



TOWARDS SECURING HIMALAYA FROM DISASTERS: A DEMAND CHARTER PEOPLE FOR HIMALAYA CAMPAIGN, 2024

People for Himalaya campaign is an initiative of progressive groups, civil society organisations and activists from the region. The campaign is not affiliated with any political party.

1. STRENGTHEN REGULATION, MONITORING AND PLANNING OF LAND USE, LAND-USE CHANGE AND FORESTRY (LULUCF)

- A complete moratorium on all mega infrastructure projects like railway, dams, hydro projects, and four lane highways, tunnelling, transmission lines - and conduct a 360-degree multi-disciplinary review of the impacts of existing projects
- Democratic decision making through referendums and public consultation on large infrastructure by strengthening the Environment Impact Assessment Notification 1994 (Scrapping the EIA 2020 Amendments & FCA 2023 Amendments); Free Prior informed consent of Gram Sabhas to be mandatory for all developmental projects
- Terrain Specific Disaster and Climate Risk Studies and land susceptibility assessments to be mandatory for land use change for urbanisation, commercial development and public infrastructure construction
- Just Implementation of 2013 Right to Fair Compensation and Rehabilitation Act
- To ensure participation of citizens, civic bodies and Gram Sabhas in monitoring pollution and land use change works like stone crusher, sand-gravel mining, mineral mining, debris dumping, construction of local roads and every commercial construction work.

2. GRANTING COMMUNITIES CONSTITUTIONAL, LAND AND FOREST GOVERNANCE RIGHTS

- Strengthening of state laws and regulations that protect the private and community resource rights of nature dependent communities – example Van Panchayat Rules in Uttarakhand
- Complete the Unfinished land reforms and land regularisation agendas to provide secure land tenure to landless and displaced communities to practice land based livelihoods – example *Nautor* rules in Himachal Pradesh
- Just implementation of constitutional provisions and laws that support the decentralised, autonomous and democratic governance and decision making – example the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act 2006 and other constitutional provisions
- Protection of pastoral communities especially minority communities like the Van Gujjars and Bakarwals in migratory routes
- Strengthen floral and faunal biodiversity through Community Forest Resource Rights governance framework under FRA 2006 - convert pine monocultures into broad leaf forests to address fodder scarcity, forest fires and soil erosion. Five 'f' species should drive plantations i.e. fruit, fodder, fertilizer, fuel, fiber and medicinal plants. Weed eradication programs for pasture development

3. TRANSPARENCY, KNOWLEDGE BUILDING, SHARING AND EXCHANGE

- Gram Sabhas, Panchayats, municipal bodies to be involved in disaster governance – not through superficial preparedness trainings but regular sharing of information on latest risk

studies and consultations on climate adaptation strategies; disaster risk mitigation and the work carried out under the National Mission on Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem

- Ensuring the participation and representation of all vulnerable and marginalised communities in these public consultations
- Put in place mechanisms for transparency and accountability of climate proofing projects
- Obligatory public disclosure of Hydrological data of the Himalayan River Basins; Air and Water Pollution data of all industrial belts, commercial and tourism centres

4. BUILDING RESILIENT, EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN SOCIETIES

- Build financially remunerative agro-ecological livelihoods that are accessible to all: for example wool, meat and dairy production by strengthening pastoralism and animal husbandry' other cottage industries; Decentralised Solar and other energy systems
- Dispersed, environment sustaining and economically remunerative responsible tourism regulated collectively by communities respectful of the region's carrying capacity
- Implementation of the Plastics/Solid/Liquid Waste Management Rules; Building consciousness on production and management of waste in urban areas; for tourists
- Reviving collective systems of resource use and management – upskilling based on balance between indigenous knowledge and modern science
- Formation, regular updating and implementation of state climate action plans
- Promotion, facilitation of human work force (traditional manual mining), light machines in place of big excavators in mining, road building other construction projects. Effective debris, muck disposal policy ensuring minimum generation and maximum reuse.
- Protection of labour rights especially migrant labour and putting in place a law for proper implementation of SC/ST Sub plans in mountain states.
- Protecting riverine ecosystems, environmental flows and rights protected only for drinking and local existing irrigation schemes.
- Reorganisation of Panchayats on the basis of watershed boundaries not merely on the basis of population

5. PUT IN PLACE A ROBUST DISASTER RESPONSE

- Creation of a dedicated disaster response fund over and above the right to funds and other help from the Union government
- Apart from Rescue and Recovery strengthening Post Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation as per the provisions of Disaster Management Act 2005
- Time bound and full Central Government Support to Himalayan states in case of extreme events - Provide time bound exemptions under the Forest Conservation Act 1980 for treatment of disaster affected private lands and rehabilitation of disaster displaced to safe areas (a land swap policy) and scrap
- Support to and acknowledgment of the role of decentralised /community controlled disaster action and response – Mahila Mandals, Youth Clubs and Panchayats
- Fixing Accountability and Culpability - Dam Safety Act 2022 to be made applicable for all existing dams in the state; Restructuring and functionalising institutions like Central Water Commission, State Committee on Dam Safety (SCDS), State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO), Met Department, Central and State Pollution Control Boards, State Disaster Management Authority etc - Penal action in case of violations of norms
- Strengthen and strictly enforce the rules and environmental norms for all developmental works – like stone crushers, sand-gravel mining, river training and dredging, river front development projects, debris dumping and every commercial construction work.

PEOPLE FOR HIMALAYA

Campaign Declaration: February 2024

This declaration comes in the wake of the irreversible impacts of increasing frequency, scale and intensity of climate disasters in the Himalayan region.

1. On the one hand are frequent extreme climatic events – landslides, intense rainfall, floods, GLOFs, cloudbursts, heatwaves and on the other creeping slow onset events of decreasing snowfall, snow cover, rising temperatures and glacial melts. As result of these we see falling crop yields, drying of springs and streams, altering floral and faunal habitats, growing invasive species. We understand these disasters are not one time events but cascading and compounding disasters that are disturbing the local geology, ecology and livelihoods, dispossessing nature based communities.
2. We understand that these disasters which appear in the natural environment – are actually systemic and policy induced disasters and result of historical processes of exploitation and governance failure at various levels – from global to local. Thus these disasters are political, economic and social not just environmental disasters. We refuse to call them ‘natural’ disasters. We understand that those who are the least responsible for these disasters are in fact the worst impacted by these disasters – and have been further rendered powerless and resource less in the process of disaster-making. These include marginal farmers, landless dalits, forest dwellers, adivasis, women, migrant workers, pastoralists, minorities, persons with disabilities and those living in conflict zones.
3. We believe that those who are the most responsible for these disasters are those in power and extracting resources for profiteering. Those sitting at the helm of decision making from the countries and financial institutions of the global north, to the national and state governments and governance institutions, corporates and contractors – we hold them accountable for the growing commodification of the Himalaya. The Himalaya have been viewed as either ‘exotic’ places or ‘strategic’ borderlands, resulting in resource extraction since the colonial era. This exploitation has gained greater momentum in the last few decades of capitalist greed in the name of development – mindless infrastructures like mega dams and four lane highways, railway projects, commercial tourism and rampant urbanisation have caused unprecedented land use change damaging Himalayan rivers, forests, grasslands and mountains.
4. Local societal and livelihood resilience has been destroyed and replaced with top-down, market dependent and techno-managerial solutions implemented through international loans and maldesigned climate finance projects. These structural and policy changes have disabled the building of financial resilience and autonomy of the Himalayan states. Over the last decade the growing centralisation of power has compromised the constitutional rights of the mountain regions and its peoples. We are seriously concerned about the growing ethnic conflict and social unrest being triggered by divisive government policies, majoritarian communalisation and believe that the resource extraction led ecological crisis has further compounded these conflicts.
5. In the last decade and a half several environmental laws and regulatory/ protective policies have been diluted or eliminated in the name of national security, national interest and ‘green’ growth endangering our ecology and putting under threat the very survival of our people. On the other hand, progressive laws for land allocation, housing rights, forest rights, rehabilitation and relocation of development/disaster affected people and labour laws stand non-implemented. We condemn the repression of voices who have questioned this mindless destruction and the use of labels as anti-national and anti-development to create false narratives.

The ‘People for Himalaya’ campaign will work in solidarity for the wellbeing and sustenance of our Himalayan natural heritage - glaciers, rivers, alpine pastures, forests and lands and diverse inhabitants whose identity and survival depend on the Himalaya. We stand in alliance with organisations that support and advocate for democratic and decentralized governance in the Himalaya based on the principles of - sustainability guided by balancing science and indigenous knowledge; gender, caste, ethnic and intergenerational equity; and climate justice.

List of endorsing organisations:

1. Affected Citizens of Teesta, Sikkim
2. AIPWA, Uttarakhand
3. Appiko-Chipko Movement, Karnataka
4. Beej Bachao Andolan, Uttarakhand
5. Bhumi Heen Bhumi Adhikar Manch, Himachal Pradesh
6. Chamba Van Adhikar Manch, Himachal Pradesh
7. Climate Front India, India
8. Climate Front Jammu, Jammu Kashmir
9. Council for Civic Democratic Engagement, Sikkim
10. Devalsari Paryavaran Samiti, Uttarakhand
11. Dibang Resistance, Arunachal Pradesh
12. Disom Foundation, Nagaland
13. Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim, Sikkim
14. Friends of Ladakh, Friends of Nature (FOLFON), Ladakh
15. Green Circle, Sikkim
16. Gene Campaign, Uttarakhand
17. Himal Prakriti – A Trust for Nature, Uttarakhand
18. Harela, Uttarakhand
19. Himalaya Niti Abhiyan, Himachal Pradesh
20. Himdhara Environment Research and Action Collective, Himachal Pradesh
21. Him Pragati Foundation, Himachal Pradesh
22. HimRRA Network, Himachal Pradesh
23. Indigenous Perspectives, Manipur
24. Indian Community Activists Network, India
25. Interweave, Sikkim
26. Jagori Rural Charitable Trust, Himachal Pradesh
27. Jammu Kashmir RTI Movement, Jammu Kashmir
28. Joshimath Bachao Sangarsh Samiti, Uttarakhand
29. Jaladhara Abhiyan, Rajasthan
30. J&K Chopan Association, Jammu Kashmir
31. J&K Forest Rights Coalition, Jammu Kashmir
32. Jol Jongol Jomi (জল জঙ্গল জমি), West Bengal
33. Kashmir Hikes and Treks, Jammu Kashmir
34. Kalimpong Krishak Kalyan Sanghathan, West Bengal
35. Katho Students Union, Manipur
36. Khoj, Himachal Pradesh
37. Koshish, Jammu and Kashmir
38. Kosi Nav Nirman Manch, Bihar
39. Kyang, Himachal Pradesh
40. Kalpavriksh, Maharashtra
41. Local Futures, Ladakh
42. MAUSAM, India
43. MKSS, Uttar Pradesh
44. Mool Sustainability Research And Training Center, Jammu Kashmir
45. North East Dialogue Forum, Assam
46. No Means No Campaign, Himachal Pradesh
47. National Alliance for People's Movements, India
48. Nature-Human Centric People's Movement, Jammu Kashmir
49. Parvatiya Mahila Adhikar Manch, Himachal Pradesh
50. Parvatiya Tikau Kheti Abhiyan, Himachal Pradesh
51. People for Himalayan Development, Himachal Pradesh
52. People's Campaign for Social and Economic Equity in the Himalaya, Himachal Pradesh
53. Save Lahaul Spiti, Himachal Pradesh
54. Sambhaavnaa Institute, Himachal Pradesh
55. South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, India
56. Shimla Collective, Himachal Pradesh
57. Sirmaur Van Adhikar Manch, Himachal Pradesh
58. Spiti Civil Society, Himachal Pradesh
59. Save The Hills, West Bengal
60. South Asian Solidarity Collective, Delhi
61. Tandi Sangarsh Samiti, Himachal Pradesh
62. The Rainbow Comrades, Himachal Pradesh
63. Thma U Rangli- Juki (TUR), Meghalaya
64. Van Gujjar Tribal Yuva Sangathan, Uttarakhand
65. Un Paso Mas (UPM), Delhi
66. Uttarakhand Lok Vahini, Uttarakhand
67. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Telangana
68. Wullar Bachao Front, Jammu & Kashmir
69. Youth For Himalaya, India

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