



### Promoting Parashar Ecotourism Initiative at International Shivratri Mela, Himachal Pradesh

**D**evelopment Alternatives in collaboration with the National Mission on Himalayan Studies, implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India is promoting ecotourism based livelihoods in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. As part of the initiative, a stall was set up to disseminate information about the project at the International Shivratri Mela in Mandi (Saras Mela Exhibition) from 21-28 February 2020. Products made by community members from the villages in Mandi (Thatta, Lagshal, Bhanuthi and Kalang) and Uttarkashi (Kamad-Thandi) were displayed at the stall.

It also promoted organic farm produce like (Kidney beans, Kodo millet, clarified butter, red rice, and walnut), traditional food items (Siddu, walnut parantha and Kodo kachori) and Ringal handicrafts.

The intent of setting up this stall was to reach out to a larger audience and link the community members to a public platform where they can proudly promote their responsible tourism initiative and culture.

Among some stakeholders who visited the stall and interacted with the community members, were professors from IIT-Mandi, students, and locals from various districts. The event also saw visits from popular travel bloggers who work on promoting responsible tourism.

The chief minister of Himachal Pradesh Jai Ram Thakur also visited the stall and appreciated the efforts in boosting the community's confidence. Sales worth INR 17,000 were recorded during the week which also established people's faith in the value organic and natural produce holds in the market. The response was overwhelming and allowed the community members to interact with visitors and enhance their communication skills and confidence.