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Executive Summary

The Nepal Festival and Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023, held from December 15th to 17th at the Nepal Tourism Board Auditorium and National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) in Kathmandu, marked a significant milestone in environmental discourse and awareness in the region.

This groundbreaking event was a collaborative effort spearheaded by CMS VATAVARAN in partnership with the 15 different stakeholders working for the conservation at local and global levels including the Ministry of Forests and Environment of the Government of Nepal, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), Canadian High Commission in Nepal, IUCN Nepal National Committee (NCC), WWF Nepal, ZSL Nepal, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), Environmental Rights Network-Nepal, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) India, Human Rights Film Centre Nepal, Nepal Tourism Board, Kathmandu University, Nepal Youth Network for Sustainable Development (NYN) and the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN).

The festival's primary objective was to foster a deeper understanding and dialogue on the pressing issues of climate change and biodiversity conservation. It aimed to engage and educate a diverse audience, including policymakers, environmentalists, students, and the general public, through a series of film screenings, workshops, panel discussions, and training programs.

The program began with an inaugural ceremony presided over by His Excellency Mr Birendra Prasad Mahato, Hon. Minister of the Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal and followed by a series of panel discussions, film screenings, seminars, Impact Film making workshops.

The inaugural Ceremony featured notable guests such as His Excellency Mr Cameron MacKay, Canadian Ambassador to Nepal; Dr Deepak Kumar Kharal, Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal; Dr. Dindo Campilan, IUCN Asia Regional Office Regional Director; Mr. Sean Southey, Commission Chair, IUCN CEC; and Dr. P N Vasanti, DG, CMS and IUCN CEC Regional Vice Chair for South and Southeast Asia.

In a significant moment of the festival, the 'Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Green Ambassadors Award' was bestowed upon Ms Prabha Kumari Chaudhary and Mr Surya Bhattarai. This award served to acknowledge and honour their remarkable grassroots contributions to environmental conservation. Both Ms. Chaudhary and Mr. Bhattarai have exemplified exceptional dedication and efforts in their respective fields, playing pivotal roles in advancing grassroots environmental initiatives.

The festival successfully screened 12 international award-winning films, focusing on diverse environmental issues. Alongside the screenings, a drawing competition for the school children, the "Social Impact Filmmaking" workshop, the training program on "Accelerating Circular Economy and Sustainable Business" two short conversations on “Screening Sustainability: Using Film to Highlight Climate Change and Drive Change” and “Climate Crossroads: Understanding the Impact of Climate Change on Wildlife” and a panel discussion on “Planetary Health: Balancing Nepal’s Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability” of were key components of the festival, drawing significant participation and engagement.
Several eminent speakers i.e. Mr Sean Southey (Chair for the Commission on Education and Communication (IUCN-CEC), Dr Ghana Shyam Gurung, Country Representative, WWF Nepal, Ms Roshani Adhikari, Chair of the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), Dr Prahlad Kumar Thapa, prominent Agricultural Economist, Dr Chiranjibi Prasad Pokharel, Conservation Director, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Mr Amrit Devkota, Chairperson, Environmental Rights Network Nepal, Mr Surya Thapaliya, Manager, Nepal Tourism Board Dr P N Vasanti Rao (DG, CMS), Mr Sabyesachi Bharti (Deputy Director, CMS VATAVARAN), Mr Shyam Karki, Sr. Nepali Documentary Filmmaker and Mr Rakesh Rao, Sr. Environmental, Science and Conservation Filmmaker from India participated in it.

The festival succeeded in creating a platform for meaningful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and networking among various stakeholders. It highlighted the importance of collective action and the role of diverse sectors in addressing environmental challenges.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the festival's activities, achievements, and the impact it created. It serves as a testament to the festival's success in raising awareness, inspiring action, and fostering a sense of community among those committed to environmental conservation and sustainable development.
Background

The Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival and Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 was conceived as a crucial response to the escalating effects of climate change in the Himalayan region. In collaboration with more than 15 key partners including the Ministry of Forests and Environment of the Government of Nepal, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), the Canadian Embassy in Nepal, IUCN Nepal National Committee (NNC), WWF Nepal, ZSL Nepal, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), and the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), the festival aimed to ignite a vital dialogue on climate change and its impacts.

Set against the backdrop of the vulnerable Himalayan ecosystem, the festival focused on the alarming rate of glacial melt in the region and its consequential threats to water availability and ecosystem stability. These environmental changes, compounded by irregular monsoon patterns and extreme weather events, pose significant risks to agriculture, hydropower, and local infrastructure. Such challenges also affect the food and water security of the vast population reliant on the Himalayan rivers.

The festival served as a platform to highlight these pressing issues and facilitate discussions among a wide range of stakeholders. It aimed to educate and engage communities, especially the youth, on the intricacies of climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable living.

CMS VATAVARAN's commitment to raising awareness and inspiring action through visual storytelling and public forums has been a cornerstone of its efforts since 2002. The Nepal festival, with its unique focus on environmental and climate issues, was a significant addition to this endeavour. It brought together experts, policymakers, activists, and the public to discuss and devise strategies that address the challenges posed by climate change in the Himalayas.

By uniting a diverse array of partners, the festival underscored the necessity for collaborative action in tackling environmental challenges. The aim was to foster a sustainable future by initiating a dialogue that bridges local initiatives with global environmental concerns. Through this festival, CMS VATAVARAN endeavoured to catalyse a movement towards more resilient and sustainable practices in the face of climate adversity, setting a precedent for future environmental discourse and action in the region.
Planning: Blueprint to Reality

The journey to the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival and Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 began after the successful Bhutan festival held in 2022. Inspired by the Bhutan festival’s ability to foster meaningful dialogue among stakeholders in the Greater Himalayan Region (GHR), CMS envisioned a similar festival for Nepal. This idea was brought to life after extensive discussions and collaborative planning with key partners.

The concept was initially proposed to the officials of the IUCN-CEC and the Canadian High Commission in India, who were instrumental in the success of the Bhutan festival. Their positive response and approval set the stage for further development. Mr. Sean Southey, Chair of the IUCN-CEC, played a pivotal role in bringing IUCN and its Nepal office into the partnership, proposing the festival idea to the Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal. Recognizing the unique and timely nature of the festival, the Ministry agreed to become the official government partner.

The planning process gained momentum in August when the final dates and key program elements were determined. To ensure the festival’s success, a reconnaissance visit was organized in October 2024 for Mr Sabyesachi Bharti, Deputy Director, CMS VATAVARAN. During this visit, he has the honour of meeting the His Excellency Mr. Ram Sahaya Yadav, the Hon. Vice President of Nepal and informed him about the festival.

He was also engaged with various stakeholders, including the 27 members of the IUCN Nepal National Committee (NNC). This trip was critical in finalizing the festival's structure, partnering with various entities, selecting venues, and organizing logistics.
The festival's planning phase was marked by a blend of strategic discussions, collaborative decision-making, and on-ground assessments. These efforts were driven by a shared vision among all partners to create an impactful platform for discussing biodiversity conservation and climate action in Nepal.
Pre-festival Press Conference

The Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival & Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 commenced with an insightful pre-festival press conference on December 14th, at the IUCN Nepal Office in Kupondole, Lalitpur. This significant event was organized with the help of the festival's media partner, Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), and witnessed the participation of over 14 journalists from various news organizations.

Esteemed speakers at the press conference included His Excellency Mr Cameron MacKay, Canada’s Ambassador to Nepal; Mr Sean Southey, Commission Chair, IUCN CEC; and Dr P N Vasanti, CMS DG and IUCN CEC Regional Vice Chair for South and Southeast Asia. Each contributed valuable insights, highlighting the festival’s central themes and goals.

The press conference effectively set the stage for the festival, underlining its commitment to biodiversity conservation and climate action. It served as a platform for unveiling the festival’s diverse lineup and initiatives, including the prestigious 'Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Green Ambassadors Award’, which recognized the exceptional grassroots conservation efforts of Ms Prabha Kumari Chaudhary and Mr Surya Bhattrai.

His Excellency Mr. Cameron MacKay, Canada’s Ambassador to Nepal said that Canada is committed to supporting environmental initiatives in GRH and Nepal. This festival plays a crucial role in enhancing awareness and catalyzing action on vital environmental issues. He further said that his various programs in Nepal aim to contribute to this cause, and we’re proud to be part of such an impactful event. He also congratulated the winners of 'The Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Green Ambassadors Award'.

Mr. Sean Southey, Commission Chair, IUCN CEC said that the IUCN CEC’s dedication to environmental education is unwavering. Collaborating with CMS VATAVARAN in this festival exemplifies our joint efforts to bring critical environmental issues to the forefront. Through education and engagement, we aim to inspire sustainable practices and meaningful conservation efforts.
Ms Roshani Adhikari, the chair of NEFEJ, also attended the press conference. She expressed her delight in being part of such a timely and important festival, emphasizing its role in fostering environmental awareness and promoting sustainable action. Her participation reinforced the collaborative spirit of the festival, uniting media, governmental, and non-governmental organizations in a joint effort to address environmental challenges.

During the Press conference, Dr P N Vasanti, CMS DG said that CMS VATAVARAN’s work is focused on bridging environmental awareness and action. This festival is a cornerstone of its efforts, showcasing the pressing need for biodiversity conservation and climate action. By honouring grassroots heroes like Ms. Prabha Kumari Chaudhary and Mr. Surya Bhattai with the Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Green Ambassadors Award, we celebrate and amplify the voices of those making a real difference.

The event was a testament to the power of collaboration and media engagement in raising awareness of critical environmental issues, and setting the tone for the upcoming festival days.
The Festival

Inaugural Ceremony

The Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival & Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 kicked off with a grand inaugural ceremony on December 15th at the Nepal Tourism Board Auditorium, Kathmandu. The event began with the guests' arrival and registration, setting the stage for an evening dedicated to environmental consciousness.

The ceremony officially commenced with the arrival of the Honourable Minister, Dr Birendra Prasad Mahato, MOFE, Govt. of Nepal, accompanied by the National Anthem of Nepal. This was followed by the introduction of the distinguished guests, including His Excellency Mr Cameron MacKay, Canadian Ambassador to Nepal, Dr Dindo Campilan, Regional Director for IUCN Asia, Mr Sean Southey, Commission Chair, IUCN CEC, and Dr P N Vasanti, DG, Centre For Media Studies (CMS), New Delhi.
Dr P N Vasanti, the Director General of CMS, set the stage for the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival & Forum with her opening remarks, highlighting the significance of the festival in fostering environmental consciousness. She underscored the critical role of such platforms in raising awareness about ecological issues and their potential to inspire action towards sustainability.

As she welcomed the guests, Dr Vasanti reflected on the journey that led to the inception of the Nepal festival. She drew parallels to the success of the Bhutan Festival, organized previously by CMS VATAVARAN. The Bhutan Festival, she noted, had set a precedent in creating a meaningful dialogue between various stakeholders in the Greater Himalayan Region. This success story was a pivotal inspiration in proposing the Nepal Festival.

Dr Vasanti then delved into the collaborative nature of the festival, stressing the invaluable contributions of partners like IUCN, IUCN CEC, and the Embassy of Canada in Nepal. She described how the synergy between these organizations played a crucial role in bringing the festival to fruition. Their collective efforts, she pointed out, were essential in mobilizing resources, expertise, and networks necessary to make the festival a reality.

Dr Vasanti’s remarks set a tone of hope and collaboration for the festival. By emphasizing the importance of collective action and education in addressing environmental challenges, she inspired the audience to engage actively with the festival’s programs. Her words encapsulated the essence of the festival - a confluence of ideas, cultures, and actions aimed at preserving and nurturing our natural world.

The inaugural ceremony included a symbolic act of watering a plant, representing the festival’s theme of growth and sustainability. This act was more than a mere formality; it was a powerful reminder of the festival’s commitment to nurturing ideas and actions that contribute to a sustainable future. Dr Vasanti expressed hope that just like the plant, the seeds of awareness and responsibility sown through the festival would grow and spread beyond the event, leading to lasting impacts on environmental stewardship.
The context for the festival was eloquently set by Mr. Sean Southey, Commission Chair of IUCN CEC. In his address, he underscored the pressing urgency of climate change and biodiversity loss, challenges that have far-reaching impacts not just locally but globally. Mr. Southey emphasized the need for a united front in tackling these environmental crises, highlighting the festival as a crucial platform for bringing together diverse stakeholders, from policymakers and conservationists to educators and the youth.
Mr. Southey’s message resonated with the festival’s theme, calling for collective action and shared responsibility. He spoke about the power of storytelling, particularly through films, in shaping perceptions and inspiring change. By bringing environmental issues to the forefront through cinema, the festival aims to ignite conversations and drive collective action towards preserving our planet’s biodiversity and addressing the climate crisis.

Mr. Southey also expressed optimism about the festival’s potential to make a significant impact. He reiterated IUCN CEC’s commitment to environmental education and advocacy and their role in supporting initiatives like CMS VATAVARAN that contribute to raising awareness and fostering global cooperation for a sustainable future.

**His Excellency Mr. Cameron MacKay, the Canadian Ambassador to Nepal**, during his inaugural remarks, highlighted the pivotal role of gatherings like the CMS VATAVARAN festival in promoting environmental awareness and spurring collective action. He articulated, "This festival stands as a testament to our shared commitment to a sustainable future. Through our discussions, we aim to nurture a community that values and actively works towards safeguarding our planet."
Expanding on this, Ambassador MacKay also highlighted the role of Canada and its commitment to environmental conservation and climate action on a global scale. He drew attention to various initiatives undertaken by Canada in Nepal, focusing on sustainable development and conservation, thereby illustrating the nation’s dedication to these causes.

Mr. MacKay’s speech also touched upon the power of collaboration and partnership in achieving environmental goals. He encouraged the audience to view the festival not just as an event but as a movement - a collaborative effort that requires continuous engagement and action beyond the boundaries of the festival.
**Dr. Dindo Campilan, the Regional Director for IUCN Asia**, contributed significantly to the inaugural ceremony's dialogue, emphasizing the organization's dedication to environmental education. He pointed out that the festival's success was a direct result of the collaborative efforts of various organizations, including IUCN, which underscored the power of collective action in tackling environmental challenges.

Dr. Campilan elaborated on IUCN's role in promoting conservation and sustainable practices across the region. He highlighted how the organization works to bridge gaps between policy, research, and on-the-ground conservation efforts. By bringing together governments, NGOs, scientists, and local communities, IUCN fosters a more holistic approach to environmental stewardship.

Furthermore, Dr. Campilan appreciated the efforts of all partners involved in the festival, highlighting that such events are not just celebrations of environmental cinema but also platforms for serious discourse on pressing global issues. He underscored the need for continued collaboration and partnership beyond the festival to ensure sustained impact and progress in environmental conservation.

The highlight of the ceremony was the felicitation of the *Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Green Ambassadors Awards* to *Ms. Prabha Kumari Chaudhary* and *Mr. Surya Bhattrai*, acknowledging their grassroots contributions to environmental conservation. Both awardees exemplified extraordinary dedication to preserving Nepal's natural heritage, earning them this esteemed recognition.

In his keynote at the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Festival, *Honourable Forests and Environment Minister His Excellency Dr Birendra Prasad Mahato* emphasized Nepal's commitment to environmental conservation and education's role in sustainability. He praised the festival's focus on climate change impacts in Nepal and the Himalayan region and appreciated the collaborative efforts of various partners in organizing the event.
Highlighting the challenges of climate change, including glacial retreats and extreme weather patterns, Dr Mahato reiterated the government’s dedication to sustainable development and the importance of media in raising awareness. He also commended the recipients of the ‘Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Green Ambassadors Award 2023’ for their significant contributions to biodiversity conservation and expressed hope that the festival would inspire and enlighten all participants.

The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr Sabyesachi Bharti, Deputy Director CMS VATAVARAN marking the beginning of the festival’s screenings with the documentary 'The Firefox Guardian' by Gunjan Menon.
Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Green Ambassadors Award

The inaugural ceremony of the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Festival & Forum not only marked the beginning of a significant environmental event but also symbolized a collective step towards a sustainable future, highlighted by the inspiring words of the esteemed speakers.

The Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Green Ambassadors Award was a notable highlight of the festival, acknowledging the dedicated efforts of individuals working at the grassroots level for environmental conservation in Nepal. This award was instituted by CMS VATAVARAN in partnership with IUCN, IUCN CEC, the Ministry of Forests and Environment, the Government of Nepal, and the Canadian High Commission in India and Nepal.

Recognizing the substantial impact of climate change on Nepal, especially in the Himalayan region, the award aimed to honour individuals who have shown exemplary commitment to biodiversity conservation amidst challenges like glacial melting, land degradation, and the effects of rapid urbanization.

A panel of esteemed committee members was formed to select the awardees, comprising Dr Narendra Man Babu Pradhan from IUCN Nepal, Mr Matthew Loken of the Embassy of Canada in Nepal, Mr Rajendra Dhungana from the Ministry of Forests and Environment, Govt. of Nepal, and Mr Amit Poudyal from IUCN CEC Nepal.

The nomination process involved inviting conservation organizations across Nepal to nominate candidates, resulting in a total of 16 nominations. After careful deliberation and review, the committee selected Ms Prabha Kumari Chaudhary and Mr. Surya Bhattrai as the recipients of the award for their significant grassroots efforts in conserving Nepal’s rich biodiversity.
Ms Prabha Kumari Chaudhary

Prabha Kumari Chaudhary is a resident of the buffer zone of Bardia National Park. Her house is at a distance of about 500 meters from the forest of the park. Prabha’s village is called Bathanpur. Bathanpur is a wild elephant affected area. Since the land of Bathanpur village is connected to the park, there is annual crop loss due to deer, wild boar and blue bull. The people there used to kill wildlife by snaring. Prabha did not like this.

Prabha started reminding the locals not to kill wildlife. She started conducting awareness classes in villages about legal action for killing wildlife. Some people in the village did not agree with Prabha. They used to kill wildlife by stealth. Some people of the village were arrested and sent to jail on the charge of poaching wildlife. Only then did the local people agree with Prabha’s ideas.

After gaining the support of the local community, Prabha gained success and enthusiasm in wildlife conservation work. She formed a Community Based Anti-poaching Unit (CBAPU) in her village. She did not expand her group to the consumer committee level.

Prabha has been the president of the CBAPU Shivpur Integrated User Committee for the past 12 years. She is conducting an awareness campaign involving the youth to control poaching. She participated as a community ranger in the 9th World Rangers Congress held in Chitwan.

At present, under the leadership of Prabha, around 250 youths from Motipur, Lathua, Bakuwa, Wankhet, Mohanpur, Bathanpur, Kaligaudi and other villages are affiliated to CBAPU under Shivpur Integrated Consumer Committee. In addition to wildlife poaching control, they are assisting the park in reducing human-wildlife conflict.
Mr Surya Bhattari

Mr Surya Bhattari, vice-chairman of Sudap Khola Community Forest User Group, is one of the first-generation forest guardians of Taplejung District and is actively involved in implementing the “Community-based red panda conservation” program. His childhood memories are filled with encounters with a creature he knew as “Punde kundo” in the jungle. It was only after the launch of the “Community-based Red Panda Conservation” program by the Red Panda Network, that he became aware that the creature that he saw was an endangered animal- the Red Panda.

His journey has taken him from working as a labourer in Qatar for 4 years (1999-2003) to returning to Nepal and working as a farmer in his village. However, his life took a transformative turn 9 years ago when he jumped at the chance to protect his forest and support red panda conservation by joining the Red Panda Network Forest Guardian Program. Over this period, he has patrolled hundreds of miles of red panda habitat, trained on forest fire management techniques, red panda monitoring and anti-poaching patrolling, installed camera traps, and helped mobilize the community to control forest fires.

Besides red panda monitoring, Mr Bhattari also educates fellow community members on the importance of Red pandas, arranges eco-trips for Red panda eco-clubs, collects data on dog population in his villages, and is actively involved in collecting red panda pellets for genetic research. He was also involved in a survey of Chinese pangolins with a field biologist from RPN in 2022. In the same year, Surya Bhattari successfully rescued a red panda that had entered to his village, probably chased by a feral dog or other predator species like a yellow-throated marten. Please find the film about him here.

Each awardee was honoured with a citation, a trophy, and a cash prize of 10,000 NPR, symbolizing gratitude and recognition of their vital contributions to environmental conservation in Nepal. This initiative not only celebrated their achievements but also aimed to inspire further action and awareness regarding environmental issues in the country.
Inaugural Film

The Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival and Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 had the privilege of screening the captivating documentary “The Firefox Guardian” by Gunjan Menon, a young and passionate Indian wildlife filmmaker.

This twelve-minute documentary takes the audience on an enchanting journey through the dense bamboo jungles of Nepal, sharing the story of Menuka, the first female forest guardian working with the Red Panda Network.

Gunjan Menon, at the age of 25, has already made significant strides in the field of wildlife filmmaking. With experience filming across India, Nepal, the United Kingdom, and the United States, her work transcends geographical boundaries. She is not only devoted to wildlife but has also gained experience as a freelance producer, camerawoman, and editor in various genres including digital content, comedy, music, and science shows.

The inaugural ceremony concluded with a high tea, attended by over 250 guests. This gathering provided an opportunity for attendees to engage in meaningful discussions, fostering a sense of collaboration and community that echoed the festival’s spirit.
## Programme Schedule

### Day 1 - December 15, 2023 | Friday

**NTB Auditorium**

- **Inaugural Ceremony**
- **Opening Film: The Firefox Guardian**, Gunjan Menon

**NTNC Seminar Hall**

- **Social Impact Filmmaking Workshop**

### Day 2 - December 16, 2023 | Saturday

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>NTB Auditorium</th>
<th>NTNC Board Room</th>
<th>NTNC Seminar Hall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:30 am - 01:30 pm</td>
<td>The Climate Challenge</td>
<td>Kokota-The Islet of Hope</td>
<td>UseLess</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>00:23:15</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English, Swahili, Craig Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:30 pm - 03:30 pm</td>
<td>Thank you to our Filmmakers</td>
<td>UseLess</td>
<td>Shepherds of Naar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>00:50:00</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English, Swahili, Craig Norris</td>
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<tr>
<td>03:30 pm - 04:30 pm</td>
<td>Panel Discussion</td>
<td>PLANETARY HEALTH: Balancing Nepal's Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability</td>
<td>Panel Discussion</td>
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**STORYTELLING AND SOCIAL IMPACT FILMMAKING WORKSHOP**

### Day 3 - December 17, 2023 | Sunday

**NTB Auditorium**

- **Gyamo - Queen of the Mountains**
  - Doel Trivedy and Gautam Pandey | 42 Min | English | India
- **The Python Code**
  - Andreas Ewels | 00:28:45 | German and English | Germany
- **Rewild**
  - Alexis Breton, Cyprien d’Haese, Thomas Zribi | 59 minutes | English, French, Portuguese and Russian | France

**NTNC Seminar Hall**

- **Social Impact Filmmaking Workshop**

**Panel Discussion**

- "Climate Crossroads: Understanding the Impact of Climate Change on Wildlife"

**Master Class on Communicating Conservation**

- **“Communicating Conservation”**
  - by Mr. Sean Southey (IUCN Chair) & Dr. Yasanti Roca (DG, CMS)

**Certificate Distributions and Closing Ceremony**

www.cmsvatavaran.org
Film Screenings and other side events

For two consecutive days, the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival & Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 expanded its reach across two venues in Kathmandu; The Nepal Tourism Board Auditorium and the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). While the Nepal Tourism Board Auditorium was the central stage for the main screenings and panel discussions, the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) Seminar Hall hosted the two essential workshops, the "Social Impact Filmmaking" and “Accelerating Circular Economy and Sustainable Business.”

From 10:30 AM to 5:00 PM on the 16th and 17th of December, the festival showcased a curated selection of 12 distinguished CMS VATAVARAN environmental films. These films, honoured with awards or nominations, tackled critical environmental themes such as climate change, wildlife and forest conservation, and sustainable livelihoods. This array of films offered festival attendees a comprehensive and insightful view of the varied environmental issues and potential solutions.

Panel Discussions

During the festival, a series of three insightful panel discussions on diverse environmental themes were organised. The first and third discussions were seamlessly integrated into thematic film screenings focusing on Climate Change and Wildlife Conservation, respectively. These discussions complemented the film sessions, deepening the audience's understanding of the issues presented on screen.

In the second session, we delved into a crucial and timely topic: “Planetary Health: Balancing Nepal’s Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability.” This panel brought to the forefront the pressing need to harmonize Nepal’s developmental aspirations with ecological preservation, a subject of great relevance given the country's unique environmental challenges and economic ambitions.

Session One, Day 2- Dec 16, 2023:

Topic: A Conversation on Screening Sustainability: Using Film to Highlight Climate Change and Drive Change.

Panel Members:

- **Mr Amrit Devkota**, Chairperson of Environmental Rights Network Nepal
- **Dr P N Vasanti**, Director General of the Center for Media Studies (CMS)

On the second day of the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival & Forum on Biodiversity Conservation & Climate Action 2023, a significant session titled "Screening Sustainability: Using Film to Highlight Climate Change and Drive Change" took place. Dr P N Vasanti, Director General of the Center for Media Studies (CMS), moderated the discussion, and Mr Amrit Devkota, an experienced environmental professional from Nepal, was the key speaker.
The session centred on the influential role of film in bringing environmental issues and climate change to the forefront of public awareness. Mr. Devkota drew on his extensive experience to discuss how films can shape public opinion, influence policy-making, and encourage community involvement in sustainable practices. This enlightening conversation provided young attendees with a deeper understanding of local environmental challenges. It set a solid foundation for further discussions and active engagement in the remaining days of the festival and forum.

**Session Two, Day 2- Dec 16, 2023:**


Panel Members:
- Ms Roshani Adhikari, Chair of the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ)
- Dr Ghana Shyam Gurung, Country Representative, WWF Nepal
- Dr Prahlad Kumar Thapa, Agricultural Economist
- Mr. Surya Thapaliya, Manager at Nepal Tourism Board
- Mr Sean Southey, Chair of IUCN CEC,
- Moderator: Dr P N Vasanti, Director General of the Center for Media Studies (CMS)

During the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival & Forum on Biodiversity Conservation & Climate Action 2023, a crucial panel discussion titled “Planetary Health: Balancing Nepal’s Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability” took place on the second day. Moderated by Dr P N Vasanti, Director General of the Center for Media Studies (CMS), the panel brought together experts from various fields to discuss the intersection of Nepal’s economic development and environmental sustainability.

Dr Ghana Shyam Gurung, representing WWF Nepal, highlighted emphasized the environmental challenges stemming from Nepal's growing population. He highlighted the increased demand for resources leading to pressure on ecosystems. Stressing the need for sustainable population management, Dr Gurung called for community-driven conservation and eco-friendly practices to balance demographic growth with environmental health.

Dr Prahlad Kumar Thapa, an agricultural economist, emphasized the importance of embracing sustainable farming methods, especially as Nepal progresses from being a least developed country to a developing one. He also raised concerns about the increasing reliance on hybrid seeds and chemicals in agriculture, underscoring the need for sustainable farming practices.

Mr. Surya Thapaliya from the Nepal Tourism Board brought attention to a critical issue in Nepal's tourism sector: the emphasis on numerical growth rather than the quality of tourist experiences. He elaborated on how this quantitative approach often overlooks the environmental and cultural impacts of tourism. Thapaliya advocated for a shift towards sustainable tourism practices that prioritize the preservation of Nepal's natural and cultural heritage while ensuring a high-quality experience for visitors.

Ms Roshani Adhikari, the chairperson of the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), emphasized the crucial role of protecting Nepal's environmental narrative. She compared the country's diverse ecosystems to a flourishing garden, which requires constant care and attention. Adhikari stressed that just as a garden thrives with nurturing, Nepal's unique environmental stories need to be preserved and shared responsibly. This, she believed, is vital not just for maintaining the
country's natural beauty and biodiversity, but also for educating and inspiring current and future generations about the importance of environmental conservation. Her analogy highlighted the need for continuous effort in environmental storytelling and advocacy to keep Nepal's natural heritage vibrant and alive.
Mr Sean Southey, the Chair of the International Union for Conservation of Nature Commission on Education and Communication (IUCN CEC), brought attention to the pressing challenges faced by Kathmandu due to its rapidly expanding population and the escalating impacts of climate change. He voiced his concerns about how these factors are increasingly putting pressure on the city’s infrastructure and natural resources. Despite these challenges, Mr. Southey remained hopeful. He emphasized the power of collective action and the importance of engaging in meaningful discussions like those happening at the forum. He believed that through collaborative efforts and shared knowledge, effective solutions could be found to address these pressing environmental issues. His optimism highlighted the potential for positive change when communities come together to tackle the challenges posed by urban growth and climate change.

The panellists collectively stressed the need for a balance between economic growth and ecological health. They called for effective policies, political will, and incentives to turn sustainability plans into reality. The discussion also covered topics like community-based conservation efforts, the role of green technologies, and the importance of global partnerships in achieving sustainable economic goals. This insightful session reinforced the idea that Nepal’s economic aspirations and ecological sustainability can harmoniously coexist with cooperation and the right policies, setting the nation on a path to green growth.

Session Three, Day 3 - Dec 17, 2023:

Topic: A Conversation on Climate Crossroads: “Understanding the Impact of Climate Change on Wildlife”

Panel Members:
- Dr Chiranjibi Prasad Pokharel, Conservation Director, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)
- Mr Shyam Karki, Documentary Filmmaker
- Moderated by Dr P N Vasanti, Director General of the Center for Media Studies (CMS)

The final day of the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival & Forum on Biodiversity Conservation & Climate Action 2023 featured an important discussion titled "Climate Crossroads: Understanding the Impact of Climate Change on Wildlife." The session was moderated by Dr. P N Vasanti, the Director General of the Center for Media Studies (CMS). Dr. Chiranjibi Prasad Pokharel from the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Nepal, and Mr. Shyam Karki, a documentary filmmaker, were the key speakers.

Dr. Pokharel spoke about NTNC’s work in community-based wildlife conservation, including efforts in restoration, rescue, and spreading knowledge about wildlife in Nepal. He stressed the importance of local community involvement in these initiatives. Mr. Karki discussed the power of video in today’s world, especially on social media platforms. He encouraged people to create their own wildlife videos, even by filming animals around their homes, to spread awareness.
Dr Vasanti guided the discussion, highlighting the crucial need to address how climate change is affecting wildlife. The session provided participants with a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between climate change and wildlife. It underscored the importance of ongoing conversations and joint efforts to tackle these environmental challenges.

**Impact Film Making Workshop**

The “Social Impact Filmmaking” workshop, held from December 15th to 17th, 2023 at the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) in Kathmandu, was a key feature of the Nepal Festival. This three-day event emphasized the role of films and photographs in raising awareness about environmental and climate change issues.
Films and photographs have the power to connect with people on an emotional level. By weaving environmental themes into this medium, complex scientific concepts become more accessible and relatable to a wider audience. In today's world, where social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are prevalent, short videos and photo stories are incredibly effective in disseminating information quickly and engagingly.

The workshop aimed to train participants in creating impactful films that raise environmental awareness. It attracted around 39 participants, including members from the 27 IUCN Nepal National Committee (NNC), various conservation organizations like ICIMOD, and mass communication students from Kathmandu University. The sessions covered various aspects of filmmaking, such as ideation, research, scripting, cinematography, sound, and editing, encompassing the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production.
One of the unique aspects of the workshop was the hands-on experience. Participants were grouped and tasked with creating a "180-second Impact film." They were challenged to conceptualize, script, shoot, and edit their short environmental films, providing them with a comprehensive filmmaking experience.

The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Rakesh Rao, a renowned Science and Environmental Filmmaker. His expertise lies in documenting scientific expeditions and research activities, and his work has taken him to the Arctic, Antarctic, and the Himalayas. His film "The Climate Challenge" won awards at the 11th CMS VATAVARAN Festival and other prestigious science film festivals. Rao's notable projects
include producing the official teaser for ISRO’s Chandrayaan-2 mission and documenting the construction of India’s ‘Bharati’ station in Antarctica, along with several scientific expeditions in the Southern Ocean and the Himalayas.

Overall, the workshop aimed to inspire and equip budding filmmakers to explore and excel in the niche area of environmental photography and filmmaking.

**Accelerating Circular Economy and Sustainable Business**

The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) in Kathmandu, Nepal, was the venue for the significant "Accelerating Circular Economy and Sustainable Business" workshop held on December 16, 2023. This initiative, a collaboration between CMS VATAVARAN and the Canadian Embassy in Nepal, was specifically designed to empower early-stage green entrepreneurs, especially women from marginalized communities. The workshop aimed to imbue participants with essential knowledge, skills, and resources for growing sustainable, eco-friendly businesses within a circular economy framework.

The workshop began with a warm welcome from Ms Jasvinder, the Advocacy and Communications Officer at the Embassy of Canada, and Sabyesachi Bharti, Deputy Director of CMS VATAVARAN. They emphasized the workshop's goal of fostering sustainability and supporting green initiatives. The
event’s packed agenda included insightful sessions led by esteemed experts, covering a wide range of topics from sustainable business practices, circular economy principles, market analysis, and supply chain sustainability, to fundraising strategies.

One of the standout moments of the workshop was the series of keynote addresses that began with an inaugural welcome from Dr Krishna Prasad Oli, Chairperson of the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). Dr Oli set the tone for the event with his insightful remarks, emphasizing the importance of collective efforts in environmental conservation and the vital role of initiatives like the Nepal-CMS VATAVARAN Film Festival in fostering such collaboration.
Following Dr Oli, **His Excellency Mr Cameron MacKay, the Canadian Ambassador to Nepal**, took the stage. Ambassador MacKay discussed the various environmental initiatives that Canada is involved in within Nepal. He expressed his admiration for the festival's commitment to raising environmental consciousness. His words underscored the crucial role of international cooperation and knowledge sharing in tackling global environmental challenges. Ambassador MacKay’s address not only highlighted Canada’s dedication to environmental issues but also reinforced the festival's significance as a platform for promoting environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

Engaging training sessions followed, focusing on various aspects of sustainable and circular business strategies. These sessions were led by experts including Mr. Manish Jha, a Member of Parliament from Nepal known for his involvement in start-ups and new initiatives, Dr. Achyut Wagle, Economist and Registrar, Kathmandu University, Dr. Dindo Campilan, IUCN Asia Regional Office Regional Director, and Mr. Saurav Dhakal, the Founder of StoryCycle. Their presentations spanned topics from green economy, business engagement in biodiversity, to innovative approaches in sustainability.
In the workshop, the first key session titled ‘Green Economy – Sustainable Business and Society’ featured Mr Manish Jha, a Member of the Parliament of Nepal known for his engagement with start-ups. Mr Jha shared his insights on integrating sustainability into business, emphasizing the economic and environmental benefits of green practices. His real-life examples from startup experiences highlighted the potential of sustainable business models. The session, appreciated by attendees for its practical insights, underscored the importance of eco-friendly approaches in modern business practices.

At the workshop, Dr. Achyut Wagle, Economist and Registrar of Kathmandu University offered a compelling talk on incorporating sustainability into business education. He explored the concept of a circular economy, emphasizing its stark contrast to traditional linear economic models by focusing on resource conservation and regeneration. Dr Wagle underlined the crucial role of human behaviour and psychology in this economic model, stressing the need for a paradigm shift from consumption to
sustainability. He advocated for the integration of these principles in business curricula, preparing future leaders to establish enterprises that are both economically viable and environmentally responsible. His insights highlighted the importance of nurturing a new generation of entrepreneurs and professionals committed to sustainable business practices and the circular economy.

In a following session titled 'Business Engagement for Biodiversity,' Dr Dindo Campilan, Regional Director of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia Regional Office, shared his extensive knowledge and experience. With a background in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Dr Campilan brought to light the various programs of IUCN Asia in Southeast Asia, emphasizing their focus on agriculture and the circular economy.

Dr Campilan's talk delved into the intersection of business practices and biodiversity conservation. He highlighted how IUCN's initiatives are designed to promote sustainable agricultural practices while fostering the principles of a circular economy. This approach, he explained, is not only about environmental stewardship but also about creating resilient and sustainable economic systems that
can adapt and thrive in harmony with nature. Dr Campilan's presentation underscored the importance of integrating biodiversity conservation into business models, demonstrating how environmental sustainability can be a driving force for innovative and forward-thinking business strategies.

Next in the workshop was a session titled 'Circular Business Strategies' led by Mr Saurav Dhakal, Founder and curator of StoryCycle. An advocate for sustainability and an adept storyteller, Mr Dhakal shared his unique insights into sustainable practices. He engaged the audience with innovative approaches to incorporating sustainability into business models, drawing from his extensive experience in promoting environmental awareness through storytelling. His talk focused on practical strategies for businesses to adopt circular economy principles, emphasizing the importance of creating sustainable and environmentally friendly business practices. Dhakal's session provided participants with a fresh perspective on how storytelling can be a powerful tool in advocating and implementing sustainability in the business world.
The workshop was not just an educational platform but also an excellent networking opportunity. A lunch break and a high tea session provided the participants a chance to interact, share ideas, and form connections that could lead to future collaborations.

Post lunch the workshop welcomed Ms Juna Mathema, a renowned entrepreneur and researcher. Co-founder of Blitz, Ms. Mathema plays multiple roles including Executive Committee Member at FNCCI, Chair of FNCCI's Startup & Innovation Forum, and has extensive experience in the Women Entrepreneurship Development Committee at FNCCI and as Vice-President (Women) at NYEF. Her session highlighted her diverse background in finance, consulting, and digital solutions, coupled with her research in labor migration.

Ms. Mathema shared her insights on how entrepreneurial ventures can be merged with social responsibilities, illustrating her commitment to blending business innovation with social impact. Her talk offered participants a glimpse into the world of responsible entrepreneurship and its potential to drive positive social change.

The day culminated with a panel discussion on ‘Entrepreneurship – Challenges and Opportunities,’ moderated by Mr Prakash Sharma, National Project Coordinator ILO Office for Nepal. Panellists included Dr Narayan Regmi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administrative, Ms Anu Joshi Shrestha, Expert on entrepreneurship, value chain and livelihood working in ICIMOD, Kathmandu, and Ms Darshana Shrestha, first Vice-president of Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs Associations of Nepal, who brought diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in entrepreneurship. Their discussions were enlightening and provided a comprehensive understanding of how sustainable practices can be integrated into business models.
In summary, the workshop was a resounding success, providing valuable learning experiences and encouraging dialogue among participants from various backgrounds. It highlighted the importance of circular economy and sustainable business practices in the context of environmental conservation and economic development. The event set a benchmark for future initiatives aiming to advance green entrepreneurship and sustainable business models in Nepal.

The workshop saw participation from 50 individuals hailing from various regions across Nepal. After the workshop, each participant was honoured with a certificate of participation, recognizing their involvement and learning.

**Master Class on Communicating Conservation**

The final day of the festival featured a compelling master class titled "Communicating Conservation," led by Mr Sean Southey, Chair of the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, and Dr Vasanti Rao, Director General of CMS. This session delved into the art of crafting impactful narratives for conservation, aiming to foster a deeper connection between people and the natural world.

Titled “Turning Up the Volume on Conservation,” the master class was enriched by the extensive experiences of both experts. They employed real-world examples to illustrate seven key principles of effective conservation communication. These principles included understanding diverse audiences, developing a strategic communication plan, leveraging the power of positive messaging, understanding the pivotal role of distribution channels, recognizing the value of trusted voices in communication, and the vital importance of initiating conversations rather than merely creating content.
The session was inspired by the words of writer Janet Litherland: “Stories have power. They delight, enchant, touch, teach, recall, inspire, motivate, challenge. They help us understand. They imprint a picture on our minds. Consequently, stories often pack more punch than sermons. Want to make a point or raise an issue? Tell a story.”

The master class culminated in an interactive session, where attendees engaged in a vibrant discussion and Q&A session, reflecting on the insights shared. This session not only enlightened the participants about effective conservation messaging but also equipped them with tools to become more persuasive and impactful storytellers in the realm of environmental conservation.
Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony of the Nepal Festival and Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 was a fitting culmination of the impactful three-day event. The ceremony was graced by the presence of distinguished guests and dignitaries who played pivotal roles in making the festival a success.

The proceedings began with the arrival and registration of guests, followed by the entrance of the dignitaries, including Chief Guest of the ceremony, His Excellency Mr Cameron MacKay, Canadian Ambassador to Nepal, Mr Sean Southey, Commission Chair, IUCN CEC, Dr Narendra Pradhan, Country Representative for IUCN Nepal, Mr Sharad Chandra Adhikari, Member Secretary of NTNC and Ms P N Vasanti, Director General, Centre For Media Studies (CMS), New Delhi, who chaired the session.

Ms. Vasanti warmly welcomed the guests with her opening remarks, highlighting the festival’s achievements and its role in promoting environmental awareness and action. This was followed by a comprehensive festival report presented by Mr Sabyesachi Bharti, Deputy Director of CMS VATAVARAN, which detailed the festival’s various events, workshops, and discussions.
The inaugural remarks by Mr. Sean Southey and Dr. Narendra Pradhan further emphasized the importance of continued efforts in environmental conservation and the role of such festivals in educating and mobilizing communities. Mr. Sharad Chandra Adhikari, Member Secretary of NTNC, addressed on behalf of the festival partner organizations, expressing gratitude and outlining the collaborative efforts that made the festival possible.
One of the highlights of the ceremony was the felicitation of festival partner organizations and the distribution of certificates, acknowledging their invaluable contributions. The Chief Guest, Honourable Canadian Ambassador to Nepal, His Excellency Mr. Cameron MacKay, in his remarks, beautifully summed up the spirit of the festival, stating, "This festival stands as a ray of hope for a sustainable future. We discussed innovation, eco-friendly businesses, the role of the media, and much more. Our goal is to nurture a community dedicated to safeguarding our planet. Let’s sustain this momentum, recognizing that every action contributes to our collective journey. We all want to ensure every individual and future generation can thrive in harmony with nature."
Mr. Sabyesachi Bharti concluded the ceremony with a vote of thanks, appreciating the participation of guests, speakers, and attendees, and emphasizing the importance of the collective journey towards a more sustainable future. The ceremony closed with a high tea, providing an opportunity for further discussion, networking, and reflection on the festival’s achievements and future aspirations.

**Conclusion**

The Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Festival and Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 marked a significant milestone as the first event of its kind in Nepal. This pioneering festival successfully established a multi-partner platform, bringing together an impressive collaboration of 16 partner organizations and 27 conservation groups. This synergistic effort created a forum that not only sparked widespread interest but also facilitated critical discussions on timely environmental issues.

The festival stood out for its inclusive approach, engaging over 750 participants, including a substantial number of students. This student participation was particularly noteworthy, as it fostered an environment of learning and awareness among the younger generation, crucial for the long-term impact of environmental conservation efforts.

Moreover, the festival served as an effective platform for discussing urgent and relevant environmental topics. Through a series of over 7 workshops and master classes, led by more than 20 expert speakers, the festival provided a dynamic and interactive learning environment. These sessions offered valuable insights and hands-on experiences, covering a broad spectrum of environmental challenges and solutions.

In conclusion, the Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Festival and Forum not only marked a first in the nation’s history but also set a precedent in creating a collaborative and educational platform. It successfully engaged diverse groups, from students to experts, in meaningful dialogue and action for environmental conservation, making it a benchmark event in Nepal’s journey towards sustainable development.
Social Media Coverage

In today's digital era, social media plays a crucial role in disseminating information and engaging audiences. Recognizing this, the Nepal Festival and Forum on Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Action 2023 leveraged social media's power for extensive promotion. The festival's presence was significantly amplified across various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Facebook, with its vast user base, served as the primary platform for our digital campaign. The festival's promotional activities on Facebook and its affiliate, Instagram, were highly effective. We employed a range of engaging content, including festival promos and regular updates, to capture the audience's interest.

The impact of these efforts was evident in the substantial organic reach achieved during the festival. Without any paid promotions, our posts on Facebook alone reached over 7,500 members. This remarkable organic reach underscores the festival's relevance and the resonance of its theme with the online community. The success of our social media campaign played a significant role in enhancing the festival's visibility and engagement, contributing to its overall success.
Media Coverage

The Nepal CMS VATAVARAN Festival and Forum garnered substantial media attention, with extensive coverage across various channels. The event was featured prominently in several newspaper dailies, which provided detailed reports on the festival's activities and programs. The collective media coverage across print, television, and digital platforms significantly contributed to raising awareness about the festival's objectives and successfully disseminated its key messages to a diverse audience.

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