Women in 1991 from the University of Reading-UK, a BA in Economics and Culture in 1988 from Padma Kanya College, and online and face-to-face diploma on Human Rights & Women Leadership from FIMI Global School in 2013 from USA.

Mr. Ang Phinjo Sherpa, Vice Chair



Mr. Ang Phinjo Sherpa, a founding member of Mountain Spirit, is originally from Namche Bazar in Solukhumbu. Mr. Sherpa was appointed as the executive director of Mountain Spirit in 2009 and played a significant role in the implementation of the MS-CESVI project in Sagarmatha National Park. In the past, he has also served as an executive member, advisor, and general secretary. Mr. Sherpa is currently the country director for EcoHimal, an Austrian international NGO. He is also actively involved in various social and community-based organizations.

Mr. Tashi Lama Hyolmo, General Secretary



Mr. Tashi D. Hyolmo first became affiliated with Mountain Spirit in 2007, became a general member in 2009, and received the status of life member in 2018. He is an indigenous youth activist, writer, and a young media person who has been exploring the applications of his professional practices on technology, youth, and social activism. He served the Nepal Indigenous Nationalities Students Federation, served as chief of the foreign department of the National Committee, advisor of the Hyolmo Student Association of Nepal, advisor of the Lumbini Help Foundation, and various Hyolmo indigenous organizations. He strongly believes that the youth will shape the future of any country.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Mr. Jikme Tsering Lama, Secretary

Mr. Jikme Tsering Sherpa is from the Udayapur district. He has been engaged in Mountain Spirit activities for more than a decade and currently serves as the secretary. He received his Bachelor's degree from Shankar Dev Campus. Mr. Sherpa has worked with the Social Action Volunteer in Kanti Baal Hospital for social action and has received training from Mountain Spirit in various subjects, such as Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA) and environmental protection for climate change.



Ms. Ang Diku Sherpa, Treasurer

Ms. Ang Diku Sherpa serves as the treasurer of Mountain Spirit. She received a degree in Business Administration and Public Administration from Minbhavan Campus. She has experience and training in diverse fields, such as new and small enterprise promotions, health management, and HIV/AIDS. Ms. Sherpa has worked as a facilitator between domestic and international enterprises and has given training on participatory rural approaches.



Ms. Ram Maya Thakali, Executive Member

Ms. Ram Maya Thakali is from Jomsom in the Mustang district. She first joined Mountain Spirit in 1999 and became a life member in 2020. She has been involved in Mountain Spirit in a range of roles and responsibilities including the president, treasurer, executive member, and coordinator. Her educational background is in Sociology and she has worked with communities in the mountain region using participatory and appreciative approaches to planning, socioeconomic surveys, and institutional capacity building.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Ms. Anita Lama Gurung, Executive Member

Ms. Anita Lama Gurung is a social worker and a businesswoman. Her expertise is in financial management. She is the Executive Managing Director of Samarpan Saving and Credit Cop. Ltd. She first joined Mountain Spirit in 2000 and became a life member in 2020. Ms. Gurung was also a former treasurer of Mountain Spirit from 2007-2010. She is also associated with Prayas Nepal as the co-chair. She has traveled to New Zealand, China, Tibet, Sri-Lanka, Thailand, India, Switzerland, Germany, France, Singapore, and Austria. She is also experienced in social science research using Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA).



Mr. Sonam Dorjee Sherpa, Executive Member

Mr. Sonam Dorjee Sherpa, a native from Khumbu joined MS in 2012 and has been serving as a Board Member since 2018. Graduated from Purbanchal University with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, he has over a decade of management experience in a community-led and isolated hydropower company based in the Everest Region. Sonam has been associated with various CBOs and NGOs in different roles and capacities. He is passionate about photography and traveling.



Ms. Pema Chhutin Sherpa, Executive Member

Ms. Pema Chhutin Sherpa is a Registered Nurse and social worker. She has pursued a Bachelor's degree in Nursing. Her expertise is in the Critical Care Unit and neuroscience nursing. She initially became a member of Mountain Spirit in 2012, became a general member in 2016, and is now an executive member. She is pursuing a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology. She also volunteers with Empower Nepali Girl. Her passion for social work is demonstrated through education and action, such as active participation during earthquakes for health aid in remote villages and other various social activities. She wants to be a source of motivation for less privileged people.

ADVISORS



Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa (Ph. D)

Dr. Sherpa is originally from the Khumbu region of the Solukhumbu district. He holds a Ph.D. in Forest Resources from the University of Washington, USA, and has over 30 years of experience in natural resource management and the conservation of mountain ecosystems and cultures. He worked for the Government of Nepal's Department of National Park as the Conservation Officer from 1980-2000. Later, he joined The Mountain Institute (TMI) and worked as foreign expert in TAR China. He also served as the Co-Director of the regional program in Nepal. He is a recipient of the Fulbright Student Scholarship in 1985 and the Fulbright Post-Doctoral Fellowship in 2009. Dr. Sherpa has broad national and international experience as an advisor and expert consultant. He has also worked actively in the conservation and promotion of mountain cultures and indigenous knowledge including language. He has been helping MS as a founder, past chair, life member, and senior advisor.



Ms. Yankila Sherpa

Ms. Yankila Sherpa is among the first women to get a university-level education from her community of Olanchung Gola. Ms. Sherpa has served as the Tourism Minister of Nepal in the past. She has spent over twenty-five years advocating for sustainable and responsible tourism and for the cause of women empowerment. She is the managing director of the Snow Leopard Trek and vice president of the Trans Himalayan Environment and Livelihood Program. She was one of the founding members of MS since 1996. She also serves as an advisor to various organizations in Nepal.



Dr. Shailendra Thakali (Ph. D)

Dr. Thakali is from the Mustang district. He holds a Ph.D. in Environmental and Development Governance from Lincoln University, New Zealand. He has over 25 years of experience working on environment, poverty, forestry, community development and tourism issues. He served as an Education and Information Director for the National Trust for Nature Conservation, Program Manager for The Mountain Institute and as a Livelihood Advisor for UK's Department of International Development. He has also provided advisory and expert services to a number of national and international organizations. He has successfully handled many large-scale projects including GEF funded projects. Most recently he is leading the Darwin Initiative and the Snow Leopard Conservancy in the Manang and Everest regions.

ADVISORS



Lhakpa Tenji Lama (Sherpa)

Mr. Lhakpa Tenji Lama (Sherpa) is originally from the Tumbuk village of Solududhkunda-2, Solukhumbu District. He holds a Master's degree in community development and planning in tourism management from Lincoln University, New Zealand, and Master's degree in Tourism Studies from Purbanchal University, Nepal. He is one of Mountain Spirit's founding members. He has worked as the Senior Field Coordinator for the EU funded, community-based forestry project in Sagarmatha National Park, the Project Officer for The Mountain Institute, the Executive Director and Chairperson for Mountain Spirit, Tourism Lecturer for Kathmandu Academy of Tourism & Hospitality, newsreader & program producer in Sherpa language for Radio Nepal, and Country Coordinator for AWC-UK. He is also an expert advisor and consultant for a number of national/international organizations in project management, communication, rural development, project impact assessment, baseline survey, monitoring and evaluation, and participatory planning and training.



Mr. Nima Lama Hyolmo

Mr. Nima Lama Hyolmo is originally from the Shermathang village of Kiul VDC, Sindhupalchowk. He joined MS in 1999 and became an executive member in 2008. He was elected as general secretary of MS from 2010 to 2012 and served as president of the organization from 2012-2014. He also served as secretary of Foreign Affairs for the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN). Professionally, he is a tourism entrepreneur and is actively involved in various community and social organizations such as the Trekking Agencies' Association Nepal (TAAN) and Yangrima Trust. Now he is also one of the provincial assembly members of Nepal.

LIFE MEMBERS

S.N	Name	Reg. Date	Life Membership Date
1	Mr. Temba Dongba Hyolmo	2000	2013
2	Mr. Gelu Sherpa	2000	2016
3	Ms. Pema Doma Sherpa	2010	2017
4	Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa	1996	2017
5	Ms. Ang Diku Sherpa	1996	2017
6	Mr. Ang Phinjo Sherpa	1996	2017
7	Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa	1996	2017
8	Dr. Shailendra Thakali	2007	2017
9	Mr. Lhakpa Tenji Lama (Sherpa)	1996	2017
10	Mr. Ang Rita Sherpa	1996	2017
11	Mr. Tashi Lama Hyolmo	2007	2018
12	Ms. Ang Dali Sherpa	1996	2018
13	Mr. Jimmy Lama	2004	2018
14	Ms. Sonam Dolma Lama	2008	2018
15	Ms. Yangdu Sherpa	2010	2018
16	Dr. Pasang Dolma Sherpa	1998	2020
17	Mr. Gopal Lama	1997	2020
18	Ms. Anita Lama (Gurung)	2000	2020
19	Ms. Ram Maya Thakali	1999	2020
20	Ms. Tuka Cheki Sherpa	2000	2020
21	Mr. Lakpa Nuri Sherpa	2004	2020

INTERNATIONAL LIFE MEMBERS

S.N	Name	Reg. Date	Name of Country
1	Mr. Robert Elliot Fairley	1997	Scotland, UK
2	Ms. Wendy Brewer Lama	2000	USA
3	Dr. Katie FM Marwick	2001	Scotland G63 OTA
4	Dr. Sara Louise Parker	2004	England, UK

GENERAL MEMBERS

SN	Name	Date	Address
1	Ms. Ang Dali Sherpa	1996	Solukhumbu
2	Ms. Ang Diku Sherpa	1997	Dhankuta
3	Mr. Ang Phinjo Sherpa	1996	Solukhumbu
4	Mr. Ang Rita Sherpa	1996	Solukhumbu
5	Mr. Ang Tenji Sherpa	1997	Udaypur
6	Ms. Anita Lama Gurung	2000	Mustang
7	Ms. Bhuwan Kumari Sherchan	2013	Mustang
8	Mr. Chhewang Lama	2007	Humla
9	Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa	1996	Udaypur
10	Mr. Dinesh Lama	2014	Kathmandu
11	Ms. Dolma Sherpa	2014	Solukhumbu
12	Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa	1996	Solukhumbu
13	Dr. Mingma Norbu Sherpa	2001	Solukhumbu
14	Dr. Pasang Dolma Lama	1998	Udaypur
15	Dr. Pasang Yangji Sherpa	2008	Solukhumbu
16	Dr. Shailendra Thakali	2007	Mustang
17	Mr. Durga Bahadur Tamang	2015	Rasuwa
18	Mr. Gelu Sherpa	2000	Solukhumbu
19	Mr. Gopal Lama	1997	Sindhupalchowk
20	Ms. Gyalmu Diki Sherpa	2012	Solukhumbu
21	Mr. Janga Bahadur Lama	2014	Humla
22	Ms. Jemima Diki Sherpa	2012	Solukhumbu
23	Mr. Jikme Tshering Sherpa	2011	Udaypur
24	Mr. Jimmy Lama	2004	Sindhupalchok

GENERAL MEMBERS

25	Mr. Kaji Sherpa	1996	Solukhumbu
26	Ms. Kinjo Omu Hyolmo	2016	Nuwakot
27	Mr. Lakpa Sherpa	2015	Taplejung
28	Ms. Laxmi Gurung	2007	Mustang
29	Mr. Lhadorchi Sherpa	2006	Udayapur
30	Mr. Lhakpa Nuri Sherpa	2004	Udaypur
31	Mr. Lhakpa Tenji Lama, Sherpa	1996	Solukhumbu
32	Ms. Neema Sherpa	2015	Okhaldunga
33	Mr. Ngawang Thapke Sherpa	2015	Okhaldunga
34	Ms. Ngima Doma Sherpa	2010	Solukhumbu
35	Mr. Nima Lama	2000	Sermathang
36	Mr. Nima Lama	2007	Sermathang
37	Mr. Nima Tshering Lama	2014	Sindhupalchok
38	Ms. Pema Chhutin Sherpa	2015	Solukhumbu
39	Mr. Phurba Chheten Pradhan	2012	Solukjumbu
40	Ms. Preeta Sherpa	2013	Kathmandu
41	Ms. Priyanka Shakya	2014	Sankhuwashabha
42	Ms. Ram Maya Thankali	1999	Mustang
43	Ms. Sangita Lama	2008	Nijgadh, Bara
44	Ms. Sonam Dolma Lama	2008	Sindhupalchok
45	Mr. Sonam Dorjee Sherpa	2012	Solukhumbu
46	Mr. Sonam Lama	2015	Dhankuta
47	Mr. Sonam Rinjin Lama	2014	Humla
48	Mr. Tashi Lama Hyolmo	2007	Sindhupalchok
49	Mr. Tenba Dongba Hyolmo	2000	Sindhupalchok
50	Mr. Tenzin Dawa Sherpa	2015	Sindhupalchok
51	Mr. Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa	2014	Solukhumbu
52	Mr. Tsewang Lama	2014	Humla
53	Ms. Tshering Lama	2014	Sindhupalchok
54	Mr. Tshering Sherpa	1996	Solukhumbu
55	Mr. Tshering Sherpa	2010	Solukhumbu
56	Mr. Tshering Tenzing Sherpa	1997	Ramechhap
57	Ms. Tshiring Lhamu Lama	2015	Dolpa
58	Ms. Tuka Chheki Sherpa	2000	Udaypur
59	Ms. Yangdu Sherpa	2010	Sangkhuwasabha
60	Ms. Yangji Doma Sherpa	2012	Solukhumbu
61	Ms. Yangji Sherpa	2008	Kathmandu
62	Ms. Yankila Sherpa	1997	Solukhumbu

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

S.N	Name	Date	Address
1	Ms. Choekyi Dolma Lama	2018	Humla
2	Ms. Dolker Lama	2018	Humla
3	Ms. Kami Doma Sherpa	2016	Nameche
4	Ms. Karsang Lama	2018	Sindhupalchok
5	Mr. Kelsang T.L Sherpa	2018	Solukhumbu
6	Ms. Mendhala Lama Gurung	2018	Mustang
7	Mr. Nisan Rai	2016	Bhojpur
8	Mr. Pasang Tsering Lama	2016	Sindhupalchwok
9	Mr. Pasang Tsering Sherpa	2016	Solukhumbu
10	Ms. Peema Sherpa	2016	Taplejung
11	Mr. Pemba Lama	2008	Nuwakot
12	Mr. Roshan Sherchan	2019	Mustang
13	Mr. Sanoj Tulachan	2018	Mustang
14	Ms. Sonam Bhuti Sherpa	2016	Solukhumbu
15	Ms. Sonam Choekyi Lama	2016	Dolpa
16	Mr. Sonam Jangbu Sherpa	2016	Solukhumbu
17	Mr. Sonam Lama	2015	Dhankuta
18	Mr. Temba Lama	2016	Dolakha
19	Ms. Tshering Gurung	2018	Mustang
20	Ms. Yankee Lama	2016	Humla

Projects and Programmes 2019-2020

THE FELICITATION AND RECEPTION PROGRAM



The Felicitation and Reception dinner program was organized by Mountain Spirit to honor Dr. Gabriel Campbell for his commendable support and contribution in environment conservation and mountain development and for inspiring Mountain Spirit from its establishment phases. The program was held on 27th October 2019 in Lalitpur, Nepal. Mountain Spirit is also privileged to have Dr. Lynn Barnett (writer of *Dangerous Wives* and *Sacred Sisters: Social And Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal* along with “The Status of Women in Nepal” and many other social research based analysis and publications), Mr. Brian Peningston (representative from Snow Leopard Conservancy), Mrs. Helen Sherpa (Country Director of World Education), Dr. Meeta Saiju Pradhan (Country Director of The Mountain Institute-TMI), and Pursotum Battarai (TMI) as our guests for the program. MS Executive Members, Advisors, and Staff were present in the program.



INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION IN THE 11TH HUMAN RIGHTS NATIONAL MAGNA-MEET

Mountain Spirit (MS) played an active role in the 11th National Human Rights Magna Meet of 2019 from 8th to 11th December 2019, which was organized in Nepal on the 71st International Human Rights Day. A grand rally was organized in close coordination and collaboration with NGOs of Federation Nepal where seven members of MS joined the rally and different program events and discussions. The participants were Mr. Lhakpa Tenji Lama (Sherpa), Ms. Tuka Chheki Sherpa, Ms. Palden Lamu Sherpa, Ms. Jyotshana Ranjitkar, Ms. Purna Devei Maharjan, and Ms. Choekyi Dolma Lama.

RELIEF PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS COVID-19

(a) Food Relief to Kantipur Tole Ward Number 7 - Budhanilkantha Municipality):



"Our Fight Against Covid-19: Food Relief

Distribution Program" was a joint collaboration between Mountain Spirit (MS) and the Chandra Gurung Conservation Foundation (CGCF). Relief was provided to 70 households of Kantipur Tole Slum Community and some of the most vulnerable surrounding people on 15th June 2020. Face masks and vegetable seeds were also distributed on the occasion. Funds for the relief program were provided by the Chandra Gurung Conservation Trust (CGCT), USA. The total budget for this program was Rs 215,463. The relief program's impact assessment will be conducted soon by both CGCF and MS jointly and the report will be submitted to CGCT.

(b) Food relief program to Nar and Phu villages of the Manang District:

The food relief program provided for 80 households of Nar and Phu villages. In addition to the local people, daily wage workers who were struck in Nar and Phu also benefited from support. The program was conducted with the help of Narpa Bhumi Rural Municipality, Chankhu, Manang on 26th June 2020. The total budget for this program was 500,000. This relief program was funded by the Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC), USA.



ISSUE-BASED TALK PROGRAMS OF MOUNTAIN SPIRIT (MS)



MS had a goal of conducting four issue-based talk programs during the fiscal year. But it is proud to announce that MS was able to conduct 14 issue-based talk programs in 16 different sessions. The Government of Nepal announced a lock down on the whole country from 24 March 2020 as a preventive measure to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Mountain Spirit decided to start the virtual programs 'MS Webinar' through Zoom Software to advance knowledge and be connected with its member from 10th April 2020. A Facebook group named 'MS Members' Group' was created where all notices and information were shared. Thus, with objectives of utilizing the lock down time productively and creating a platform for knowledge sharing, MS successfully organized events led by 10 minutes of Anapana Meditation Practice, which was instructed by MS advisor, Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa.

The lists of Issues Based Talk Programs are mentioned below:

S.N	Topic	Speaker	Date
1	Buddhism and Buddhist Meditation	Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa	13, 14, and 15 th April 2020
2	Highlights from the latest Climate Change Assessment Reports and the Implications for Nepal's Mountain Communities	Dr. Pasang Yanjee Sherpa	29 th April 2020
3	Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism	Mr. Lhakpa Tenji Sherpa	22 nd April 2020
4	Impact of COVID-19 on Education in the Mountain Communities of Nepal: Opportunities and Challenges	Mr. Gopal Lama	26 th April 2020
5	What Makes Us Special? - Identity of Thakali and Other Indigenous People's Climate-friendly Traditional House Constructions Practices	Mr. Sanoj Tulachan	3 rd May 2020
6	Conservation Governance of Sagarmatha National Park, Buffer Zone, and Buffer Zone Community Forest User Groups	Dr. Mingma Norbu Sherpa	10 th May 2020
7	Life of Buddha Shakyamuni & his Core Teachings	Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa	7 th May 2020
8	BON in Conservation	Ms. Sonam Choekyi Lama	17 th May 2020
9	Restoring Hopes Through School Rebuilding in Sindhupalchowk District	Mr. Jimmy Lama and Mr. Thakur Thapa	21 st May 2020
10	Cultural Ecosystem Service Provided by Mountain Landscape: Understand International Visitors' Recreational Preferences	Mr. Ngawang Thapke Sherpa	24 th May 2020
11	Cultural Heritage of the Himalaya: A Case of TsumNubri region in the Manaslu Conservation Area, Gorkha	Mr. Sonam Lama	27 th May 2020
12	Indigenous Peoples' Contribution to Climate Change Resilience and Challenges	Dr. Pasang Dolam Sherpa	31 st May 2020
13	Tips for Stress Management	Mr. Nima Tshering Lama	3 rd June 2020
14	Impact of Climate Variability on High Mountain Asian Glacier and Hydrology Estimated using Satellite Gravimeter	Ms. Sonam Futi Sherpa	7 th June 2020

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN OTHER NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUE BASED TALKS, SEMINARS AND DISCUSSIONS

Mountain Spirit as an organization also participated in different international and national virtual seminars, talks, and discussion series, such as “Science and Technology” of FIMI-International Indigenous Women’s Forum (IIWF), “Looking Ahead to Life After COVID” of The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), “Living in Harmony with Nature - Indigenous People and their Perspective” of TEBTEBA Foundation, Philippines, “Access to Justice through Social Enterprise” of BBC, “Value of Volunteerism” of Youth Advocacy Nepal, and “Child-Friendly Local Governance”.

ONGOING PROJECTS

"Sustaining Snow Leopard Conservation through Strengthened Local Institutions and Enterprises" was funded by the Darwin Initiative and Snow Leopard Conservancy. This initiative has been implemented in Nar Phoo and Khumbu Valleys of the Annapurna Conservation Area, Sagarmatha National Park and the Buffer Zone area, respectively. Summaries of the progress in year two of the initiatives are provided below:



BUILDING CAPACITIES OF LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Three training manuals (APPA, Conservation Governance, and Environmental Safeguards) have been produced, reviewed, and field-tested. Training manuals were field-tested in Nar and Phu and the Khumbu valleys. Eight training programs were delivered on Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA) and Environmental Safeguard and Conservation Governance Training. 164 people were trained in addition to 23 people who received the ‘Training of Trainer’ training in Kathmandu. The project plans to incorporate feedback received from participants on training programs and finalize the manuals that will be done in Year 3.

BIOLOGICAL MONITORING

The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and Mountain Spirit have signed an agreement to conduct the camera traps survey in Manang of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project. This survey was postponed due to the heavy snowfalls earlier in the year, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown of the country, which restricted all travels. NTNC is monitoring the situation in the fields, and the survey will kick off as soon as the situation improves. Nonetheless, the project completed three biological monitoring activities: the blue sheep population dynamic survey, the livestock depredation pattern monitoring in SNP, and the monitoring report focusing on human-wildlife conflict in Nar and Phu. More biological monitoring is now planned for Year 3.

SNOW LEOPARD BASED ENTERPRISES AND PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT



As a result of the recently held Environment, Social and Governance Training, local participants identified a desire for bakery training as an alternative income stream and diversification from traditional adventure tourism. Twenty-two women from the Nar and Phu villages were trained in Food Preparation and Baking Training. Most of the trainees were tea-shop and hotel owners. This training is expected to increase their incomes once tourism resumes in the Nar-Phu valley in the post-COVID period.

INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S FORUM (IIWF) - FIMI PROJECT

"Awareness raising on the rights of indigenous people and documenting food systems and practices of Tamang indigenous people in Nepal" was funded by FIMI. This project aims to document the traditional food system of the Tamang Indigenous people of Gatlang, Rasuwas District, and provide national and international instruments on the rights of indigenous people. It is on the process of fulfilling legal obligations. MS will provide training on national and international instruments of indigenous people and women's rights to MS members. Research will be conducted to identify seed preservation techniques and food practices of Tamang indigenous people, and the information will be published.

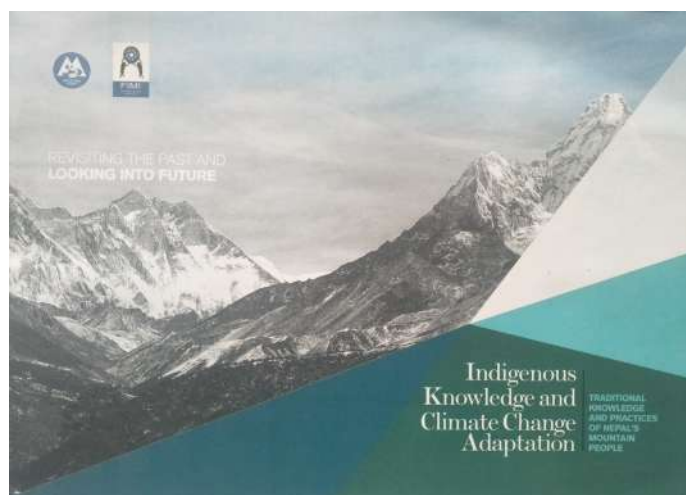
UPDATE ON MS ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY KHADAKS AND BAGS

With the initiation from life members, Ms. Ang Diku Sherpa and Ms. Ang Dali Sherpa, Mountain Spirit came up with an idea of producing environment-friendly shopping bags from 2018 with the tagline, "Reduce, Reuse and Rethink". The main idea of this initiative is to minimize the use of polythene bags that are extremely harmful to the environment and human health. MS promoted environmentally friendly khadaks and bags this year as well.



PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Since its establishment, MS has been promoting the conservation of indigenous mountain communities' environments, cultures, traditions, and indigenous knowledge. MS has documented and published traditional knowledge of stories from different mountain communities of Nepal in 2019 with the support of FIMI - International Indigenous Women's Forum, USA.



A Letter From the Editor

Dear members, friends, and partners,

After working on the 2017 issue of the Mountain Trail during my internship with Mountain Spirit, I hoped that I could visit Nepal again within a short period of time. I never imagined that it would be nearly impossible to do so in three years because of a global pandemic.

We have all faced a year of turbulence and upheaval, thereby rendering this year's theme - "Changing Mountains" - all the more relevant.

Although there is no conclusive evidence that climate change increases the transmission of COVID-19, the root causes of climate change magnify the risk of global pandemics.¹ While this information has caused many to only now grow alarmed of global warming, I remember from my time in Nepal that people had already been taking action to fight it in their day-to-day lives for years. Notwithstanding the economic, political, and social marginalization that forces mountain people to face even more hardships, Nepal's mountain communities are pioneers for conservation efforts and sustainable development.

While reading and editing these articles, I was once again reminded of the insight and strength of Nepal's mountain people. Rather than lamenting the detrimental effects of COVID-19, mountain communities have been focusing on how to transform them into opportunities for improvement.

As a Korean-American observing Nepal from the United States, it is undeniable that there is much to learn from the spirit of Nepal's mountain people.

Thank you for the opportunity to read and learn from your words. I look forward to the day that I can visit you all again. Until then, I wish that your friends and families stay healthy, happy, and safe.

Stephanie Kim

2017 MS Intern from Columbia University



¹"Coronavirus and Climate Change." C-CHANGE | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 6 July 2020, www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/coronavirus-and-climate-change/.

Changing Predators Presence in Sagarmatha National Park, Khumbu Rural Municipality, Nepal

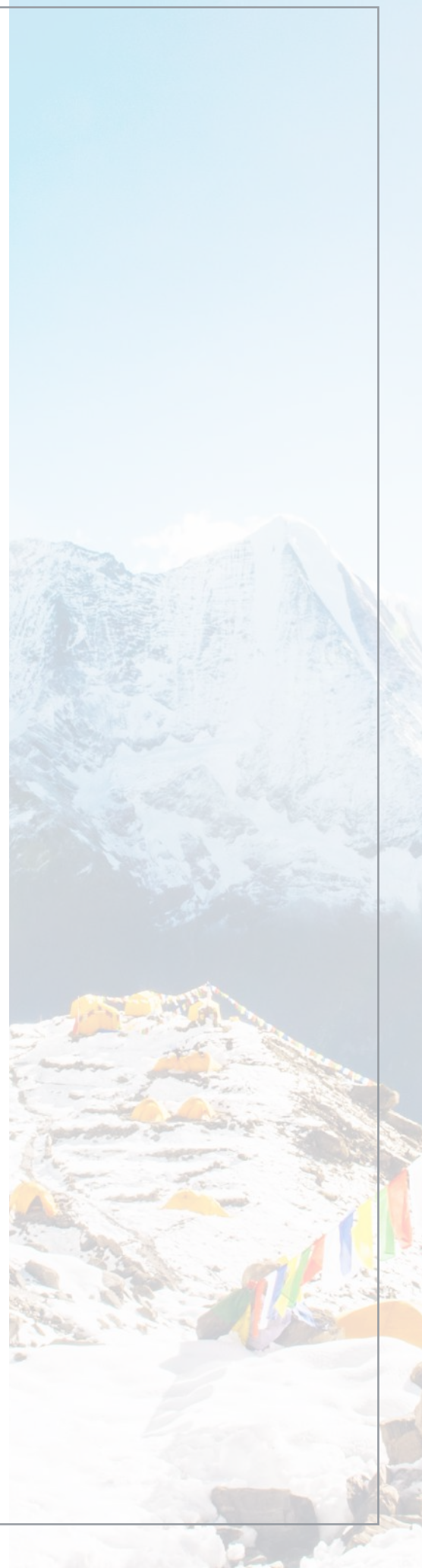
Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa (Ph.D.), Advisor

Even the most well-meaning actions can have unintended consequences. Creating a protected area is not an exception. The primary purpose of a protected area is to conserve unique natural features and the biological diversity of the country. Their benefits and costs are difficult to assess in monetary terms because of their intangible nature. However, it has been generally accepted that the protected area benefits are widely shared. At the same time, its negative impacts are mostly shouldered by the local people who live in and around the protected areas.



Starting from the mid-1970s, Nepal has established twelve national parks, six conservation areas, one wildlife reserve, and a hunting reserve. These cover nearly 18% of the total land area of the country. In terms of geographic distribution, 90% of the protected areas are located in the high mountain regions impacting the mountain people disproportionately. Five decades of conservation through protected areas have prevented habitat destruction, revived vanishing wildlife populations, and promoted tourism. These successes do come with challenges, such as the growing wildlife and people conflicts. The future of Nepal's protected area system will depend on skillful management of wildlife and people conflicts.

This article describes a recent attempt by Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) to address such a conflict. In SNP, snow leopards and wolves existed even before the creation of the Park in 1976. The difference is that before the Park, herders were free to hunt and retaliate when predator pressure crossed a certain tolerance threshold. Activities, such as setting traps, killing pups, and encouraging bounty hunters, are not entirely unheard of despite the conflict with their Buddhist conscience. After the Park, these retaliatory actions were made illegal by law, which changed the power relation between the herders and the predators.





Livestock owners are also the least benefitted group from protected area programs. Park revenue, which flows to the community through the Buffer Zone structure, hardly benefits the herders. To make the matters worse, the Park's protected wildlife damages livestock and crops, the only source of livelihood for the subsistence farmers. The only recourse available to them is to complain to the Park authorities.

After decades of a lull, the herders of the Nangpa Valley started experiencing a sharp rise in predator attacks on livestock from 2015. The problem was gradually spreading to other parts of the Park. A consultation meeting between the Park and the herders was organized in July 2017 to discuss the issue. A herder vented his frustration and said, "If you don't want to kill the wolves, you might as well kill us." As a former Warden of the Park and now an elder from the Nangpa Valley, I felt hemmed in between a rock and a hard place.

Luckily, the meeting concluded amicably with the Park making two significant promises. Firstly, it agreed to secure government funds to compensate for the livestock losses; and secondly, it promised to initiate monitoring

activities to understand the problem better and seek alternative solutions.

The Chief Warden swiftly moved into action and organized a relief package within six months. Between December 2017 and November 2018, the Park distributed Rs.400, 0000 in the form of relief. The program continues, and more funds were released subsequently, which significantly alleviated the herders. The monitoring component was delayed because of a lack of research budget and suitable manpower.

In early 2019, the Park Warden asked me to help conduct a rapid assessment of their relief program. The Nangpa Valley, which was not only severely affected by the problem but also poorly studied by previous wildlife researchers, was selected for the survey. The first priority was to determine what kinds of predators are present or absent in the study area. A meaningful investigation is not possible without some ideas of the culprits. A significant portion of the field survey was therefore devoted to tracking wild predators. This article essentially highlights the experiences and outcomes of the predator tracking component of the research.

Tracking high altitude predators is not an easy task, especially for sexagenarians. The thin air, cold conditions, and treacherous terrain make the task challenging. Getting a good night's sleep is difficult at high camps. At times, I felt that those scientists got it all wrong when they said Sherpa are genetically adapted to hypoxic conditions. Despite the difficulties, there were also plenty of rewards. Seeing a rare alpine flower in bloom, a high altitude bird in flight, an unusual evening view of a mountain, the aroma of incense rhododendron, the opportunity to listen to a knowledgeable herder, and most importantly, successful capturing of an elusive predator on camera, all keep one motivated.

The survey continued until heavy monsoon set in August, and I slipped on wet rock and injured my ankle, preventing further field travel. Nevertheless, within four months, we managed to gather solid photographic evidence of the existence of five major predator species, including a snow leopard, a common leopard, a wolf, red foxes, and brown bear paw prints.

Valuable support and encouragement were received from the Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone. The trust placed on us by the local herders were encouraging. The support from Darwin Initiative, a collaborative project of Mountain Spirit and Snow Leopard Conservancy, was invaluable. This result would not have been possible without the camera equipment received through the Darwin Initiative Project. Encounters with each predator are described below.

1. Snow leopard (*Panthera unica*). Local name: Sarken or Khang zhikh



A herder informed us that wolves had killed one of their yaks. The incident took place on the eastern slope (50%) of the Sumdur Peak (5080 m). A partially devoured carcass was found at an elevation of 4732 m. We quickly installed two camera traps around 5:00 pm and left the site immediately ensuring minimum disturbances.

The cameras were retrieved at 8:00 am the next morning. The data revealed that a snow leopard had arrived at 6:30 pm to feed. Feeding continued, off and on until 5:30 am the following day. During the 11 hours feeding frenzy, the cat disappeared and appeared four times. Intervals ranged from 30 minutes to two and a half hours.

It is re-confirmed that snow leopards are present in the Park. Questions remaining are: How many snow leopards are there in the Park? Was the cat a male or a female? Did it ambush the yak by itself, or was it simply scavenging a wolf kill? Why did the cat appear and disappear during the feed?

Was it traveling to a nearby den to regurgitate and feed its cubs?

2. Common leopard (*Panthera pardus*). Local name: Zhikh

A predator killed a several weeks old foal at a place called Lawe (3665 m), an old abandoned settlement site located about 2 km south-east of Thame Village. Lawe is surrounded by degraded birch and rhododendron forest and fenced plantations. A secondary village trail runs through the area.

The remain of the foal was found under a pile of stones placed by its owner. We dragged the carcass out into the open and installed two camera traps at dusk. The video recorded the arrival of a common leopard at 7:40 pm to feed, which confirmed the existence of common leopards at 3665 m elevation. Are the common leopards moving higher because of climate warming? Is it encroaching on snow leopard territory? Are the common leopards responsible for much of the livestock depredation in the forested area below 3700 m, including the vicinity of all major villages such as Khumjung, Khunde, Namche, and Thame?



3. Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Local name: Wa or Wazhikh

The herding settlement of Chhulung Marsal is located on a marshy flood plain below the terminus of the Pangbug glacier. There are nine huts, each associated with hayfields; only four were occupied. Herders showed the sites where predators recently killed two mature dzopkio and a calf. While Park Scout, Mishra Kaji, prepared the inspection reports, the rest of us hunted for wildlife tracks. The nearby sandy trail was full of wolf pug marks. In the evening, we moved the calf remains from the riverside to the wolf trail and installed cameras hoping to catch wolves. Instead, the footage showed a red fox, clearly distinguishable from its body shape and bushy tail with white tips. In Khumbu, the red fox is seen at elevations as low as 3700 m. This one is recorded at 4500 m elevation, almost at the upper limits of its habitat range. Red foxes are mostly scavengers and are known to follow wolf and snow leopards to take advantage of their kills.



4. Wolf (*Canis lupus*). Local name: Chanku or Chankyi

Our team of four arrived at Trincham (5057 m), a remote location halfway up the left bank of the Menlung glacier. Behind the left lateral moraine, there is a half a kilometer wide and nearly 4 km long gently sloping landscape furrowed with numerous parallel gullies.



The area is sparsely vegetated, and human disturbance is minimal. Informants told us that wolves had established dens in this locality in the past.

At one location, we found scattered animal bones of all ages transported there by wolves from elsewhere. Relatively fresh pug marks and dusting sites were seen on an exposed earth bank.

We installed several cameras using the calf legs brought from Chhulung Marsal as baits

and retreated to a secluded camp on the edge of the glacier. Eerie howls of a wolf were heard in the evening but not seen. The howling stopped at dark and started again at 5 am the next morning. We followed the direction of the howls. As we searched around, a wolf suddenly got flushed out of a gully and scampered upslope. We took pictures and watched it disappear over the side of the mountain.

Interestingly, the wolf neither touched the bait nor triggered any of the cameras. Herders told us that wolves are very reluctant to eat carcasses that have been tempered by people.

A question that came to my mind is, will the wolves sustain in SNP without the availability of livestock as substitute prey?

5. Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*).
Local name: Chhutre or Yattre (Yati)

A young herder reported that he saw a Yeti footprint while traveling to Lungsampa Valley in search of missing yaks. He got so spooked that he decided to abort the trip and came home. After hearing this, we packed our minimalist camping equipment and headed towards Lungsampa in upper Nangpa Valley. At the snout of the Sumna glacier, we veered to the left and traveled along the left lateral moraine of Sumna glaciers to head for Lungsampa. While hiking over bad trail conditions in driving rain, we kept our eyes glued to the ground, hoping to spot a yeti footprint. Footprints were finally spotted at 5000-meter elevation, in a mud pool as well as on a sandy flat. Prints in the mud were somewhat distorted, whereas those on the sand had a clear outline but were obscured by sand movement. Sherpa has a concept of a Chhutre, which is unfriendly to livestock, and Mitre, which is unfriendly to humans. Yatre (Yeti) and Mitre are believed to be the same thing. The Chhutre meets the description of a brown bear. The paw print belongs to a bear family, and it is most likely that of a Chhutre or a brown bear.

To conclude, the findings of five major predator species in the limited confines of the Nangpa Valley is somewhat unexpected and unprecedented.

Wolf and brown bear are not even pictured on the poster titled "Mammals of Sagarmatha National Park". The high predator pressure may be depressing the population of Himalayan tahr, the only notable wild prey species in the Park. The unfulfilled demand, therefore, may be shifting on to domestic livestock, causing a sudden increase in the depredation rate.



Sagarmatha National Park is a relatively small valley (1148 sq. km) surrounded by formidable mountain ranges. These topographic barriers restrict migration of species in and out of the Park, which may cause both endemism as well as

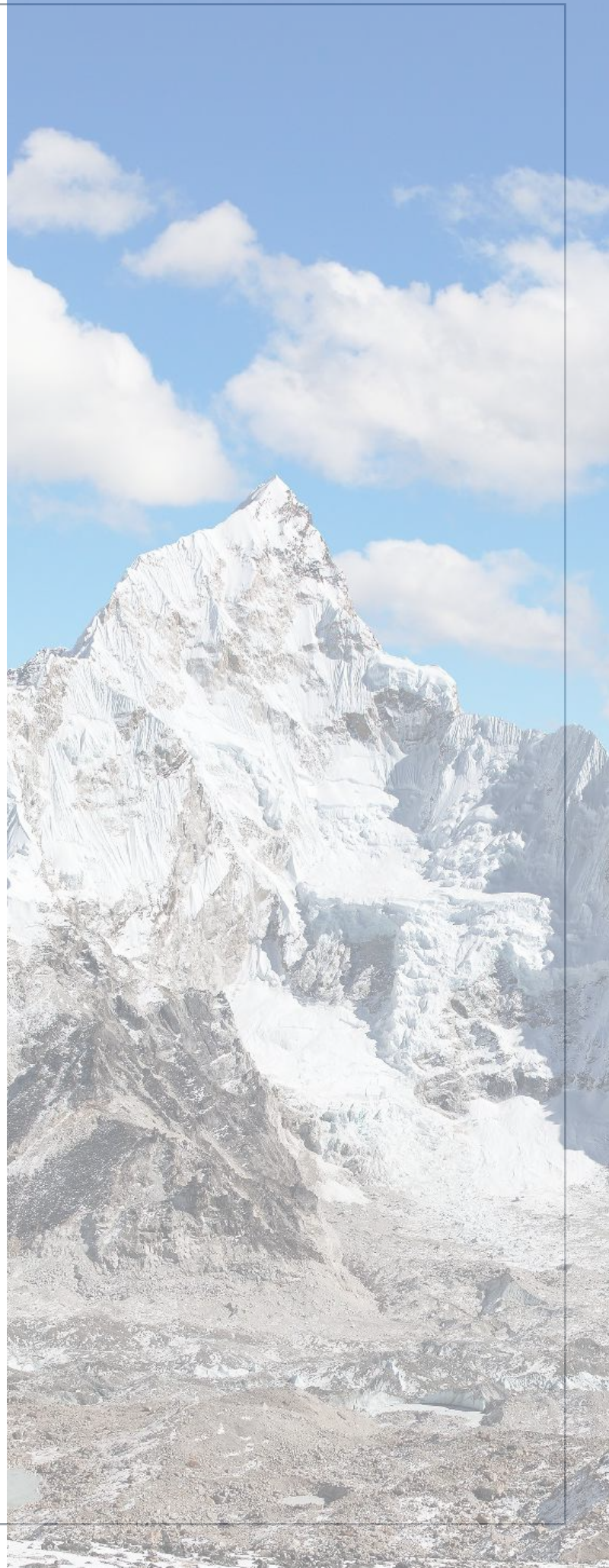
periodic local extinctions. Predators such as wolves, snow leopards, and brown bears may occasionally succeed in crossing the high passes on an opportunistic basis. It may explain their periodic absence, followed by re-colonization. The herders of the Nangpa Valley are convinced that the current wolf population got re-seeded from Tibet. They believe that a wolf pair followed the scent of the herd of yaks

driven across the Nangpa Pass from Tibet for the Shyongboche Yak Farm in 2014.

Long term predator management in the SNP, therefore, must look beyond the boundaries.

The creation of three contiguous transboundary protected areas, such as Sagarmatha National Park, Makalu-Barun National Park, and Qomolangma Nature Preserve of Tibet, have significantly increased the chances of predator survival and spread across boundaries.

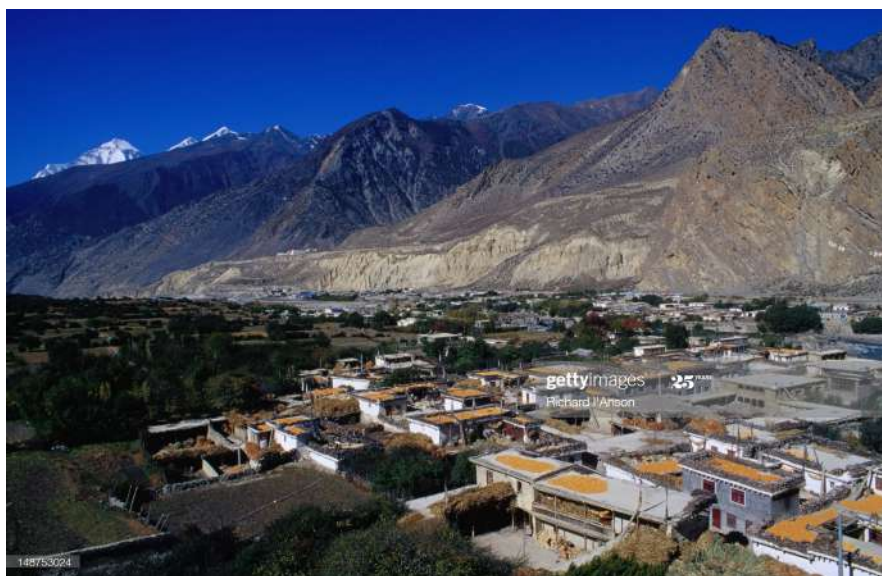
Yaks are an equally important part of the local culture and ecosystem of SNP. They have shaped the very landscapes that we are trying to preserve. Unfortunately, yaks and the yak herding tradition both face severe threats. Just as in the case of wildlife, the yaks are also trapped in the confines of the Khumbu valley and do not mix easily with outside populations. This increases the possibilities of local adaptation as well as threats of inbreeding and decline. Yak herding has become a less preferred occupation in recent years because of the influences of growing tourism and globalization. Added stress such as wildlife depredation pressure can threaten the agro-pastoral way of life. Alternately, the extended impact of Covid-19 on tourism may force local people to return to agro-pastoralism. Either way, fair and equitable resolution of wildlife and people conflict is vital for conservation of wildlife as well as protection of local livelihoods. The financial relief program of the Park must continue as part of this solution.



Changing Mountains - Is There a Price for Prosperity?

Dr. Shailendra Thakali, Advisor

During our lifetime, we experienced many changes in our home districts and villages. Our villages are no longer isolated and remote places; they have become very much part of rapidly changing global villages. Our communities are enjoying the benefits of development, and they have become much more prosperous. I have been living and working in Kathmandu since 1990. Every time I visit my village Jomsom, I feel like a stranger in my village and also left out from community affairs.



Generations I knew or grew up have either passed away or moved out like myself. There are now new, growing generations that I do not know, and they are taking charge of social and economic helms. I get amazed with on-going development activities, but we also get concerned with the growing community discontent that members have expressed or shared while in conversation with them. It makes me reflect on what we have gained and what we have lost over the decades as we embarked on the development journey.

When I was growing up in Jomsom, a small village bisected by the Kali Gandaki river and located on the lap of NilgiriHimal, Mustang district was

occupied by Tibetan freedom fighters, known as Khampas. They were mostly men, tall and well-built and skillful horse riders. They had established many high mountain posts, away from villages, along with Nepal's northern border districts. Khampas used to walk around the villages freely slinging automatic rifles over their shoulders, and some with small pistols fastened around their waists. As a child, I was intimidated, but also fascinated by their look.

Khampas were Tibetan refugees. They arrived in Mustang in the early 1960s after the annexation of Tibet in China. There is no official record of the numbers of Khampa living in Mustang during that time, but a local who was their food supply contractor told me in 2009 that there were over ten thousand, more than the local population. Khampas dominated the social and economic life of Mustang for more than a decade. They ran a chain of shops-cum-restaurants along the trail, which also served as check-posts. They built irrigation channels for villages, installed water mills, created income opportunities for locals by buying food grains, beverages

(rakshi), beer (chyang), and using horses, yaks, Dzopas (bull-yak cross breed), donkeys, and mules for transportation. Khampas injected cash into the local economy, transforming Mustang's barter-based economy into a cash-based economy. They were also feared by the local people. Khampas killed some influential local traders suspecting them of spying for China; some were forced to migrate out for good to save lives. They also occupied lands for building garrisons and indiscriminately cut forests for firewood and timber. Khampas were funded by the US government, and remoteness coupled with easy access to Tibet made Mustang a perfect place for

them to establish headquarters and wage their 'sacred war' against China. During this time, the people of Mustang had little protection or support from the government. Agriculture and livestock herding were their main occupations. They also used to travel to the south during the winter during which time they used to engage in petty trades, such as running an inn (Bhatti), selling herbs and Tibetan needle (BhoteSiu), and buying and selling sweaters from one city to another in India, etc.

to India and the remaining warriors were relocated to different locations as refugees. There's been a lot of water under the Kali Gandaki bridge since then.

After the eviction of Khampas, the district headquarters of Mustang was shifted from Daana to Jomsom, and many government offices, including permanent camps for police and armies, were established. Tourists were allowed to visit Mustang and with the opening of

health centers, and health posts across the district. There are public schools, monastic schools, and a few private boarding schools.

Mustang had no road connection before 2008. We had to risk our lives traveling through treacherous trails, crossing numerous landslides and flooded rivers during the monsoon just to get from one village to another. With road connection, Mustang is now only a day's drive away from Pokhara, and


even from Kathmandu - if roads are not washed away by landslides. Farmers of Mustang started apple orchids since the late 1970s. But they had major problems ferrying apples safely to Pokhara, and it was expensive, too. But the road connection has changed this. Traders come from the outside district and buy agriculture products directly from farmers. They no longer need to worry about harvesting, packaging, and transporting apples and local agriculture products to markets. Additionally, the local farmers are opting for growing cash crops instead of traditional crops such as buckwheat, barley, and

naked barley. Cultivation of some traditional crops such as turnips, sour buckwheat, and even garlic, despite a high market demand, is becoming less popular, and if current trends continue, they may disappear soon. Animals such as horses, donkeys, dzopas, and mules have now been replaced by jeeps, trucks, and motorcycles. Farmers no longer use dzopas for plowing fields, and instead hand tractors are used for it.



Lives for the majority of people were very tough. Mustang was a restricted district; hence, foreigners were not allowed to travel. During the mid-1970s, the US-China relationship changed with the introduction of 'the ping-pong diplomacy'. Consequently, the US withdrew its support to Khampas. The Government of Nepal launched a military operation against them. Their main commander was killed while he was trying to flee

Manangin in the early 1980s, the trek around the Annapurna circuit became one of the world's best trekking trails. The small airport near the old Jomsom that was built during the Khampa's occupation has been upgraded with regular flight services all-year-round. Most of the villages in Mustang today enjoy modern amenities, such as electricity, water taps, landline phones, mobile, and internet connections. There are hospitals,



During the construction of the road, there was a concern mainly raised by tourism operators that the road will kill tourism. On the contrary, the road has increased the volume of domestic tourists and pilgrimages by many folds. The number of international tourists is also increasing steadily although the length of stay may have been shortened. Unlike in the past, tourists - mainly domestic and Indian - visit Mustang even during monsoon and the winter periods. In the past decade, several high-quality hotels in most of the touristic villages in Mustang have been built, and this is a clear sign that the impacts of the road on tourism are a minimum. There is also a plan to build a Kali Gandaki highway that will promote trade links between China and Nepal. Once this highway comes in operation, Mustang will be one of the major transit trade corridors in Nepal, and the impacts of this on the national and local economy will be unprecedented.

Mustang is no longer is a remote and underdeveloped district. What intrigued me the most during my childhood was a strong camaraderie I had the privilege to sense between fellow villagers. Community members worked hard and together to overcome hardships and challenges. The government-funded projects in faraway districts like Mustang were very rare, and when the government grant was received for a project, they used to get overjoyed and worked hard to complete it on time. They also used to save a portion of the grant for the village fund by contributing more than their share of labor. The saving was used to finance community projects. The situation is very different now. There are government-financed projects, I/NGO financed projects, and privately funded projects. Local communities find it hard to keep track of different development projects, and more importantly give time for them. The local disengagements in community projects and welfare are increasing every year, and so has community discontent despite remarkable improvements in local lifestyle and livelihoods. Sadly, this is also undermining the trust communities once had for community leaders and between fellow members. It was the trust that held them together strongly against all odds in the past, even against the Khampa's tyranny and brutality, and it makes me wonder what lies ahead in absence of it, and more importantly, if there is a price one must pay for prosperity.

Vipassana Meditation: An Art of Living

Lhakpa Tenji Lama (Sherpa), Advisor

I awoke to the sound of a ringing bell at 4:00 am. I got myself ready to proceed to the Dhamma Hall. It was the first day of the ten-days Vipassana meditation course; I reached the Hall at 4:30 am like other students and sat on the seat that was assigned to me by the center. Orientation took place the previous evening, where the students had been briefed on the codes of conduct and the management aspects of the schedule that would set for the upcoming days of the course. Before attending the formal meditation course, following the recorded instructions of Acharya S.N. Goenka, all students take refuge to the triple gem (Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha) and take five precepts (Sila) not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie and to refrain from intoxicants. Following this, Acharya S.N. Goenka, in the recorded instructions, explained the Anapana meditation technique, and students practiced the process accordingly. For the next ten days, each one started at 4:30 am and continued until 9:00 pm, with the students aiming for at least 10 hours of meditation (with breaks). Students practice five precepts (Sila) and observe noble silence by not communicating with fellow students during the course period; however, they are free to discuss meditation questions with the teachers and material problems with the management. Each day's progress is explained during an hour-long discourse every evening.

When the world went into a lockdown due to the ongoing pandemic, it brought along both challenges and opportunities for us. Personally, it turned into an opportunity for me to learn new techniques, test them, and apply them in real life. Out of those techniques, the most fruitful one that I got to know was the Anapana meditation technique. Technology made it possible to conduct a series of webinars on different topics for the Mountain Spirit (MS) members. MS Senior Advisor, Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, who is also a Vipassana Teacher, taught the techniques for Anapana meditation in the series of sessions in the webinar. I had heard of Vipassana quite a long time ago, but it was only recently that I was able to learn and practice it in real life.



The MS webinar sessions motivated me to learn about the practice in-depth, which is what ultimately inspired me to attend the ten-day course. I had a wonderful experience and found the course very beneficial. This article is based on my experience during the ten days, along with the teaching instructions and discourses by Acharya S.N. Goenka.

Vipassana means, "to see things as they are." It is a logical process of mental purification through self-observation.

Vipassana is the meditation technique that the Shakyamuni Buddha practiced. Vipassana enables us to experience peace and harmony by purifying the mind, freeing it from suffering and the deep-seated causes of suffering. This technique helps us to understand and share practically the four-noble truths (the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering), the primary teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. Since the time of the Buddha, Vipassana has been handed down, to the present day, by an unbroken chain of teachers. Five centuries after the Buddha Shakyamuni, the technique of Vipassana disappeared from India. Acharya S.N. Goenka reintroduced Vipassana to India as well as to more than eighty other countries. Currently, there are eleven Vipassana centers in different locations of Nepal, along with 205 centers and 142 non-centers in various countries in the world.



The newest center, "Dhamma Sagar," is under construction in Lukla, Solukhumbu, in the Everest region.

Although the Buddha taught Vipassana meditation, its practice is not only limited to Buddhists. It contains nothing of sectarian nature; therefore, it is open to any members of all races, castes, faiths, or nationalities who sincerely wish to learn the technique. The technique works on the simple basis that all human beings share the same problems. For example, anger, love, and compassion do not belong to any community or creed: they are universal human qualities resulting from the purity of mind.

The practice of Vipassana meditation involves following the principles of Dhamma/Dharma, the universal law of nature. It consists of walking on the noble eightfold path, which is the foundation of Vipassana

and broadly categorized into three steps: Sila (Morality), Samadhi (Concentration, mastery of the mind), and Panna (Wisdom, an insight that purifies the mind). First, students practice Sila (Morality) following five precepts. The observation of these precepts allows the mind to calm down sufficiently to proceed further with the task at hand. Second, for the first three and a half days, students practice Anapana meditation, focusing attention on the breath. This practice helps to develop samadhi (concentration) and gain mastery of the mind. Third, this step is undertaken for the last six and a half days, which is the practice of Vipassana. It is the practice of observing the sensation on one's entire body and developing equanimity in mental structure with the clarity of Panna (wisdom, the insight that purifies the mind) and with the understanding of

Annica, the law of impermanence that all sensations sooner or later pass away. The law of nature is that all sensations have similar features of appearing and disappearing. This enables one to break the old habit of generating raga (craving) and dosa (aversion) due to pleasant and unpleasant sensations. One cannot learn this technique by merely listening or reading about it. It is imperative to attend the ten-days course with the guidance of qualified teachers. Also, the benefits of this meditation cannot be achieved without continuous everyday practice. There is no immediate miracle after this meditation; rather, the benefit depends on the individual's effort of a regular and proper exercise of the technique. The course closes on the morning of the eleventh day with the preparation of loving-kindness meditation (metta Bhavana), the sharing of the purity developed during the period with all beings. The details about the course are accessible on the website of the center - <https://shringeri.dhamma.org/>.

This ten-days course offered me an excellent opportunity to understand the real Dharma, the law of nature, and the law of impermanence. Buddha taught this technique for the liberation of all beings. However, the majority of us are not aware of this technique. Many of us perform various rituals (karma Kanda), considering that it will help us to liberate from misery, and this becomes a Dharma. The four noble truths and eight noble paths provide clear steps for liberation from suffering. Vipassana is an art of living, and it can be an excellent option to liberate by mastering one's mind. Anyone can be delivered if one practices the meditation technique correctly by following the steps of Sila, Samadhi, and Panna. I am grateful to all those who encouraged me to attend this course.

May all beings be happy!





Changing Mountains: Its Impact On The Lives of Mountain Indigenous Peoples (IPs)

Chhing Lamu Sherpa, Chair

Changes are a natural part of life, but the recent changes in the Himalayan mountains due to climate change and poorly planned socio-economic interventions are a cause of significant concern for Mountain Indigenous Peoples.

The Himalayan mountain regions covers 15% of the total area of Nepal, the hilly region covers 68%, and the Terai region covers 17%. The Sherpas, Bhote, Gurung, Thakali and Tibetans are the main Mountain Indigenous Peoples who live in Himalayan ranges. Mountains provide up to 60 percent of fresh water, which comes from highland watersheds, and over 70 to 90 percent of river flows from mountains (FAO, 2003) to provide resources for the domestic, agricultural, and industrial consumption in Nepal. The mountain is home to many flora and fauna, and it is also the source of water and

many other ecosystem services. The hills and high mountains cover around 86 percent of the total land of the country, where more than 51.60% of people live in mountains and hills. Climbing and mountain trekking attract a high percentage of national tourism in Nepal.

The mountains are home to a rich array of fauna, flora, the source of water and many other ecosystem services - more perhaps than we can imagine. However, mountain communities in Nepal face many challenges, including disproportionate allocation of public resources, poor infrastructure, poverty, food insecurity, deforestation, landslides, and the fragile mountain ecosystem. Mountain ecosystems are extremely vulnerable to climate change and its consequences, such as rapid glacier melting, which are far-reaching and potentially shocking. There are more than 130 glacial lakes in Nepal. These lakes threaten the livelihoods and lives of tens of thousands of people who live in some of the world's most remote areas.

One resident stated, "If the lakes burst above the villages up in the



Everest area, up between 12,000 to 13,000 feet, there are villages all the way downstream, and they will wipe [away] some of these villages. The danger is real."

Indigenous peoples are the first to feel the calamitous consequences of climate change; their survival depends on their close relationship with the environment and the resources therein. These impacts include political and economic marginalization, loss of land and resources, human rights violations, discrimination, and unemployment. For example, in Sindhupalchok, disasters continue, and the number of dead, injured, and displaced increases every year. Recently a significant landslide swept away an entire community in Sindhupalchowk, resulting in the death of 156 Indigenous People, many missing people, and the displacement of 400 households (Kathmandu Post). This village was among several villages in the area that have been identified as 'unsafe' and 'vulnerable to landslides' by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority after the 2015 earthquake.

The authority informed local units about areas vulnerable to landslides and disasters. The ward chairperson claimed that his office asked for help from the provincial and federal governments. Still, no one took responsibility for the lives that could have been saved if the authorities were responsible. Worse yet, the homeless in those poor, rural communities do not have access to proper shelter or any form of adequate support from the government.

Sun Maya, a local survivor, stated, "The government only pays attention to the people living in disaster-prone areas after people have died and their homes destroyed. We had long been asking the authorities to move us to safer locations, but they did not listen. Had the villagers been relocated to a safer location, there would've been no casualties today."

Local communities own traditional knowledge and best practices in managing and enhancing the resilience of fragile mountain ecosystems and the mountain agriculture systems, but their voices often go unheard. Multi-scale engagement of stakeholders with a range of interests and perspectives results in a better understanding of local biodiversity and sustainable mountain agricultural systems. It enables the effective positioning of mountain farming systems and the voice of mountain farming communities in the national and global debate on sustainability.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also hitting the indigenous mountain people hard. Some of the specific issues include lack of access to basic amenities, such as health, water, soap, and sanitizer. Lack of knowledge and understanding of the disease tend to be serious because most of the guidelines are in English or Nepali.

The engagement in the informal economy and returning overseas workers, many of whom are indigenous people, increase the potential risk of spreading COVID-19 in their communities due to lack of not having health reports disaggregated by ethnicity in Nepal. The current situation of mountain tourism, which is the primary source of income for many mountain indigenous communities are negatively impacted.

These are extremely tough times for everyone. It is time to reflect and renew our relationship with the nature and our environment. Our emotional health would benefit if we cared about others and developed compassion. I hope the post-COVID-19 world will be a more peaceful, healthy, and happier one.



Global Warming: Changing the Himalayas

Ang Phinjo Sherpa, Vice Chair

For a layman, the simplest definition of global warming would be the 'increase in the average temperature of the earth.' This directly affects Pakistan, Nepal, India, China, Bhutan, and Afghanistan as the Himalayan Mountain peaks linger over them. Rivers, such as the Yangtze, the Brahmaputra, and the Ganges, glide over the Himalayan ranges, and the total sewerage gulf houses over 1.3 billion people.

Increase in the earth's temperature and erratic weather patterns are causing glaciers and permafrost to melt at higher rate, resulting in the disruption of reliable water sources for millions. It is causing more natural disasters, and the mountain dwellers are the ones who are most affected by such changes.



A climate scientist at ICIMOD, Mr. Arun Shrestha says, "Even if global warming is limited to 1.5° [Celsius, or 2.7° Fahrenheit] by the end of the century – and you could call it a miracle if that happens – the high mountains are likely to warm even more." He said the number will rise to at least 3° Fahrenheit by the middle of the century, which is quite a significant increase.

And there could be continuous rises in the temperature without coordinated global efforts to minimize the greenhouse gas emissions. If we continue on the current emissions path and do not make a new approach, then it could be worse. We might face even higher rates of warming around the globe.

As the chief scientist at the ICMOD, Phillipus Wester says, "Mountains matter, and it's time we start paying attention to them." We need to focus on reducing carbon emissions and to adopt more means of environmentally friendly and sustainable development.

Similarly, we can observe in our mountain areas and communities that the snowfall and rain patterns are changing as the climate has warmed. This reduces the glaciers that serve as a key water source to the farmer as it normally melts slowly through the springtime - right when they need water to get their crops planted. And usually, there is snow in the summer when the powerful monsoon cool breeze enters up into the mountains. But the monsoon has weakened in recent decades, causing less snow fall in the mountains that feeds the glaciers. If the monsoon weakens in days to come then the farmer may face severe complications caused by disruption of critical water supplies.

Changes to the glaciers can have another effect besides reduction in the glaciers and its effect on the farmers. As the glacier melts at a higher rate, more water is collected in the ponds and lakes. These lakes grow very quickly and the water that is collected is more than it can hold. Due to this reason, there are more frequent devastating lake outbursts, floods, and avalanches.

Alejandra Borunda and Rekha Jain of the National Geographic stated, "Since the 1980s, the changing climate conditions have driven an uptick in the disaster risk in the region... which will ramp up in the future... Now, a coherent picture has emerged. And what it shows is a region that will face enormous challenges in the coming years... The region, with its millions of residents and important resources for the downstream neighbors, has not gotten the international attention it deserves."

We can't hide and make excuses now saying there is not enough research studies; we have already seen the consequences. We know enough now to take action.

Hyolmo Language: The Foundation of Identity and History of Living Civilization

Tashi Lama Hyomo, General Secretary

Language is the gift blessed by our ancestors, and every ethnicity feels pride over their ethnicity, language, and culture. The native language constitutes one's identity, and we must preserve it. All native language speakers have to respect their mothers and their mother-tongues. Not only do we need to treasure our mother-tongue orally, but we should also cherish it in our hearts with respect. We should always take our mother-tongue as our own and keep it that way forever. We should accept it with honor deep from our soul. To preserve one's language is to feel pride over one's mother, who introduces us to the world. We should assimilate the cultural aspects of our community, such as folk-languages, dances, customs, traditions, musical instruments, indigenous scripts, historical heritages, unwritten histories, etc. as the emblem of our ancestors.

A specific language of Hyolmo indigenous ethnic groups exists to date as a powerful medium of conversation between these ethnic groups. Hyolmo is a language under the Tibeto-Burman language family, and in this language, meanings can be identified based on word-pronunciation. It has been considered mandatory to use the right words according to age and relationship. We all know that the Hyolmo community has subscribed to Himalayan Mahayana Buddhism. The script is vital for the development of a language. We are the community able to showcase our identities of language, writing, religion, and culture as per the regulations of the Mahayana Buddhist community based on the holy scripture written in Sambhota script; we perform our rituals from birth to death under it. In the historical age, Hyolmo language was used in written documents like letters, monastery documents, court papers, reports, stories, and songs. But due to the “one country, one language” policy of Nepal, the use of this language deteriorated in written form, and now it is limited to oral use only.

Now, under article 32 of the Constitution of Nepal, the provision of language and culture is considered among fundamental rights. Each citizen and community have the right to use his or her language, participate in cultural life, and protect and promote his or her language, script, culture, civilization, and cultural heritage.

Similarly, the formation of the Language Commission, as directed by Article 287 of the Constitution of Nepal, has shown some positive signs for the development of the protection of languages of the indigenous ethnic groups.



The language of the Hyolmo ethnic group is unique from the language of any other ethnicity. It has its unique style in use and in speaking. We can find different dialects among the Hyolmo speakers based on their location, but these dialects are not considered a brand-new language. This difference is due to the synonyms in Hyolmo language and the variations in pronunciation. Even though the government agencies did provide assistance or benefits in the past, we can find the contribution on a personal and organizational level for the continuation, protection, and development of the Hyolmo language. We can still find lyrical anthologies, stories, official documents, legal documents, and house owner certificates written in Hyolmo language in the rural areas. We can see positive works, initiatives, and achievements regarding the language of Hyolmo indigenous ethnic groups.



- On Mangsir, 2033 BS, "Thindel" lyrical anthology was published, which anthologized the songs in the Tamang and Hyolmo language. Nho Babu Lama Hyolmo Nenyenba, Sunita Lama Hyolmo Nenyenba, and Dawa Gyalmu Lama Hyolmo had collected Hyolmo songs in the anthology.
- The Hyolmo Foundation tried to anthologize lyrics of Hyolmo language in three publications titled "Dhingsang Hyolmo" in 2053, 2054, and 2056.
- In the month of Chaitra in 2053 BS, a discussion was carried out on the Hyolmo language in a three-day Hyolmo culture analysis workshop seminar jointly organized by the Hyolmo Foundation and Community Independence Service Centre, Kiul.
- In the year 2060 BS, Swiss citizen, Anna Maria, had published a lyrical anthology in the Hyolmo language titled "Hyolmo Lu."
- A one-day seminar was organized on Chaitra 3, 2060 BS, for the preparation of the publication of curriculum books in the Hyolmo language.
- Also, in 2061 BS, some lyrics of the Hyolmo language were collected in the publication "Hyolmo Jyalga." There are two publications of "Hyolmo Jyalga."
- Swiss citizen, Anna Maria Hari, had published the Hyolmo–Nepali–English dictionary in the year 2061 BS.
- Among different papers presented by other indigenous ethnic groups on the publication of Mother Language - part 1, a paper presentation on the mother language of the Hyolmo indigenous nationalities group was also included.
- Music albums in the Hyolmo language have been released at various times.
- "Jalpari," a telefilm directed by Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansha Acharya, was dubbed into the Hyolmo language by the initiative of Hyolmo people residing in America.
- Community FM radio stations air Hyolmo language programs, and weekly television programs are broadcasted through Indigenous Television.
- Similarly, a documentary and several films have been produced in the Hyolmo language.
- Books, such as Hyolmo Shyeshagi Team, the Hyolmo traditional writing system, and Hyolmo Lu have been published.
- Folklore in the Hyolmo language has been published in collaboration with the Language Commission of Nepal.

These initiatives are admirable and have made a particular contribution to the development of the Hyolmo language. They will inspire the continuation of works in the Hyolmo language that are more powerful and credible in upcoming days.

Though campaigns have been launched for the promotion of written Hyolmo language to some extent, it has mostly been used in oral form. Hence, it is very much essential to introduce some reliable programs with great importance to promote Hyolmo in written form. Organizations under Hyolmo society should actively operate as a facilitator for archiving the Hyolmo language and for developing the Hyolmo language. The Hyolmo Foundation, in association with the Himalayan Indigenous Society-Nepal, has conducted a campaign to archive and develop the Hyolmo language and to contribute to the protection and promotion of the language among the youths of the Hyolmo community in the future. Moreover, the SIL International and Mother Language Center Nepal has been providing technical support to some extent.

Though we are facing several problems in the preservation of the Hyolmo language, art, culture, and tradition and for conducting developmental programs, we can see that initial steps have been put forward for archiving the Hyolmo language so that there will be no such problems for the youths of upcoming generations.

To experience an uplifted situation of the Hyolmo language, the following achievements are essential:

- An environment where each family can speak the Hyolmo language quickly.
- An environment where Hyolmo people are following their religion and culture regularly.
- The availability of curriculum books in the Hyolmo language.
- The wide use of the Sambhota script.
- The use of the Hyolmo language in media.
- The availability of schools that teach in the Hyolmo language.
- The availability of enough trainers in the Hyolmo language.
- The use of the Hyolmo language in government documents inside the Hyolmo region.
- An environment where non-Hyolmo people are also learning and speaking the Hyolmo language.

The language that exists in society as the conversational form is called the living language. There is no doubt that Hyolmo is a living language as children of the Hyolmo community use it with correct pronunciation. It should be promoted by keeping it as a formal language under the provision of mother language education. As education has a vital role in the development of the Hyolmo language and community, all Hyolmo people should be educated in the first place. Due to this reason, it is compulsory to educate children located in the Hyolmo area on the importance of the language up until the primary level.

According to the educationists, organizing education programs in the mother tongue can help students in their education and minimize the school dropout rate. Moreover, it can also assist in creating a child-friendly environment. Educating the youth in their mother tongue will safeguard the native language for an extended period. Identifying language with script, culture, costume, and increasing affinity of folk culture in the community will add additional value. It will create an environment of co-existence in the community and play a significant role in maintaining ethnic harmony.

It is crucial to have correct pronunciation in any language as incorrect pronunciation deteriorates language. To pronounce a Hyolmo word, there is a requirement of Hyolmo-ness. Language without correct pronunciation is like a flower without any fragrance and liveliness. Therefore, it is a social crime to make fun of language.

An essential aspect of language archiving includes the use of script as well as the arrangement and context of the letter; there is no argument in agreeing that the Sambhota script is the primary and original script. This script carries the actual pronunciation of the Hyolmo language. It is not appropriate to use a holy script like Sambhota haphazardly without studying its dignity and significance. As Mahayana Buddhists believe Sambhota script is a godly script, it cannot be written haphazardly and misused. Sambhota is also the linguistic script of the people of Tibet as well as the Himalayan Buddhist community of Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh, and Sikkim.

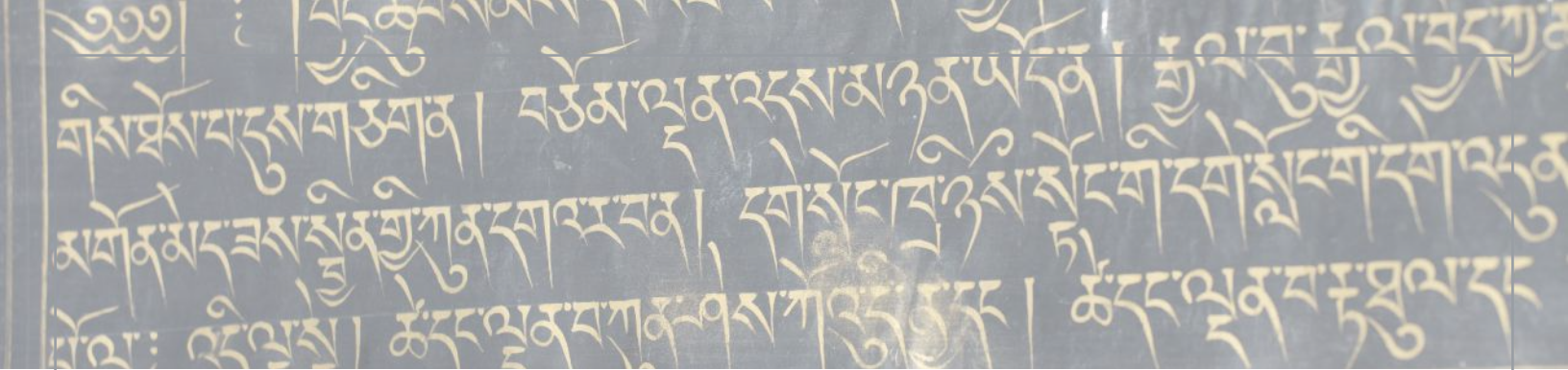
Using the script in a community that has carried religious importance shows the feeling of co-existence. Still, it seems there is a need for in-depth study and practice before bringing its use in the community. For this, a group of people who have sound knowledge of the Hyolmo language should form, and discussions should be organized regarding the use of the Sambhota script. Additionally, experts in Sambhota script should come together, and special projects related to Hyolmo language writing should be organized.

According to linguists, simple writing composition is critical for the development and stability of a language. The simplest writing composition can make the vast popularity of that language. The most straightforward, scientific writing system of language can improve the flow of a language. Many practices must expand the knowledge area of the new generation by comprising various subjects relating to the original identity of the Hyolmo ethnicity.



As Hyolmos believe in Buddhism, they have studied and practiced Sambhota script per the Gurukul tradition under the monastery education system. As the writing and reading activities of Sambhota script are limited to the Lama poniard, laymen cannot read nor write the script. The Hyolmo language needs to consider this exclusion a serious matter because it misses the opportunity to expand the knowledge area of the new generation. As an example of this, we can take the Sanskrit language, which has been promoted by the government with special priority in Nepal. On the one hand, the Sanskrit language seems limited to the religious adoration and external language, and it is currently not a mother-tongue of any society. On the other hand, with the evolution of that language, Nepali and Hindi languages have prevailed as a result of the massive usage of Devanagiri.

In the same way, the holy writing of the Bhot language, written by a Himalayan Buddhist in the Sambhota script, has been used respectfully. Subject to the practical application of the Sambhota script, it has stabilized as an ethnic language in the Himalayan region of Nepal and has been used continuously as an identical component. Thus, it seems that there is a need to discuss the slight



changes in the pronunciation of the term written in religious books and the term used in spoken language. In the context of Hyolmo society, uses of the Hyolmo language only exist in religious books; it is not used amongst Tibetan residents and other societies. Moreover, there are many cases in which the term written in religious books and the practical application of the term differ.

Correct writing depends on the pronunciation and whether the term is written in the Bhot language or is used for a primitive time as a daily spoken language. Thus, it seems that a record of the language must be kept and discussed intensely. If all Himalayan society languages have been written according to the Bhot language, will native tribe's origin be lost? Should the offense of Tibetan residents be tolerated? Is the use of the Hyolmo language in daily behavior needed if the writing composition is developed to use the Sambhota script according to the pronunciation with a simple method? To facilitate the development of the Hyolmo language in a long-term manner, the Sambhota script must be used. Its effectiveness exists due to the connections that laymen have made between the script, religion, and culture.

The domination of Devanagiri and Roman script has to be taken into account. Due to the lack of a specific book, it will take a long time to make a book of Sambhota script. It is therefore essential for us to document it in Devanagiri for the preservation and conservation of the term, literature, story, and music that is collapsing day by day.

Although the Sambhota script remains very close, to fulfill the instant need for preservation of the Hyolmo language, the book titled, "Hyolmo Language Writing Composition" was published with the engagement of experts, initially for the use of Devanagari. For the development and the arrangement of letters of the Hyolmo language, various books, newspapers, articles and films have practiced carrying out the task of record-keeping and dictionary formation.

There are some problems in putting down the Hyolmo tongue to a Devanagari script. However, it is not possible to skip and separate them instantly. This script has been entrenched deeply into the Hyolmo way of life. Children of the Hyolmo society go to the government and private schools for formal education, and they are taught in Devanagari and Roman script. It also seems that the previous generation of Hyolmo had used the Devanagari script; hence, we cannot avoid the reality in which the Devanagari script has prevailed. Self-scholars also use this script often. If we keep creating the controversy concerning the script, then the knowledge of Hyolmo will end. Therefore it is vital to understand the critical situation: until the writing composition of the Hyolmo language is consistent and easy to learn and the practical guideline is done in Sambhota script, we should use the Devanagari script as an option.

A lengthy discussion on which script should prevail for the preservation and development of the Hyolmo language concluded that for recent times Devanagari would be used for writing. When facilitating the development of a language, there is a need to look ahead by keeping pronunciation in consideration and creating books, publications, audios, videos, and apps in the language. Thus, the use of Roman in informal communication media and social networks demonstrate that we can also use Roman as needed.

This step must be taken to promote the Hyolmo language; its development must bring awareness of Hyolmo society all around the world to avoid a collapse of the Hyolmo language, especially to the younger generations. It will help them realize the importance of their language and guide the future generation to have precise, practical, and effortless pronunciation.

Language is the means of presenting one's wills, desires, feelings, and perceptions of human beings, and it has played a vital role in the daily lives of all humans. Language is the core structure of every society and plays a vital role in the preservation of human rights, peace creation, and durable development sectors. Enough knowledge can come from this. Due to the lack of writing tradition and practice, everyone should understand the fact that day by day, the Hyolmo language is getting closer and closer to collapsing. In this time, as a result of modernization and globalization with the development of science and technology, the new generation has the opportunity to learn new things.

Given the situation in various language speakers around the world who can only greet in their mother-tongue and the situation in which many have forgotten their originality, we cannot say that it will be easy to find our language, culture, and tradition.

According to the population census of 2068 BS, there are 123 languages which are spoken as the mother-tongue (first language) in Nepal. The Hyolmo language is categorized as an endangered language by a group of language experts. We must preserve the language, which has been created by our elders over thousands of years. The maintenance of this language is a huge responsibility of every dutiful son. In the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) Act, 2058, 'Indigenous and nationalities' refer to the ethnicity or society that have their mother tongue and traditional culture, unique cultural identity, unique social structure, and written or non-written history. All mother-tongues of Nepal have the right to be a national language. They can achieve education in their mother-tongue and bring about action by presenting at the government court in their language.

The United Nations decided that 2019 AD would be celebrated as the international language year of native tribes. It would push for the prosperity, development, peace, and unity of languages that are in danger of collapsing into the international area.

Its goal is to collaborate with the international society, members of the United Nations, and native societies to spread awareness about the need for the revival, preservation, and promotion of native languages.

Statistics from UNESCO estimate that out of a total of 7000 languages, one collapses every 14 days, and about half of the languages face the threat of collapsing in this century.

Article 13 of ILO 169 and UNDRIP indicates that there needs to be a revival of the written language from a tribe's history. Oral tradition, philosophy, writing systems, and literature must deliver the name, location, and people of a society to future generations and a way to maintain it.

Therefore, it is significant for a native tribe to preserve its mother-tongue. UNESCO has also emphasized the preservation of old language, culture, and art.



In the Hyolmo region and the areas where the majority of Hyolmo indigenous people reside, it is crucial to prioritize the study of mother-tongue. In the present situation, it is legally possible to use the Hyolmo language as an administrative language at the local level, including Helambu Rural Municipality. If we apply and include the Hyolmo language in subjects, such as history and culture, and in curriculum and books, we can deem that a meaningful mother-tongue development exists in education. According to the managed provision of the Government of Nepal, the monastery education system operating in the Hyolmo area should validate the preservation of history, philosophy, art, culture, and architecture of the Buddha religion. Additionally, there should be a search for old and original Himalayan herbal treatment procedures (Aamchi). The pretension plan to establish the Hyolmo Buddhist Academic Institute should also be constructed. It seems that organizations related to the Hyolmo indigenous should be united in an organized and effective manner. These organizations should make efforts through long-term preparation, planning, and strategies focused on the development of the Hyolmo language. Hyolmo natives must engage in the preservation, enrichment, and development of the time relative Hyolmo language through the study, research, and exploration of the various subjects of Hyolmo decency. We must also keep record, analyze, and share the information.

A Visit to the Forbidden Kingdom of Lo-Manthang

Anita Lama Gurung, Executive Member

My visit to Upper Mustang, one of the remotest districts in Nepal, known as the Forbidden Kingdom, was eye-opening in every sense. For the first time in my life, I was so up close to the mountains in the south, and the Tibetan Plateau in the north stretched right next to me. Astonished, overwhelmed, and speechless don't quite justify what I felt during my first encounter with this vast landscape, famous for its cultural and natural diversity and a meeting point of the Eastern and Western Himalayas.

Mustang also happens to be my husband's hometown, so I had more reason than one to visit this hidden gem of Nepal. This vast and beautiful landscape in the backdrop was undoubtedly a sight to behold. But with a closer look, I couldn't help notice the panorama weathered by erosion and beaten down by wind, rain, and snow – a clear picture of what the exposure to harsh climatic conditions has done to this contrarily magnificent landscape and its resilient inhabitants.



Mani Thang – Mani means Jewel and Thang means Plain

The scarce grass painted a bleaker picture in the region, and scrawny animals barely had any fodder to feed on.

Locals narrated to us stories about the prolonged drought where they had nothing to eat and the harsh winter that took away the lives of yaks, goats, and other wild animals. The locals had been forced to migrate to riverbeds to avoid the drying up of spring sources and the severity of the weather. Among the villages that have moved to lower regions include Deh and Samjong.

The prolonged drought in summer with quick-drying water sources, the erratic rainfall in monsoon resulting in flash floods, and the heavy snowfall in winter in a short period speak of the sad state of the communities that live in in this semi-desert. Amidst all this, locals now grow apples in the area, which was otherwise unfit for any kind of plantation; although a boon, it is a clear indication of rising temperatures leading to rapid but erratic snowmelt.

While this forbidden kingdom continues to shoulder the impact of climate change, it also bears testimony to great cultural significance. Concentrated with artistic monuments that are over 500 years old, each monument in Upper Mustang has a story to tell. Luri Gumba is one such monastery – the first and the oldest ones built in a cave with a unique tale to tell. According to Buddhist Mythology, the stupa self-manifested itself, and people believe that a man is also seated inside the cave in meditation. At the same time, his descendants live in a near-by secular village of Yara, which is about two hours away.



KatamRhangzung: Katam means Stupa and Rhangzung means self-manifested

Nyakpas, are locally called Duhwa, lama practitioners or monks who are known to perform a fierce ritual of Vajrayana – driving evil with good and conducting death sky burials, an ancient tradition of feeding the dead bodies to birds. It is said that to attain the ability to perform such rituals with deities, these Nyakpas are required to spend three years, three months, and three days in a cave in solitude and conduct an overnight visit to at least 108 cremation grounds, 108 springs, and 108 caves. Over a few hundred years ago, one such enlightened lama on a full-moon day in July happened to visit Tibet to pay homage and came face to face with His Holiness, Dalai Lama in Tibet.

ManiGhang – Mani means Jewel and Ghang means Hill-Cave



As the tradition went, monks from thousands of monasteries across Tibet, after competing regionally, were brought to the Potala Palace in Lhasa to perform a mask dance ritual in front of the Dalai Lama, his cabinets, and aristocrats on a full-moon day in July. During one such occasion, Lama Kunsang, a Nyakpa from Luri Gumba, accidentally visited the palace at the time of the dance ritual. When asked by a guard in the palace as to what he thought about the dance, Lama Kunsang had average things to say about the performance – in his words, ‘It was okay.’ While the entire kingdom praised the dance as one of the best they had seen, Kunsang’s response provoked the guard and the others who started beating him. When Dalai Lama saw what was happening, he enquired about the scene and sent a message back to the guards asking them to allow the monk to perform – sensing there was something exceptional about the man.

Lama Kunsang agreed to perform Karma Kateu, a popular dance form of the Kagyupa tradition of Bhutan. He put on his costumes, wore his mask, and grabbed a thunderbolt on the one hand and a bell on the other. The minute he started dancing, putting his right foot out, people heard thunder in a clear sky. Upon putting out his left foot, more thunders were heard. As soon as the monk started dancing in circles, people saw a rainbow accompanied by slight drizzles and more thundering. When he circled the second time, his body seemed to have disappeared, and the audience could only see an apparition of a rainbow moving. His extraordinariness blew everyone’s mind, and they bowed down to him in honor.

That was the day Kunsang received the name Jah Luh. Jah means rainbow, and Luh means body, and Kunsang Jah Luh became a famous saint not just in Upper Mustang and Nepal but also in all of Tibet. Lama Jah Luh wished for more people to learn the ritual, the art to perform and attain Buddhahood. So, he led the construction of another monastery where more people could receive the divine intervention but didn’t live long enough to see it to completion.

It is said that on the day of the construction of the monastery over 100 years ago, water sprouted on its own in the construction site, and the water source dried the day the building was complete.

While this tradition of practicing solitude to gain the ability to perform rituals like Vajrayana and receive the embodiment of a rainbow continues, the region, on the whole, is under severe threat accelerated by climate change. In the given scenario, there is an urgent need to protect this cultural heritage that is losing its value not just to climate change but also to the lack of attention and investment.

Every occurrence in the region, which some call miracles and other normalcy, are associated with climate and the change it has seen over the years. Be it the sprouting water spring, or drying of it, or the warmer weather that has given rise to apple farming, Lo-Manthang in its glory continues to remain threatened and vulnerable to both disappearing culture and advancing climate change.

Photos: © Ghana S. Gurung, PhD

The COVID-19 Pandemic: The Challenges and Opportunities for Mountain Communities of Solukhumbu

Ang Rita Sherpa, Life Member

1. BACKGROUND OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic¹ at the beginning of 2020, Nepal imposed a nationwide lockdown on March 24, 2020. The government issued a travel advisory against non-essential travel to countries hit hardest by the disease, including China, Iran, South Korea, Japan, and Italy. Nepal decided to suspend on-arrival tourist visas for all countries, with an exception to diplomatic and official visas, to last from March 14 to April 30.



Likewise, the government closed land border entry points for third-country nationals and canceled all mountain climbing expeditions, including Mount Everest, from March 14 to April 30.

All international flights were closed from March 22 and vehicular movement on long routes from March 23. Additionally, the Nepal Tourism Board announced the suspension of the issuance of trekking permits. Nepal also decided to close its land border with India and China for a week since March 23. As the situation worsened, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation called off the Visit Nepal Year 2020 campaign.

2. IMPACTS ON MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a mixture of both positive and negative impacts in the country. The following are the negative and positive effects of the disease based on my observation and information derived from various sources.

3. NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Mountain communities, such as Solukhumbu, were very excited and happy when the government of Nepal declared the Visit Nepal 2020 initiative to attract two million visitors this year. Likewise, at the beginning of the year, there was excitement when the government introduced winter sports in the mountains offering substantial economic opportunities.

3.1 EFFECTS ON TOURISM BUSINESS IN SOLUKHUMBU

The Sherpa's happy smile turned to a frown when Nepal closed its borders, shut down international travels, issued at-home orders, and postponed Visit Nepal 2020. Likewise, when the government of Nepal decided to cancel all trekking and climbing permits to keep both tourists and their people safe, the local people's excitement was greatly diminished.

¹Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is an ongoing global pandemic.



Approximately 60 flights per day were canceled during the peak tourism season, and Tenzing Hillary airport became silent. The effects of the coronavirus pandemic are widespread, reaching even the most remote corners of the earth, including the Everest region, where the virus is inflicting cascading impacts upon mountain tourism and local well-being.

Being a mountainous country, Nepal is a major destination for tourists. The Everest Region is one of the most significant trekking and mountaineering destinations in the world. The Everest region ranks second after the Annapurna Region in terms of the number of tourists visiting different areas of Nepal. Tourism is also a major source of revenue for this region. In 2019, more than 60,000 tourists - approximately ten times the local population - visited the Khumbu region of Sagarmatha National Park as trekkers and mountaineers with pre-COVID-19 prices.

Tourism has greatly benefited the Sherpas of Khumbu by providing them with the opportunity to work as guides and porters. Many Sherpa of the Khumbu region works exclusively for mountain expeditions. These are locally understood as a prestigious and well-paying occupation. By providing locals with these jobs, their standard of living has improved.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the area has fallen silent for over six months. Once one of the busiest expeditions of Mt. Everest during the trekking season, the tiny airport of Lukla is now quiet. With this pandemic, tourism in the Solukhumbu region has taken a dramatic financial hit. These decisions have resulted in the suffering of guides, guesthouses, teashops, hotels, and lodges. Most Sherpa families are experiencing significant adversity with the loss of this income.

Additionally, the lodges and the hotels in Solukhumbu have pre-purchased goods and materials for the upcoming tourism season, as off-season transport is, of course, less expensive.

The tourism sector has reported hardship due to the absence of tourists and the various travel restrictions imposed upon travel globally. As a result of lowered demand, the domestic airlines struggled for survival as ticket prices dropped to half or a third of pre-COVID-19 costs. The number of international flights to and from Nepal had decreased by more than 50% by March 13, 2020.

3.2 FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT

Both men and women often travel to Japan and countries in Europe, such as Austria, France, Italy, Norway, and elsewhere, for additional income-producing labor. Many households from Khunde and partially from Khumjung have members that travel to Norway to work during the monsoon seasons to make extra incomes.

They are often employed in Norway to build trails inside national parks and some reserves in the mountains. They have earned good reputations for building excellent and durable trails inside the parks and reserves of Norway. Due to this pandemic, approximately 60 households from Khunde and Khumjung missed this opportunity for foreign employment this year.

3.3 POACHING FLORA AND FAUNA INSIDE PARK



During the continued lockdown, there has been an understandable slacking in the monitoring of wildlife; this is partly the result of significantly reduced movement during the COVID-19 lockdown. As a result of this, the country saw a surge in the killing of endangered and innocent wildlife under the cover shadow of the coronavirus lockdown.



Many animals were killed throughout the parks and reserves of Nepal, including the Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone. In late April 2020, six Himalayan Musk Deer (*Moschus moschiferous*), listed as an endangered species by IUCN, were found dead inside the park. Solukhumbu District Police arrested nine people in connection to the musk deer killings. The park also encountered the illegal cuttings of Laligurans (*Rhododendron arboreum*), the national flowers of Nepal, for construction of the houses and lodges inside the park.

4. POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Recent research conducted by western medical experts found that Sherpa people are capable of resisting COVID-19 due to the physiological structure of their lungs and the lower number of RBC or red blood cells.

4.1 CORONAVIRUS SHUTDOWN GIVES KHUMBU'S NATURE A RESPITE

The COVID-19 pandemic is stifling the movement of humans all over the planet; this has given nature everywhere a respite. Carbon emissions have dipped. Almost no carbon monoxide is in the air, and sulfur dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere have dropped.

Likewise, the mountains of the Himalayas, including the Mount Everest peak, have received a much-needed respite after the government canceled all expeditions and treks from the mountains for the spring climbing season.

The mountains have been overused, as can be seen by an international uproar last year after a traffic jam on the summit ridge of Mount Everest went viral. Many men are involved in the climbing and guiding livelihoods, and many are engaged in migrant labor. They have not been involved in many of the common activities of their communities.

The Covid-19 pandemic now provides these men with the opportunity to contribute to the various immediate needs of their community. Many have now become involved in small local level infrastructures projects focused on preserving the environment, preserving cultural heritage, improving trails and helipads of the Khumbu area, and fulfilling local laws and environmental regulation requirements.

With the onset of the pandemic in the country, the tourist-based income to the region fell sharply. Yet, many difficult social and environmental problems were circumstantially mitigated as well. There is less risk for guides as no treks are being taken; there is less pollution and no overcrowding because tourists have fled. However, it is not a permanent solution. The same problems will return when the pandemic is over unless revisions to the current tourism industry are made.

4.2 TRAIL IMPROVEMENT IN THE TREKKING ROUTE OF KHUMBU



The effects of damaged trails and main trekking destinations to Mount Everest have been felt by thousands of trekkers, guides, porters, and local people despite high entry fees. The local people of Khumjung have utilized their time in lockdown by improving those inadequate infrastructure features along the trekking trail.

Many of the complaints or problems presented by trekkers have been improved or resolved. This is important as the trails and bridges are an essential component of the program where the walking tracks are the only means of travel for both visitors and local people. As the lifeline of mountain communities, damage to trails and bridges continually poses a severe challenge to local inhabitants.

The Sherpas of Khumbu had well utilized their leisure time in the Himalayas during COVID-19.

"For the villagers, by the villagers, and to the villagers" is a concept that is proving profitable at this time. Many have returned from abroad, and many others have had their guiding and tourism positions put on hold. Thus it is necessary to seek and invent any potential or possibility for building the local economy based on local capacity, skill, and resources.



The Sherpas have improved or fixed many dangerous points in the trails during the lockdown. The Sherpa people have developed many skills needed for mountain road rehabilitation and renovation with locally available materials and resources. The steep topography and fragile landscapes made the rebuilding of many trails difficult and dangerous, requiring them to apply safety measures while working on many of these projects. These road and trail building skills are often prized and depended upon in western nations for the extension and rehabilitation of main trails and trekking routes inside parks and reserves.

4.3 PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The youth of Khunde, Khumjung, Thame, and Namche have been self-motivated to make a great effort in conserving and preserving the cultural heritage of their people and to respect the ancestral gifts that have become the treasure and identity of the Khumbu region. The youth have removed moss and repainted the Mani walls along the main trails. They have also cleaned the surrounding landscape, despite the absence of tourism.



If there were no COVID-19 pandemic, it would not have been possible to focus on conserving the environment and preserving the culture of this region. The nature of the Sherpa people seems to fulfill the adage that 'Problem is Opportunity'.

4.4 CLEANING THE ENVIRONMENT



The women's group from Khumjung used their lockdown period to clean their village areas. Despite the lockdown, they had the desire to clean the environment and to make it tidy. For those women, a neat, clean, and tidy house is the key to a healthy family. According to them, the money they spend on medicine to cure diseases and fees paid to the doctors will become less necessary. These environmentally aware women have taken social leadership in managing the local environment. The women of Khumjung have organized well through the sorting and disposal of the various waste materials. This is a much-appreciated use of the COVID-19 lockdown period and an example to all other communities in the region.

4.5 RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS: DUMJI AND MANI RIMDU



The Sherpas of Khumbu, mainly from Namche, Thame, Khumjung, Phortse, and Pangboche, had celebrated the Dumji¹ festival during June of 2020 despite the lockdown and the nation's application of social distancing. Likewise, the people of Thame celebrated another religious festival, the Manirimdu², in May of 2020. It is a sacred ceremony and a series of events for empowerment. Due to the pandemic and the shutdown of the Khumbu Pasanglhamu Rural Municipality, the festival was performed amongst the abbot and monks without the public. Although it was vital for them to respect the government's rules, they should avoid social gathering. Tmmhe locals could not forgo the celebration of this festival practiced during the monsoon season for more than 300 years.

¹Dumji festival is celebrated by the Sherpas of Khumbu in celebration of the anniversary of the death of the patron saint Lama Sanga Dorje. On this occasion, rich and poor join the celebration on equal terms.

²The local people of Thame had celebrated Mani Rimdu in May 2020. Mani Rimdu Festival is celebrated at the Tengboche, Thame and Chiwong Monasteries of Solukhumbu Nepal. This is a sacred ceremony and a series of events of empowerment.

Bridging the Digital Divide in Nepal's Education Amid the Global Pandemic

Phurba Chheten Pradhan, General Member

The year 2020 has been a crazy ride so far. For the most part, the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had an undesirable effect on numerous sectors worldwide, including the education sector. The pandemic triggered the closure of schools, colleges, and universities across the globe for an indefinite period so that the spread of the virus could be contained to some extent (Toquero, 2020). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports that the pandemic has led to the closure of many educational institutions, impacting around eighty percent of the global student population. Moreover, UNDP estimates that 86 percent of children from underdeveloped and developing countries are unable to receive an education due to the pandemic, compared to only 20 percent of children in developed countries.

Educational institutions in Nepal are not immune to this effect. The new academic sessions for the schools were supposed to start from mid-April; however, in the process of containing the virus, almost all educational institutions throughout the nation have been closed from 19 March 2020 for an indefinite period. Realizing the current situation, many private schools and colleges have found an alternative distance learning opportunity based upon the resources available. Digital platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Skype, etc. are being extensively used to run classes online and ease the teaching and learning process. The use of such online mediums has undoubtedly made the whole teaching and learning process much more comfortable, especially for private educational institutions.

On the contrary, many public schools and colleges still do not have the luxury of holding online classes simply because they lack the necessary access and know-how for such supportive technologies. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology has launched an e-learning portal where educational materials of all topics are included for classes one to ten. They have also arranged various lessons from numerous mediums, such as radios and televisions. But it has not been that effective and uniform. The digital divide, as such, has made the majority of the public educational institutions unable to cope with the private institutions and therefore are being left out of this process. School closures followed by such inequitable learning opportunities will hit the disadvantaged and most vulnerable the hardest and also might threaten to widen the educational gap accelerating the dropout rates in the long run.

Developed countries might be used to distance learning methods as they have heavily invested in information and communications technology (ICT); but for developing countries, such as Nepal, it indeed is a new experience, especially for school levels. It might take some time to fully adapt to the sudden transition from physical classrooms to e-classrooms. But if we look around the world, ICTs have become one of the basic building blocks of modern society within a short time. Many countries now regard understanding ICT and mastering the necessary skills and concepts of ICT as part of the core of education, together with reading, writing, and numeracy.

However, there seems to be a misconception that ICTs generally refers to 'computers and computing-related activities.' This is fortunately not the case; although computers and their application play a significant role in modern information management, other technologies and systems also comprise of the phenomenon that is commonly regarded as ICTs (Daniel, 2002). ICTs and digital platforms, as such, can be used in remedying the closure of educational institutions for now; however, it cannot replace the critical effect of face-to-face teaching pedagogy. But in times like these, it is very crucial for the institutions to upgrade their level of ICT knowledge so that there is an equitable learning opportunity for students across the nation.

It took a pandemic for the government to realize that its approach to health and education needs a vast technological boost. Although digital solutions may not be ready for immediate use for developing nations, the current situations have brought about a change in the mindset of the stakeholders. Development organizations and society as a whole should use this momentum to accelerate the development of digital solutions (Lilza, 2020). The integration of ICT in education is very much necessary to enhance the capability of students and teachers and compete in the global market. If not, countries like Nepal with lower learning outcomes and high dropout rates, in general, are particularly vulnerable to such closures followed by the digital divide.

Nepal's Obvious Concern: Changes in the Snow Pattern

Dolma Sherpa, General Member

I am originally from Bhakanje, Solukhumbu, which lies at a height of 2400 meters above the sea level. When I was small, I used to observe snowfall from my home. Sometimes my sister and I would go outside to play with the snow and make snowmen. I still remember that it used to snow continuously for many days. Water collected in buckets and jars; even the tap water and other water resources turned into ice. It would take days for snow-covered places to melt. After the snowfall, it would be colder, and the snow would obstruct daily work. This was the scenario 20 years ago.

I revisited my village in 2016; snow greeted me on the way. I was delighted to experience snowfall after almost 12 years of living in the crowded and busy city area. I was excited to play with the snow to recreate my childhood nostalgias. When I woke up the next day, I looked outside of my room. To my surprise, the snow had already melted in most of the places. I was shocked and asked my grandmother about the situation. She said, "Nowadays, the snowfall pattern is changing, and the amount of snowfall has been decreasing with the rise in temperature in the village." I was sad to know about the situation. It is one of the most relevant evidences of change in snow patterns that I have experienced after 12 years.



In the same way, a study conducted by Devkota and Bagale (2015) on the evidence of climate change in Nepal showed a decrease in snowfall patterns as one of the several pieces of evidence of climate change and other environmental factors. Likewise, an article published in the Nepali Times on 5th October 2018 stated that visitors returning to the Everest region after 20 years also noticed changes. Large lakes did not exist in the past; glacier ice was replaced by ponds, boulders, and sand. The snowline moved up the mountains, and glaciers have receded and shrunk.

However, there are very few ground studies of the impact of snow. Snowfall has not been monitored regularly. A report by the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) in 2014 stated

that they have been working to watch snowfall at elevations above 3000 meters when international research organizations work in partnership with them. It sounds crazy that a specific budget has not been allocated for the same purpose every year. Nonetheless, the major interruption continues due to low investment and low priority in the field of changing patterns of snowfall. Currently, there is no heavy snowfall during the winter season, which does not harm vegetation and the business of the local people. But in the long run, I am fearful that people and all other living creatures residing in the mountains, especially those living downstream, will face a significant problem - not only because of the change in the snow pattern but because of the adjustment and adaptation in the changing environment. Moreover, the government and people of Nepal are poorly prepared for future disasters induced by changes in the snow pattern as a result of climatic change.

• Photo credit to Nepalese Tea Trust

Will You Be My Voice?

Jyotshana Ranjitkar, Associate Member

The truth I hold took years to unfold,
Wants to converse up but never told.
Now, I speak, for I am done being helpless and weak,
From the pit of hell, I went through.
A couple hopes to make a family,
Waiting for a baby boy,
Downcast eyes, turned out to be a girl.
Growing up as a girl,
Sadly, she faces discrimination from her own family,
So does society.
In the mid-night,
Walking down the narrow street,
Being bold yet scared of something,
Sounds of footstep following her,
Wants to scream but cannot shout.
Mom telling her to wear skirts out less often,
Nirmala and others left forgotten,
We don't want to be born as a girl again,
In a country where sex offenders don't go to prison.
The hatred of those touches kills her several times,
Heart skips a beat, don't want to admit it,
But I am accepting defeat.
Parents and society look at her as if she is a curse,
She is not a curse,
I repeat, she is not a curse,
She can't take back what he selfishly and senselessly stole,
and she can't undo what was done to her.
Her smiles snatched, tears froze,
Yet tried to fight,
she was cold, she was empty and pieces,
Even fear was a horror-struck,
And the pain was no longer pain.
For, I realized, my cries didn't reach the skies.
I am the loudest whisper,
My silence speaks
Will you be my voice?

Let's Be Still, Listen, and Redirect Our Ways

Choekyi Dolma Lama, Associate Member

The coronavirus pandemic makes us realize how fragile and vulnerable our lives are, as we tend to think we are indestructible. Even a small organism can destroy our lives in a matter of days. The dreadful outbreak of COVID-19 has given many people around the world reason to slow down and think in silence. China recorded its first COVID-19 death on January 11, 2020, and the virus kept spreading rapidly. Then the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Since then, many millions of cases of coronavirus infections spread around the globe, and nearly a million deaths have been registered so far - leading every country to declare nation-wide lockdowns. People remained confined to their homes, driving the globe into economic hardships. It is still spreading like wildfire. This pandemic did bring some changes. We have learned to take care of our hygiene more than before, and 'Namaste', the Nepali way of greeting, became a popular way of conveying greetings while keeping physical distance at a minimum.

It has unfolded truths that we have long forgotten in the rush of advancement and modernization. People are always in a rush, buckling under the pressure of selfish craving and desires. Many people have forgotten their basic human values of interdependency, love, compassion, and respect for their fellow human beings and other species who share the same planet. This pandemic has shown that in the end, we all suffer the same regardless of differences in caste, race, color, religion, culture, economic status, and man-made physical boundaries.

This pandemic is terrible, but the impact of the worsening climate crisis could be even more serious in future. The pandemic is causing direct deaths and making people afraid to leave their homes. Likewise, many things are happening around us that is linked to climate change; but the connection is not as direct and people think less of the climate crisis. It seems as if nature is punishing us and making all of us pay for what we have done. We don't have to search hard to find the evidence. The Australian Bush fire of 2019 turned 46 million acres of land, wildlife, and over 33 homes into ashes. The recent wildfires in USA have burned millions of acres of land and destroyed many homes already. Devastating floods in Indonesia, China, India and many other countries including Nepal are bringing misery to millions of people.

Our oceans, weather, glaciers, snow and rainfall patterns are also being affected. These affect our health and safety. What once seemed to be a green, healthy earth is not healthy anymore.

It is time to halt, think and listen to sources of wisdom. It is time to rethink and redirect our ways. It is time to move beyond individual greed and things about others. It is time to abandon our ignorance and think about the condition of air, sky, forest, rivers - the ultimate basis for our survival, the Earth. It is time to use our human intelligence to heal the earth and heal ourselves. For that we need to start now and save our indigenous knowledge, respect scientific facts, preserve our genetic resources, and avoid poisoning and destroying the earth through unity and understanding.

Hence, let us unite and do something good for our surroundings. Let's make our planet greener, lusher, and wealthier by changing our ways. Let us focus on sustainable and environmentally friendly development and advancement. Let science and innovation lead the way toward lessening the carbon emissions and rebuilding our Earth. Let's start saving our local seeds; start respecting and documenting our local and indigenous peoples' knowledge to mitigate global and regional climate change issues. Let's not think about our needs alone but address the needs of other living organisms with whom we are eternally dependent.



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