

Nepal Development Research Institute

Media Release on the Occasion of 21st Anniversary

12 April 2024

Learning from the past, providing evidence for a better future!

Nepal Development Research Institute which started with a modest beginning in 2004 AD is now recognized as a leading think tank in the country.

On the occasion of the completion of its two decades of service, NDRI organized a special annual lecture followed by a panel discussion on climate change and resilience. The Honorable Minister of Forests and Environment, Mr. Nawal Kishor Sah Sudi graced the occasion as the chief guest.

The keynote speech entitled “Climate and the Hindu Kush Himalaya – Critical Decade for our Shared Future” was delivered by Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) where he highlighted that **the most urgent and pressing challenges in front of Nepal and the rest of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) are the triple planetary crises of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, and highlighted the urgent need to take action during this decade.** Remarking that **Nepal does not have to be poor**, he said that **Nepal has immense potential to benefit from its rich bio-diversity, natural and human resources.**

The Minister for Forests and Environment speaking as the chief guest on the occasion, remarked that Nepal is facing serious negative impacts of climate change, even though the global climate change is caused largely due to actions in other countries. Hence, climate justice is critical to Nepal. In this context, he applauded the role of think tanks like NDRI for conducting research providing evidence for informed policy decisions and making the case for climate justice.

Ms. Ayshani Medagangoda-Labe, UNDP resident representative in Nepal, speaking on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator, stressed that the need to scale up investment in research to generate knowledge is very important in order to meet the immense challenges of climate change. She also reminded 2022 as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development which led to the declaration of 2023-27 as Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions and suggested seizing this moment as the opportunity to make the case for the mountain agenda.

Dr. Krishna Pahari, President of NDRI, in his closing remarks, mentioned that while reflecting on the successes over the past two decades, NDRI is now embarking on its future journey which is likely to have enormous challenges from climate change and other issues, and also opportunities due to advances in sciences, connectivity and human potential. He said that NDRI believes in the power of evidence in social transformation and would like to work together with all stakeholders including the Government,

development partners, academia and civil society in this cherished goal of serving the society through evidence.

This was followed by a panel discussion on “Way Forward for a Climate Resilient Future”. The panelists included Dr. Zhang Lanying, founder of Sources for Action and Co-founder of Cihai Foundation (China); Dr. Arun Bhakta Shrestha, Strategic group lead on reducing climate and environmental risks (ICIMOD), Prof. Dr. Jyoti Parikh, Executive Director, Integrated Research and Action for Development (India) and Dr. Madhav Karki, member, Climate Change Management National Council (Nepal). Dr. Ram Manohar Shrestha, Professor Emeritus, Asian Institute of Technology provided special remarks. Dr. Divas B. Basnyat, Lead of, Water and Climate Program of NDRI, moderated the panel discussion.

The key messages delivered from the discussion were:

1. The nexus approach on water, energy, food, and ecosystems was needed for managing climate risks. The key drivers of risks were climate-related as well as socio-economic, stressed further by the lack of resources and infrastructure. Hence, climate actions need to be more contextual, and dependent on water management practices including the use of nature-based solutions. As we are entering an uncharted future, the actions need to be evidence-based. As climate-induced hazards like floods and glacial lake outburst floods are transboundary, there is a greater need for transboundary collaboration. Capacity building is another key necessity.
2. Nepal’s commitment to climate mitigation and preparation for adaptation are well reflected in the Nationally Determined Commitment (NDC) submitted in 2020 and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) in 2023. To give an idea of the financial needs of Nepal on implementing NDC and NAP, it will require 4.5 billion USD in a Business as Usual (BAU) case, and 6.5 billion USD if additional measures are to be taken. This is only a small fraction of what is available through international climate finance. Nepal thus needs to work on 5 key strategies: (i) evidence-based advocacy (ii) capacity building to handle climate, biodiversity, and pollution crisis. (iii) capacity for project preparation and proposal writing, (iv) mainstreaming and integrating climate risks in every sector, and (v) assessing climate finance.
3. Lessons to learn from our two neighboring countries were also shared. China’s rapid economic growth came at the cost of environmental degradation, and China is now focusing on carbon-neutral growth, integration of rural and urban development, more equal civilization, and balancing material and spiritual needs. These can be good lessons for countries like Nepal.
4. Countries in the region can learn from India’s strategies for climate mitigation and decarbonization. These include a net-zero goal by 2070 and low-carbon inclusive growth through a 35% EV target by 2030. The non-fossil fuel growth will require both technology and finance which can be constraints that need to be tackled.
5. Nepal is the 9th most climate change-affected country from extreme weather-related events and is in a condition to lose 2.2% of its GDP by 2050. Hence, there is a need for dedicated research centers for each sector, like agriculture, water, energy, transport, health, etc.

6. Research institutes like NDRI need to work on Research and Development to support evidence-based decisions and policies, policy advocacy, capacity building and knowledge sharing.

The event was attended by distinguished delegates in-person (more than 100) as well as virtually (more than 150) representing embassies and diplomatic agencies in Nepal, Australia and Bangladesh; development partners, I/NGOs, think tanks, research institutes, universities, Government bodies and media.

On this momentous occasion, NDRI reaffirms its steadfast dedication to advancing studies and research aimed at furnishing robust evidence for crafting policies that effectively address the escalating menace of climate change. We earnestly call upon all stakeholders to unite in a collaborative effort towards this vital mission



Krishna Pahari, Ph.D.

President

Nepal Development Research Institute