

Report on IAMCR 2025 Conference in Singapore Attended by Ms. Ikla Subba Ph.D. scholar, & Dr. Pooja Basnett Dept. of Mass Communication, Sikkim University

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Dr. Pooja Basnett, Assistant Professor in the Department of Mass Communication Sikkim University, and her Ph.D. scholar Ms. Ikla Subba, participated in the conference organized by the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) 2025 held from July 13 to 17 at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. They also presented their co-authored paper titled “*Indigenous Battle Over Cultural Beliefs: A Study of the Mukkumlung Protests for Environmental Protection in Nepal.*” Their presentation took place on July 14, under the Participatory Communication Research Section (PCR), in a panel titled “Environmental Activism, Justice, and Ethics,” chaired by communication scholar Dr. Jessica Noske-Turner from the Loughborough University, United Kingdom.

The IAMCR 2025 conference, themed “*Communicating Environmental Justice: Many Voices, One Planet,*” brought together researchers and scholars from across the world to examine how media and communication practices can both challenge and contribute to environmental issues. The conference emphasized the importance of intersectional, interdisciplinary, and inclusive approaches in addressing the global climate crisis. Topics ranged from climate activism and greenwashing to indigenous media, ethics, and participatory storytelling. Hosted in Singapore, a city known for its rapid urbanization and environmental planning, the conference provided a meaningful platform for reflecting on the communication challenges and innovations involved in building sustainable futures.

In alignment with the conference theme, Ms. Ikla Subba & Dr. Pooja Basnett’s paper examined the indigenous community led *Save Mukkumlung Movement* in Eastern Nepal in the Taplejung district, where the Limbu community protested a cable car project near the sacred *Mukkumlung* site. Grounded in the oral scripture *Mundhum*, the study showed how cultural beliefs and spiritual traditions were mobilized to resist ecological disruption and assert ancestral ties to the land. Drawing from interviews and field observations, the researchers illustrated how traditional knowledge, passed through generations, shaped the protest’s messaging through slogans, performances, digital campaigns, and community gatherings. The presentation highlighted how such indigenous narratives challenge dominant ideas of development that overlook cultural and ecological values. It argued for reimagining development through local worldviews that see land as sacred, not exploitable. The study also showed how blending traditional beliefs with modern communication tools amplified the movement’s reach, bringing national and international attention. Ultimately, it stressed the need to recognize indigenous voices in environmental policy, as these communities often stand at the frontline of climate and ecological change.

Their presentation was part of an intellectually engaging panel that featured four other insightful papers.

Dr. Charlotte Hill of Chiang Mai University and Prof. Mirca Madianou of Goldsmiths, University of London, presented their study on the digital identity construction among encamped Karen refugees through a visual participatory methodology.

Prof. Wendy Su of the University of California, Riverside, USA presented on Chinese youth activism within the Rural Reconstruction Movement, emphasizing how young people in rural China are mobilizing environmental justice through creative communication strategies.

Ms. Marie Rathmann from Austrian Academy of Sciences on behalf of her co-authors Dr. Tobias Eberwein, Dr. Krisztina Rozgonyi (Austrian Academy of Sciences), and Dr. Laura Amigo (Università della Svizzera Italiana, Switzerland) presented a comparative analysis of dialogic communication principles in international codes of ethics.

The final presentation by Ms. Meng Yao from the Communication University of China, Beijing examined music as a tool for emotional mobilization in climate change advocacy. Her presentation shed light on how music can drive climate activism, especially among the younger generations.

Moderated by Dr. Noske-Turner, the panel sparked meaningful discussions around ethics, representation, resistance, and indigenous knowledge. The session foregrounded inclusion and participation as essential principles in both research and practice. Questions raised during the discussion explored the complexities of documenting oral traditions, the role of media in amplifying indigenous resistance, and the challenges of negotiating modern development agendas with traditional ecological values. Ms. Ikla Subba & Dr. Pooja Basnett were deeply encouraged by the interest shown in their work and received valuable feedback from fellow scholars on pursuing comparative inquiries with other indigenous movements.

In addition to presenting their research, the two actively participated in various other sessions at IAMCR 2025, which exposed them to a wide array of approaches and methodologies in communication. They attended presentations on story telling and creative methodologies, climate journalism, digital activism, feminist perspectives on ecology etc. These sessions helped them gain insight on how media infrastructures, institutional narratives, and communication tools operate differently across global and local contexts. The conference provided an active space for exchanging ideas, debating frameworks, and building academic networks. For both participants, the conference was not only a platform for sharing their work but also an opportunity to learn from the practices, struggles, and successes of other researchers working on varied areas.

The setting of Singapore added further layers of insight and reflection. As a multicultural, hyper-urbanized, and environmentally ambitious city-state, Singapore embodied many of the themes debated at the conference. Formal - informal discussions, and exposure to the city's environmental initiatives helped participants reflect on how communication strategies are also employed in urban planning and ecological management. Observing how Singapore balances technology, development, and sustainability offered comparative insights that could inform future research.

Overall, IAMCR 2025 was a transformative experience. This research on the Mukkumlung protest not only found a relevant and responsive audience but also contributed meaningfully to a global academic conversation on environmental justice, cultural identity, and participatory communication. The feedback, learning, and connections gained during the conference will shape future work and enrich the consideration of how communication, culture, and ecology intersect in both resistance and resilience. The conference reaffirmed participants belief in the importance of ethical, inclusive, and grounded communication research and left them inspired to further their commitment to amplifying indigenous voices and environmental consciousness through scholarly work.



