



FREE SMILE
FOUNDATION



6TH UTTARAKHAND YOUTH TALK

*“Youth Role in Disaster Resilience &
Environmental Protection in Uttarakhand.”*



11 JULY 2026

DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND

REPORT



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

It gives me immense pleasure to present the report of the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk (6th UYT)**, organized by the **Free Smile Foundation Society** on **11th July 2026** at **Government Doon Medical College, Dehradun**, under the theme "**Youth Role in Disaster Resilience and Environmental Protection in Uttarakhand.**" This initiative reflects our unwavering commitment to empowering young people as active partners in addressing the pressing environmental and disaster-related challenges faced by our state.



Uttarakhand, with its unique Himalayan ecosystem, is highly vulnerable to natural hazards and the impacts of climate change. In such circumstances, the role of youth becomes more significant than ever before. Through the Uttarakhand Youth Talk, we aim to create a platform where young minds can engage with experts, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders to exchange ideas, develop innovative solutions, and inspire collective action for a resilient and sustainable future.

The overwhelming response to the 6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk, with the participation of **213 delegates** from educational institutions, government departments, NCC, NSS, voluntary organizations, and youth groups, reflects the growing enthusiasm of young people to contribute towards disaster preparedness, environmental conservation, and sustainable development. The insightful panel discussions, position paper presentations, cultural performances, and interactive sessions reaffirmed that meaningful change can only be achieved through collaboration, scientific thinking, and community participation.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the **Uttarakhand Council of Science and Technology (UCOST)**, **Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board (UKPCB)**, **Government Doon Medical College, MY Bharat, Proud Pahadi Society**, and all our partner organizations for their invaluable collaboration and unwavering support. I also express my sincere appreciation to our distinguished speakers, resource persons, volunteers, organizing team, and every participant whose dedication and enthusiasm made this event a grand success.

I firmly believe that today's youth are not merely the leaders of tomorrow—they are the changemakers of today. By equipping them with knowledge, skills, and opportunities, we can build communities that are better prepared for disasters and more committed to protecting our environment. Let us continue to work together with the spirit of responsibility, innovation, and service to ensure a greener, safer, and more resilient Uttarakhand for future generations.

On behalf of the **Free Smile Foundation Society**, I thank everyone who contributed to the success of this initiative and look forward to your continued support in our journey towards youth empowerment, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development.

With warm regards,

Ravi Tyagi
Chairperson & Founder
Free Smile Foundation Society & UYT
Dehradun, Uttarakhand

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk (6th UYT) 2026** was successfully organized by the **Free Smile Foundation Society** in collaboration with the **Uttarakhand Council for Science and Technology (UCOST)** and the **Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board (UKPCB)** on **11 July 2026** at **Government Doon Medical College, Dehradun**, under the theme "**Youth Role in Disaster Resilience and Environmental Protection in Uttarakhand.**" The programme was supported by **MY Bharat, Proud Pahadi Society, Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)**, and the **Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building and Livelihood Programme (EIACP)**.

The event served as an interactive platform bringing together **students, youth leaders, academicians, researchers, environmental experts, government officials, NCC cadets, NSS volunteers, and civil society representatives** to discuss the challenges of disaster resilience and environmental protection in Uttarakhand. The programme emphasized the importance of youth leadership, scientific awareness, community participation, and sustainable development.

The event witnessed an encouraging response, with **150 online registrations**, out of which **117 registered participants attended** the programme. In addition, **walk-in registrations** significantly increased participation, resulting in a total attendance of **213 participants**. Participants represented organizations and institutions including **27 Battalion, Uttarakhand NCC, AASRAA Trust, Graphic Era University (NSS Unit), SGRR Nursing College**, and several other educational institutions and youth organizations.

The programme commenced with the inaugural session, followed by an expert **Panel Discussion** featuring **Prof. (Dr.) Jog Bhatia, Col. Pratyul Thapliyal, and Mr. Chandan Nayal**, who shared valuable insights on disaster resilience, environmental conservation, water resource management, and youth participation. An interactive **Question-and-Answer Session** enabled participants to engage directly with the experts and discuss practical approaches to disaster preparedness and environmental stewardship.

Another key highlight of the event was the **Position Paper Presentation Session**, where **Mr. Aditya, Mr. Albab Quddosi, and Mrs. Namrata (Goonj)** presented research-based recommendations on environmental protection, disaster resilience, and rehabilitation. The programme also featured **traditional cultural performances** by the students of **SGRR Nursing College**, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Uttarakhand.

The event concluded with the **Valedictory Address** by **Prof. (Dr.) Durgesh Pant, Director General, UCOST**, who encouraged students to embrace science, technology, innovation, and research for building a resilient and environmentally sustainable Uttarakhand. The programme concluded with the felicitation of speakers, certificate distribution, networking among participants, and a formal vote of thanks.

Overall, the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk 2026** successfully provided a collaborative platform for knowledge exchange, youth engagement, and policy dialogue. The participation of **213 delegates** reflected the growing commitment of young people and institutions towards promoting **disaster resilience, environmental conservation, and sustainable development** in Uttarakhand.

2. INTRODUCTION

The **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk 2026** was organized to create an inclusive platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative action on the theme *"Youth Role in Disaster Resilience and Environmental Protection in Uttarakhand."* The programme brought together students, researchers, academicians, professionals, policymakers, environmental advocates, and young leaders to discuss the growing environmental and disaster-related challenges in Uttarakhand and the crucial role of youth in addressing them through innovation, awareness, and active participation.

The event aimed to inspire young people to become agents of positive change by encouraging informed discussions on disaster preparedness, environmental conservation, climate resilience, sustainable development, and responsible citizenship. Through expert lectures, panel discussions, interactive sessions, and position paper presentations, participants explored practical solutions, exchanged diverse perspectives, and shared innovative ideas for strengthening environmental governance and community resilience. The programme also provided a valuable opportunity for networking, interdisciplinary learning, and collaboration among individuals and institutions committed to sustainable development.

The Youth Talk emphasized that the challenges posed by climate change, ecological degradation, and increasing disaster risks require collective efforts, informed decision-making, and active public participation. By promoting evidence-based dialogue and youth-led initiatives, the programme sought to bridge the gap between academic knowledge, policy discourse, and community action. It encouraged participants to recognize their responsibility as future leaders and environmental stewards capable of contributing to resilient communities and sustainable ecosystems.



More than an academic event, the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk 2026** served as a movement to empower youth, foster leadership, and strengthen partnerships among educational institutions, government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities. The discussions and recommendations generated during the programme reaffirmed the importance of youth engagement in shaping environmental policies, enhancing disaster resilience, and advancing the vision of a greener, safer, and more sustainable Uttarakhand. Through this initiative, the programme reinforced the belief that informed, responsible, and committed youth are essential partners in building a resilient future for the Himalayan region and beyond.

2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE 6TH UTTARAKHAND YOUTH TALK 2026

- To create a platform for meaningful dialogue on disaster resilience and environmental protection in Uttarakhand.
- To encourage active participation of youth in addressing environmental and disaster-related challenges through innovative ideas and sustainable solutions.
- To promote awareness about climate change, environmental conservation, and disaster risk reduction among students and young professionals.
- To facilitate interaction between youth, academicians, policymakers, environmental experts, and practitioners for knowledge sharing and collaborative learning.
- To provide an opportunity for participants to present research, position papers, and policy recommendations on issues related to disaster resilience and environmental sustainability.

2.2 EVENT DETAILS

Event Name: 6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk 2026

Theme: *Youth Role in Disaster Resilience and Environmental Protection in Uttarakhand*

Date: 11 July 2026 (Saturday)

Time: 10:00 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.

Venue: Govt Doon Medical College, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Organized By: Free Smile Foundation Society

In Collaboration With: Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology (UCOST) & Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board (UKPCB)

Supported By:

- Proud Pahadi Society
- MY Bharat
- Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)
- Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building and Livelihood Programme (EIACP)

Event Format: Youth Talk, Expert Panel Discussion, Position Paper Presentations, Interactive Question & Answer Session, and Networking.

Target Participants: Students, Research Scholars, Academicians, Government Officials, Environmental Professionals, Youth Leaders, NGO Representatives, NCC Cadets, and Young Change-makers.

2.3 PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

Time	Programme
10:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.	Registration of Participants
10:30 A.M. – 10:35 A.M.	Welcome Address and Introduction to the Programme
10:35 A.M. – 10:45 A.M.	Lamp Lighting and Felicitation of Guests
10:45 A.M. – 10:55 A.M.	Opening Remarks by the Organizing Team
10:55 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.	Expert Panel Discussion on <i>"Youth Role in Disaster Resilience and Environmental Protection in Uttarakhand"</i>
11:45 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.	Interactive Question & Answer Session
12:00 P.M. – 12:20 P.M.	Position Paper Presentation – Mr. Aditya
12:20 P.M. – 12:40 P.M.	Position Paper Presentation – Mr. Albab Quddosi
12:40 P.M. – 12:55 P.M.	Cultural Performance
12:55 P.M. – 1:10 P.M.	Certificate Distribution and Closing Remarks
1:10 P.M. – 1:25 P.M.	Vote of Thanks and Networking Session

3. CHIEF GUEST & GUEST SPEAKERS

PROF. DR. DURGESH PANT

Director General, UCOST, Director, USAC

With over 35 years of multifaceted contributions in Science, Technology and Innovation, Prof. Durgesh Pant has played a crucial role in transforming Uttarakhand's Science and Technology landscape through collaboration, teamwork, and creativity. A votary of Himalayan intelligence and traditional knowledge system, he has been staunch supporter of sustainable development with focus on conservation of environment, wild life and natural resources across the Himalayan region. As an institution builder, Prof Pant has been instrumental in establishing many greenfield universities and institutions of higher learning and strategic importance in the state.



GUEST SPEAKERS

1. PROF. (DR.) JOG SINGH BHATIA

Senior Consultant (Disaster Management) cum Director Training, Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration (MGSIPA), Government of Punjab

Prof. (Dr.) Jog Singh Bhatia is a distinguished disaster management expert, former Assistant Commandant of the ITBP/NDRF, and an internationally recognized trainer in disaster risk reduction and emergency management. During the Youth Talk, he emphasized the importance of disaster preparedness, institutional capacity building, and youth participation in strengthening community resilience and sustainable development.



2. COL. PRATYUL THAPLIYAL

Commanding Officer, 127 Infantry Battalion (Territorial Army) Eco Task Force (ETF), Garhwal Rifles

Col. Pratyul Thapliyal is the **Commanding Officer of the 127 Infantry Battalion (Territorial Army) Ecological Task Force (ETF), Garhwal Rifles**. He has been actively involved in ecological restoration, afforestation, and environmental conservation initiatives across Uttarakhand through the Ecological Task Force. During the Youth Talk, he highlighted the importance of youth participation, environmental stewardship, and community-based approaches in strengthening disaster resilience and protecting the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

3. MR. CHANDAN SINGH NAYAL (ENVIRONMENTALIST)

Mr. Chandan Singh Nayal is a renowned **environmentalist** from Uttarakhand. He is widely recognized for his contributions to afforestation, water conservation, and community-led environmental initiatives, having led large-scale plantation drives and spring rejuvenation efforts across the Himalayan region. During the Youth Talk, he emphasized the importance of youth leadership, sustainable lifestyles, and collective action in protecting Uttarakhand's fragile ecosystem and building a greener future.



4. SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

4.1. WELCOME ADDRESS AND OPENING CEREMONY

The **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk (6th UYT)** commenced with a warm and enthusiastic welcome by **Mr. Tinkoo Sharma**, who formally inaugurated the proceedings as the Master of Ceremonies. He extended a cordial welcome to the distinguished guests, keynote speakers, academicians, representatives from government departments, partner organizations, youth delegates, students, researchers, media representatives, and all participants present at the event.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Sharma highlighted the vision and objectives of the **Uttarakhand Youth Talk** initiative, emphasizing its role as a platform for fostering meaningful dialogue between young people, policymakers, subject experts, and civil society on issues of public importance. He underscored the significance of the 6th edition, organized under the theme "**Youth Role in Disaster Resilience and Environmental Protection in Uttarakhand**," and stressed the need for active youth participation in building resilient communities and promoting sustainable environmental practices.

He also acknowledged the valuable collaboration of the **Uttarakhand Council for Science and Technology (UCOST)** and the **Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board (UKPCB)**, along with the support of **MY Bharat** and the **Proud Pahadi Society**, whose collective efforts made the event possible.

Mr. Sharma then presented the day's programme schedule, giving participants an overview of the **inaugural ceremony, expert panel discussion, interactive question-and-answer session, position paper presentations, cultural performances, felicitation ceremony, and concluding remarks**. He encouraged all participants to actively engage in the discussions, exchange ideas, and contribute constructively towards developing innovative solutions for disaster resilience and environmental conservation in Uttarakhand.

The opening ceremony set a positive and inspiring tone for the event, creating an atmosphere of collaboration, learning, and youth-led action towards a safer, greener, and more sustainable future.

4.2. INAUGURAL CEREMONY – LIGHTING OF THE LAMP

The **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk (6th UYT)** was formally inaugurated with the traditional **Lighting of the Lamp**, a timeless Indian tradition symbolizing the dispelling of ignorance through knowledge, the enlightenment of minds, and the collective commitment towards building a resilient and environmentally sustainable society. The ceremonial lamp lighting marked the official commencement of the programme and reflected the shared vision of empowering youth to become catalysts for positive social and environmental change.

The inaugural ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of:

- **Prof. (Dr.) Jog Bhatia** – Disaster Management Expert
- **Mr. Chandan Nayal** – Environmentalist
- **Col. Pratyul Thapliyal** – 127 Eco Task Force, Garhwal Rifles
- **Mrs. Pinki Tyagi** – Advisor, Free Smile Foundation Society
- **Mr. Ravi Tyagi** – Founder, Free Smile Foundation Society
- **Mr. Gaurav Bisht** – Founder, Proud Pahadi Society

- **Mrs. Simmi Sharma** – M&E Coordinator FSF
- **Mrs. Namrata** – Goonj



The dignitaries jointly lit the ceremonial lamp amidst applause from the audience, signifying unity, collaboration, and a shared responsibility towards strengthening disaster resilience and protecting Uttarakhand's fragile environment. The ceremony served as a symbolic reminder that meaningful progress can only be achieved through collective action, scientific awareness, and active community participation.

The inauguration also reflected the spirit of partnership among government institutions, civil society organizations, environmental practitioners, and youth leaders. It set an inspiring tone for the day's deliberations, encouraging participants to engage in thoughtful discussions, exchange innovative ideas, and work collectively towards creating a safer, greener, and more sustainable future for Uttarakhand.

4.3. INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS

Following the inaugural ceremony, the programme transitioned into the **First Technical Session – Expert Panel Discussion**. The session was moderated by **Mr. Ravi Tyagi**, Founder of **Free Smile Foundation Society**, who welcomed the distinguished panelists to the stage and formally introduced each speaker to the audience, highlighting their professional achievements, areas of expertise, and significant contributions in the fields of disaster management, environmental conservation, ecological restoration, and community development.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Tyagi emphasized that the panel discussion aimed to create a meaningful platform for dialogue between experts and youth, enabling participants to gain practical insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with disaster resilience and environmental protection in Uttarakhand. He encouraged the participants to actively engage with the speakers, ask thought-provoking questions, and contribute their own perspectives throughout the session.

Before commencing the discussion, Mr. Tyagi briefly outlined the structure of the panel, explaining that the session would include expert interactions, moderated discussions, audience participation, and an open question-and-answer segment. He noted that the multidisciplinary expertise of the panelists would provide participants with diverse perspectives on sustainable development, climate resilience, water conservation, ecological restoration, and disaster risk reduction.

With the formal introductions completed, the moderator invited the panelists to share their insights, marking the beginning of an engaging and interactive discussion that set the tone for the remainder of the technical sessions.

5. PANEL DISCUSSION

5.1 UNDERSTANDING DISASTER RESILIENCE AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF DISASTERS

The first panel discussion commenced with an engaging interaction between the moderator, **Mr. Ravi Tyagi**, and **Prof. (Dr.) Jog Bhatia**, a distinguished expert in disaster management. Setting the context for the session, the moderator posed a thought-provoking question on the distinction between **natural disasters** and **human-induced (man-made) disasters**, and how these concepts are relevant in the context of Uttarakhand's increasing vulnerability to disasters.



Responding to the question, **Prof. (Dr.) Jog Bhatia** challenged the conventional understanding of disasters by explaining that **nature itself does not create disasters; rather, disasters occur when natural phenomena interact with vulnerable human societies and poorly managed environments**. He emphasized that events such as earthquakes, heavy rainfall, cloudbursts, landslides, and floods are natural processes that have existed for centuries. However, these events transform into disasters largely because of **unplanned urbanization, indiscriminate construction, deforestation, encroachment on riverbeds, excessive exploitation of natural resources, and inadequate disaster preparedness**.

Prof. Bhatia further explained that when humans disturb the ecological balance and ignore the carrying capacity of fragile ecosystems particularly in the Himalayan region—the consequences become increasingly severe. He remarked that **nature always seeks to restore its balance**, and when ecological systems are disrupted through unsustainable development practices, communities become more exposed and vulnerable to hazards. Therefore, the magnitude of a disaster is often determined not only by the intensity of the natural event but also by the extent of human intervention and preparedness.

Highlighting the importance of **disaster resilience**, Prof. Bhatia stressed that resilience is not merely about responding to emergencies but also about **anticipating risks, minimizing vulnerabilities, protecting ecosystems, and strengthening the capacity of communities to withstand and recover from disasters**. He advocated for an integrated approach that combines scientific planning, environmental conservation, climate-sensitive development, and active public participation.

Referring specifically to Uttarakhand, he underscored the urgent need to adopt sustainable development practices, enforce environmental regulations, and promote disaster-risk-informed planning in ecologically sensitive areas. He also encouraged young people to become active stakeholders in disaster preparedness through awareness, volunteerism, community engagement, and responsible environmental stewardship.

The discussion laid a strong conceptual foundation for the subsequent sessions, helping participants understand that **effective disaster resilience is inseparable from environmental protection, sustainable development, and responsible human behaviour**. It also inspired the audience to view disasters not merely as natural events but as challenges that can be significantly reduced through informed planning, scientific knowledge, and collective action.

5.2. WATER CONSERVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

During the panel discussion, the moderator invited **Mr. Chandan Nayal**, a renowned environmentalist and water conservation practitioner, to share his experiences and insights on sustainable water management in the Himalayan region. Responding to the discussion, Mr. Nayal presented his **Community-Based Water Conservation Model**, which has been successfully implemented across several hilly villages of Uttarakhand.

Drawing from his years of field experience, Mr. Nayal explained that the growing water crisis in the state is not merely the result of declining rainfall but is largely linked to **deforestation, degradation of catchment areas, changing land-use patterns, climate change, and the neglect of traditional water conservation practices**. He emphasized that restoring the natural hydrological cycle requires a holistic and community-driven approach rather than relying solely on large infrastructure projects.

He elaborated on the importance of **spring rejuvenation, rainwater harvesting, watershed management, catchment area protection, afforestation, and the revival of traditional water harvesting systems**. According to him, these interventions have successfully revived drying springs, improved groundwater recharge, and ensured year-round water availability in several rural communities.



A key focus of his presentation was the role of **community participation**.

Mr. Nayal highlighted that sustainable environmental conservation is possible only when local communities, particularly youth and village institutions, actively participate in planning, implementation, and maintenance of conservation initiatives.

He encouraged participants to become "Water Stewards" within their own communities by promoting water-efficient practices, protecting local water bodies, and spreading awareness about responsible water use.

He further stressed that **water conservation is closely linked to disaster resilience and environmental protection**. Healthy watersheds, forests, and natural springs not only ensure water security but also

reduce the risks of droughts, soil erosion, landslides, and flash floods. Concluding his address, Mr. Nayal urged the youth of Uttarakhand to combine traditional ecological knowledge with modern scientific approaches to develop sustainable solutions for future generations, emphasizing that **every drop of water conserved today is an investment in tomorrow's environmental security and resilience.**

5.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE INDIAN ARMY TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The panel discussion further explored the vital role of the **Indian Army** in environmental conservation, with **Col. Pratyul Thapliyal**, representing the **127 Eco Task Force (ETF), Garhwal Rifles**, sharing valuable insights into the Army's sustained efforts towards ecological restoration in the Himalayan region. The moderator invited him to elaborate on how the armed forces have extended their service beyond national security by actively contributing to the protection and restoration of the environment.

In his address, **Col. Thapliyal** highlighted the remarkable work undertaken by the **127 Eco Task Force**, which has been at the forefront of **afforestation, degraded forest restoration, biodiversity conservation, soil and water conservation, watershed management, and ecological rehabilitation** in Uttarakhand. He explained that the Eco Task Force, operating under a unique partnership between the **Indian Army and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, has successfully transformed degraded landscapes into thriving green ecosystems through disciplined planning and community collaboration.

He emphasized that environmental protection is not solely the responsibility of government agencies but a **shared national responsibility** that requires active participation from every citizen. Stressing the importance of youth involvement, he encouraged students and young volunteers to become ambassadors of environmental conservation by participating in **plantation drives, forest conservation campaigns, cleanliness initiatives, and biodiversity protection programmes.**



Sharing the guiding philosophy of the Eco Task Force, Col. Thapliyal inspired the audience with the motto **"Bhagidari aur Jimmedari" (Participation with Responsibility)**, emphasizing that meaningful environmental conservation can only be achieved when every individual takes ownership of protecting natural resources. He remarked that **planting a tree is only the first step; nurturing and protecting it until it matures is the true responsibility of every citizen.**

He further highlighted that healthy forests and ecosystems play a crucial role in **reducing disaster risks** by preventing soil erosion, minimizing landslides, improving water retention, conserving biodiversity, and enhancing the resilience of fragile Himalayan landscapes. He encouraged the youth to adopt environmentally responsible lifestyles, participate in community-based conservation initiatives, and work collectively towards safeguarding Uttarakhand's rich natural heritage for future generations.

The session inspired participants by demonstrating how disciplined institutional efforts, combined with active public participation, can significantly contribute to environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and disaster risk reduction. Col. Thapliyal's address reinforced the message that **protecting nature is not only an environmental obligation but also a patriotic duty towards building a safer, greener, and more resilient India.**

5.4 COMMUNITY-BASED WATER CONSERVATION MODEL – REVIVAL OF NAULA–GADERA ECOSYSTEMS

Further elaborating on his work, **Mr. Chandan Nayal** emphasized that long-term water security in Uttarakhand cannot be achieved through infrastructure alone but requires **community ownership, ecological restoration, and the revival of traditional Himalayan water systems.** He explained that the people of Uttarakhand have historically depended on natural water sources such as **Naulas (traditional spring-fed water structures), Dharas (natural springs), and Gaderas (seasonal mountain streams)**, which have sustained rural communities for generations.

Mr. Nayal introduced the concept of the **Naula–Gadera Model**, a community-led approach that focuses on restoring the natural relationship between forests, catchment areas, springs, and streams. He explained that when forests are protected and catchment areas are scientifically treated through soil and water conservation measures, rainwater gradually recharges the groundwater, rejuvenating **Naulas** and ensuring a continuous flow in the **Gaderas**. This integrated model not only enhances water availability throughout the year but also strengthens the ecological resilience of mountain ecosystems.

He further highlighted that the degradation of forests, unplanned development, excessive extraction of natural resources, and changing climatic conditions have caused many traditional water sources to dry up, leading to increasing water scarcity in several villages. Reviving these indigenous water systems, therefore, is essential for ensuring **drinking water security, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation.**

Mr. Nayal stressed that the success of the **Naula–Gadera Model** lies in active community participation. Local villagers, youth groups, women's self-help groups, and Gram Panchayats play a crucial role in protecting catchment areas, planting native tree species, constructing water recharge structures, and maintaining traditional water bodies. He encouraged young participants to document and revive traditional ecological knowledge while integrating it with modern scientific techniques for watershed management.

Concluding his address, Mr. Nayal remarked that **"Water conservation is the foundation of environmental conservation."** He urged the youth to become custodians of their local water resources, emphasizing that the revival of **Naulas, Dharas, and Gaderas** will not only secure water for future generations but also reduce the risks of droughts, soil erosion, landslides, and other climate-induced disasters. His presentation demonstrated that sustainable water management is a key pillar of disaster resilience and environmental protection in the fragile Himalayan region.

5.5 CONSERVATION OF RIVERS AND TRIBUTARIES: THE NEED FOR INTEGRATED RIVER RESTORATION

During the technical session, **Mr. Nitin** delivered an insightful presentation on the importance of **river and tributary conservation**, emphasizing that the health of major rivers is intrinsically linked to the condition of their tributaries. Using the **Hindon River** as a case study, he explained that the river

originates from the **foothills of the Shivalik Mountain Range** in Saharanpur district and serves as a significant tributary of the **Yamuna River**.

Mr. Nitin highlighted that, despite its ecological and socio-economic importance, the Hindon River has witnessed severe environmental degradation over the years due to **untreated domestic sewage, indiscriminate discharge of industrial effluents, solid waste dumping, encroachments, and the loss of natural floodplains**. These anthropogenic activities have transformed large stretches of the river into a heavily polluted watercourse, adversely affecting aquatic ecosystems, public health, and the livelihoods of communities dependent on the river.

Drawing parallels with the **Rispana** and **Bindal** rivers of Dehradun, he observed that many tributaries across northern India are facing similar challenges of pollution, urban encroachment, and ecological degradation. He emphasized that these rivers, once lifelines of their respective regions, are gradually losing their ecological significance due to unsustainable development and poor waste management practices.

He strongly advocated for an **integrated river basin management approach**, stressing that the rejuvenation of major rivers such as the **Ganga** and **Yamuna** cannot be achieved without first restoring and protecting their feeder streams and tributaries. According to him, every tributary plays a critical role in maintaining river flow, groundwater recharge, biodiversity, and the overall ecological balance of the river system.



Mr. Nitin further emphasized that river conservation requires the collective efforts of **government agencies, local communities, educational institutions, industries, and youth volunteers**. He encouraged young people to actively participate in river-cleaning campaigns, awareness programmes, waste segregation initiatives, plantation along riverbanks, and community-led conservation projects. He remarked that **"A river is only as healthy as its tributaries,"** underscoring that protecting small streams and local water bodies is the first step towards restoring India's larger river ecosystems.

Concluding his presentation, he called upon the participants to become responsible environmental stewards and contribute towards safeguarding rivers through sustainable practices, scientific planning, and active community participation. His presentation reinforced the message that **river conservation is not merely an environmental concern but a fundamental requirement for ensuring water security, ecological sustainability, disaster resilience, and the well-being of future generations**.

6. INTERACTIVE QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Following the panel discussion, participants actively interacted with the experts during an engaging **45-minute Question & Answer Session**.

Students raised questions on how youth can contribute towards disaster preparedness and environmental conservation in their communities.

6.1 YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT – THE *AAPDA MITRA* INITIATIVE

During the interactive **Question-and-Answer Session**, several participants expressed keen interest in understanding how young people can actively contribute to disaster preparedness and emergency response. Addressing these queries, **Prof. (Dr.) Jog Bhatia** highlighted the importance of community participation in disaster risk reduction and introduced the audience to the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)'s "Aapda Mitra" Initiative**.

Prof. Bhatia explained that the **Aapda Mitra Scheme** is a flagship community volunteer programme of the **NDMA**, designed to develop a cadre of trained local volunteers who can support disaster preparedness, response, rescue, relief, and recovery efforts at the community level. The programme equips volunteers with practical skills in **basic search and rescue operations, first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), evacuation techniques, emergency communication, incident response, and coordination with government agencies during disasters**.



Emphasizing the role of youth as the first line of community response, he stated that **well-trained and aware citizens can significantly reduce the loss of life and property during emergencies**. Since local volunteers are often the first to reach affected areas before professional response teams arrive, their preparedness and timely action can make a critical difference in saving lives.

Prof. Bhatia encouraged students, NSS and NCC cadets, youth organizations, and community volunteers to actively participate in **Aapda Mitra training programmes**, disaster mock drills, and awareness campaigns organized by the **NDMA, State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs), and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs)**. He stressed that disaster management should not be viewed solely as the responsibility of government agencies but as a **shared responsibility** requiring the active involvement of every citizen.

He further emphasized that disaster resilience begins long before a disaster occurs. Building awareness, understanding local hazards, preparing family and community emergency plans, promoting environmental conservation, and encouraging scientific risk assessment are all essential components of a disaster-resilient society. He noted that the youth, with their energy, innovation, and leadership potential, can become powerful agents of change by spreading awareness, assisting vulnerable communities, and promoting a culture of preparedness.



Concluding his interaction, Prof. Bhatia urged the participants to move beyond awareness and translate their knowledge into action. He encouraged them to become **responsible volunteers, community leaders, and ambassadors of disaster resilience**, reinforcing the message that **prepared communities, empowered youth, and informed citizens are the foundation of a safer, more resilient, and disaster-ready Uttarakhand**.

7. CULTURAL PERFORMANCES – CELEBRATING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF UTTARAKHAND

The **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk** was enriched with a series of vibrant and captivating cultural performances presented by the talented students of **SGRR Nursing College, Dehradun**. The cultural segment provided a refreshing interlude between the technical sessions while beautifully showcasing the cultural diversity and traditional heritage of the Himalayan region.

The programme featured:

- **Traditional Tibetan Dance**
- **Garhwali Folk Dance**

The **Traditional Tibetan Dance** reflected the values of peace, harmony, compassion, and the rich cultural traditions of the Tibetan community residing in Uttarakhand. The graceful performance highlighted the importance of cultural coexistence and respect for diverse traditions, receiving enthusiastic appreciation from the audience.



The **Garhwali Folk Dance** celebrated the vibrant cultural identity of Uttarakhand through traditional music, colorful attire, and energetic performances. The presentation beautifully depicted the close relationship between the people of the Himalayas and their natural surroundings, emphasizing how local customs, festivals, and folk traditions have always promoted respect for forests, rivers, mountains, and biodiversity.

The performances served as a reminder that **culture and nature are deeply interconnected**. They reinforced the message that preserving cultural heritage is equally important for promoting environmental awareness, sustainable living, and community resilience. Through music and dance, the performers highlighted the values of unity, harmony, and collective responsibility toward protecting the environment.



The audience greatly appreciated the performances, which added warmth and enthusiasm to the programme while fostering a sense of pride in Uttarakhand's rich cultural legacy. The cultural segment successfully complemented the theme of the event by demonstrating that **environmental conservation and disaster resilience are deeply rooted in the traditions, values, and collective wisdom of local communities**, making it one of the most memorable highlights of the 6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk.

8. POSITION PAPER PRESENTATIONS – SHOWCASING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Following the cultural performances, the programme transitioned into the **Position Paper Presentation Session**, which provided a platform for young researchers, students, professionals, and development practitioners to present innovative ideas, research findings, and practical recommendations on disaster resilience and environmental protection.

The session was formally announced and coordinated by **Ms. Simran Singh, Senior Project Associate, Free Smile Foundation Society**, and a core member of the **Uttarakhand Youth Talk Organizing Team**. Welcoming the audience, she emphasized that the Position Paper Session was one of the most significant components of the Youth Talk, designed to encourage evidence-based dialogue and promote youth-led policy recommendations for sustainable development in Uttarakhand.

Ms. Simran Singh briefly explained the objectives and format of the session before introducing each presenter to the audience. She highlighted the diverse backgrounds of the presenters and encouraged

participants to actively engage with the ideas being shared, noting that such academic and practical discussions play a vital role in shaping future policies and community-led initiatives.

8.1 The first presentation was delivered by Mr. Aditya, who presented his paper titled "*Samajik Aivam Sanskratik Prathaon ka Paritantra Swasthya Par Prabhav*."

His presentation focused on community-driven approaches to environmental conservation, sustainable rural livelihoods, natural resource management, and the integration of traditional ecological knowledge with modern environmental practices. He emphasized that empowering rural communities is essential for achieving long-term environmental sustainability and climate resilience.



8.2 The second presentation was delivered by Mr. Albab Qudussi, who presented his research paper on *The Role of Youth in Protecting Uttarakhand: A Vision for a Safer Future*.



His paper explored strategies for strengthening community preparedness, reducing disaster risks, and promoting environmentally responsible development through scientific planning, public awareness, and active youth participation.

8.3 Representing Goonj, Mrs. Namrata presented an insightful paper on "*Rehabilitation and Disaster Relief Programmes*."

She highlighted Goonj's community-centric approach to disaster response, rehabilitation, and recovery, emphasizing the importance of dignity-based humanitarian assistance, community participation, and sustainable post-disaster reconstruction. Through practical examples from field interventions, she demonstrated how empowering affected communities can significantly improve long-term recovery and resilience.



The Position Paper Presentation Session generated meaningful discussions among participants and experts, who appreciated the originality of the ideas and the practical relevance of the recommendations. The session reflected the core objective of the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk** to provide a platform where **young minds, practitioners, and development professionals could contribute innovative solutions and policy perspectives for strengthening disaster resilience and environmental protection in Uttarakhand**. It also reinforced the importance of research, evidence-based policymaking, and collaborative action in addressing the environmental and disaster-related challenges of the Himalayan region.

9. VALEDICTORY ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, UTTARAKHAND COUNCIL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (UCOST)

The **Valedictory Session** of the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk (6th UYT)** was graced by the esteemed presence of the **Director General, Uttarakhand Council of Science and Technology (UCOST)**, who joined the programme to address the participants and conclude the event on an inspiring note. His presence added immense value to the programme and reaffirmed UCOST's commitment to promoting scientific awareness, innovation, and youth engagement in addressing the developmental challenges of Uttarakhand.

As a mark of respect and appreciation, the **Director General felicitated all the distinguished speakers, panelists, and resource persons** for their invaluable contributions and for sharing their expertise on disaster resilience, environmental conservation, sustainable development, and community participation. The felicitation ceremony recognized their dedicated efforts in inspiring young minds and enriching the deliberations of the Youth Talk.



In his keynote address, the Director General congratulated **Free Smile Foundation Society**, the collaborating organizations, supporting partners, and the organizing team for successfully conducting the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk** on a theme of immense relevance to the Himalayan state. He appreciated the active participation of students, researchers, academicians, and youth leaders, noting that such platforms play a crucial role in fostering dialogue between scientific institutions, policymakers, civil society organizations, and young citizens.

Emphasizing the growing challenges of **climate change, environmental degradation, natural hazards, and rapid urbanization**, he highlighted the critical role of **science, technology, innovation, and research** in developing sustainable and evidence-based solutions. He encouraged students and young researchers to cultivate a scientific temperament, pursue interdisciplinary research, and actively contribute to finding innovative solutions for environmental conservation, disaster risk reduction, water security, waste management, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation.

He further stressed that the future of Uttarakhand depends upon **knowledge-driven development**, where scientific research is integrated with traditional wisdom and community participation. He urged the youth to transform innovative ideas into practical action through research projects, technological innovations, start-up initiatives, and grassroots interventions that can directly benefit society and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities.

The Director General also emphasized the importance of collaboration between **academic institutions, research organizations, government departments, and civil society** to create a robust ecosystem for innovation and sustainable development. He encouraged participants to remain actively engaged in scientific outreach programmes and to become ambassadors of environmental stewardship and disaster preparedness within their respective institutions and communities.

Concluding his address, he expressed confidence in the potential of the youth to become **leaders of change** and reiterated that **an informed, scientifically empowered, and environmentally conscious generation is essential for building a resilient, sustainable, and prosperous Uttarakhand**. His inspiring message motivated the participants to continue learning, innovating, and working collectively towards protecting the state's unique ecological heritage while contributing to its long-term sustainable development.

10. FELICITATION CEREMONY AND VOTE OF THANKS

The **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk (6th UYT)** concluded with a **Felicitation Ceremony**, during which all the distinguished speakers, panellists, resource persons, and special guests were honoured with mementoes and certificates in recognition of their invaluable contributions to the programme's success. The ceremony acknowledged their expertise, thought-provoking deliberations, and unwavering commitment towards promoting disaster resilience, environmental conservation, and youth empowerment in Uttarakhand.



Following the felicitation, the **Vote of Thanks** was delivered by **Mr. Hritik Bhandari**, a dedicated **Team Member of Free Smile Foundation Society**. In his address, he extended heartfelt gratitude to the **Director General, Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology (UCOST)** for his gracious presence and inspiring valedictory address. He also expressed sincere appreciation to all the esteemed speakers, panelists, dignitaries, and resource persons for sharing their valuable knowledge, experiences, and perspectives with the participants.

Mr. Bhandari conveyed his gratitude to the **Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology (UCOST)** and the **Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board (UKPCB)** for their collaboration and continued support in making the event a success. He also acknowledged the valuable support of **MY Bharat** and the **Proud Pahadi Society**, whose partnership significantly strengthened the outreach and impact of the programme.



He further thanked the administration of **Government Doon Medical College, Dehradun**, for providing the venue and extending logistical support for the successful organization of the event. Special appreciation was also extended to the organizing committee, volunteers, technical team, media representatives, student participants, cultural performers from **SGRR Nursing College**, and every individual who contributed their time, effort, and dedication to the successful execution of the programme.

In his concluding remarks, Mr Bhandari reaffirmed the Free Smile Foundation Society's commitment to continue organising meaningful platforms that encourage youth leadership, scientific dialogue, environmental stewardship, and community participation. He emphasized that the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk** was not merely an event but a collective movement to inspire young people to become active contributors towards **disaster resilience, environmental protection, and sustainable development**.

The programme concluded with the National Anthem, leaving participants inspired and motivated to translate the knowledge and insights gained during the Youth Talk into meaningful action for building a **safer, greener, and more resilient Uttarakhand**.



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11. GLIMPSES



12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The **Free Smile Foundation Society** expresses its heartfelt gratitude to all the dignitaries, institutions, partner organizations, volunteers, and participants whose invaluable support, guidance, and collaboration contributed to the successful organization of the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk (6th UYT) 2026** on the theme "**Youth Role in Disaster Resilience and Environmental Protection in Uttarakhand**," held on **11 July 2026** at **Government Doon Medical College, Dehradun**. The overwhelming support and active participation of all stakeholders made the event a meaningful platform for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and youth engagement towards building a resilient and environmentally sustainable Uttarakhand.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the **Uttarakhand Council of Science and Technology (UCOST)** for collaborating with us and continuously encouraging scientific dialogue, innovation, and youth participation in addressing the environmental and disaster management challenges of Uttarakhand. We are especially grateful to **Prof. (Dr.) Durgesh Pant, Director General, UCOST**, for his inspiring leadership, valuable guidance, and encouraging address during the valedictory session. We also convey our sincere appreciation to **Dr. Naveen Joshi, UCOST**, for his constant support, coordination, and contribution towards the successful organization of the programme. We are equally thankful to the **Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board (UKPCB)** for its continued commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable development, and for extending valuable support to this important initiative.

Our sincere appreciation is extended to **Dr. Geeta Jain, Principal, Government Doon Medical College, Dehradun**, and the entire administration of the institution for graciously providing the venue and extending wholehearted support as the **Venue Partner** for the successful conduct of the event. Their cooperation and hospitality played a significant role in ensuring the smooth execution of the programme.

We also acknowledge with deep appreciation the valuable support and collaboration extended by **Mr. Rahul Rawat, Director, MY Bharat Uttarakhand; Proud Pahadi Society**, particularly **Mr. Gaurav Bisht** and **Ms. Ankita Rawat; 27 Battalion, Uttarakhand NCC; SGRR Nursing College; AASRAA Trust**; and the **NSS Unit of Graphic Era University**. Their active participation, institutional cooperation, and encouragement significantly strengthened the outreach and impact of the 6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk.

We express our profound gratitude to our distinguished speakers and panelists—**Prof. (Dr.) Jog Bhatia, Col. Pratyul Thapliyal, and Mr. Chandan Nayal**—for sharing their vast knowledge, practical experiences, and insightful perspectives on disaster resilience, environmental conservation, water security, and ecological restoration. Their thought-provoking deliberations inspired participants to adopt a proactive approach towards environmental stewardship and community-based disaster preparedness.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to the Position Paper Presenters—**Mr. Aditya, Mr. Albab Quddosi, and Mrs. Namrata (Goonj)**—whose well-researched presentations contributed valuable ideas and practical recommendations on rural sustainability, disaster rehabilitation, and environmental protection. Their presentations enriched the academic and policy-oriented discussions of the programme and encouraged evidence-based dialogue among participants.

A special note of appreciation is extended to the dedicated **Uttarakhand Youth Talk Organizing Team** of the Free Smile Foundation Society, including **Simran Singh (Legal & Project Coordinator), Mr. Tinkoo Sharma, Mr. Piyush Tyagi, Mr. Sanskar,**



Mr. Sidhartha Tyagi, Mr. Mudit Singh Bora, Ms. Shruti Lakhera, Mr. Hritik Bhandari, and all other volunteers and team members whose unwavering commitment, meticulous planning, and tireless efforts ensured the seamless execution of every aspect of the event. Their dedication, teamwork, and enthusiasm were instrumental in making the programme a grand success.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all the students, researchers, academicians, NCC cadets, NSS volunteers, youth delegates, partner organizations, media representatives, cultural performers from **SGRR Nursing College**, and every participant who contributed their time, energy, and enthusiasm to make the **6th Uttarakhand Youth Talk 2026** a memorable and impactful platform for dialogue, collaboration, and collective action.

The **Free Smile Foundation Society** remains committed to fostering youth leadership, scientific awareness, environmental stewardship, and collaborative partnerships for building a **disaster-resilient, environmentally sustainable, and socially responsible Uttarakhand**. We look forward to continuing this collective journey towards empowering young people as catalysts for positive change and sustainable development.

PARTNER'S

