

Social Development  
for Communities  
FOUNDATION

# राउंडटेबल डायलॉग

मतदान में मात  
क्यों खा रहा उत्तराखंड

April 28, 2024

Hotel Inderlok  
Rajpur road Dehradun



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## SDC ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUE

### **Why is Uttarakhand facing a decline in voter turnout?**

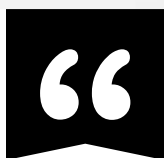
For the Lok Sabha elections in 2024, Uttarakhand recorded a significantly low turnout of only 57.22%. This voter turnout percentage is lower compared to the previous two Lok Sabha elections in Uttarakhand. Even in these elections, there was a noticeable traditional gap between the plains and the hills regarding voter turnout trends. While the plain seats like Haridwar and Nainital witnessed comparatively higher voter turnout, there was general apathy observed in the hilly regions of Almora, Garhwal, and Tehri regarding voting.

SDC Foundation, a social organization, organized a round table dialogue on the topic "Why is Uttarakhand facing a decline in voter turnout" on 28 April, 2024. Addressing this issue were educators, social workers, media personnel, and representatives of the youth.

During the dialogue, speakers from various sectors attributed the low voter turnout to factors such as migration for less participation, a one-sided political narrative leading to voter disengagement, and to some extent, the issue of missing voters. Suggestions for improvement in this situation included providing incentives like free rides for voting, expanding the facility of voting from home, remote voting, and ensuring robust coverage of the voter list.



## Who said what



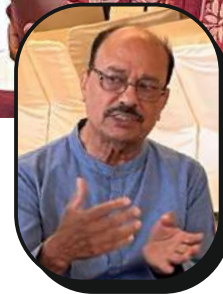
**Anoop Nautiyal**  
*SDC Foundation,  
Uttarakhand*



Welcoming the participants, Anoop Nautiyal of SDC Foundation mentioned that in the first phase, Uttarakhand ranked 19th among 21 states and union territories. Out of the 70 assembly constituencies, 18 in the hills had more than 50% of the population not voting. This is concerning from a national security perspective for a border state like



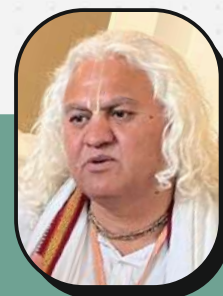
**Jay Singh Rawat**  
*Senior journalist*



Senior journalist Jay Singh Rawat pointed out that this time, the dates of voting coincided with wedding ceremonies, which may have contributed to the low voter turnout. Additionally, complaints regarding fundamental amenities like roads, remained unaddressed by the administration, leading to voter disenchantment. He also suggested that the disillusionment with established political parties and leaders in the state might be a reason for low voter turnout.



**Manoj Dhayani**  
*ADR State Coordinator*



ADR State Coordinator Manoj Dhayani emphasized that migration is primarily responsible for the low voter turnout percentage, along with responsibility lying with migrant voters who, under the emotional appeal of campaigns like "My Village, My Vote," might have registered their votes in their villages but failed to turn up for voting. According to him, the extensive exchange of leaders from political parties before the elections has also eroded the confidence of voters in the political process, leading to people abstaining from voting.



**Varsha Singh**  
*Senior journalist*



Senior journalist Varsha Singh stated that discrepancies in the voter list and daily issues faced by voters could be reasons for low voter turnout. Discussing the lack of options, she highlighted the need for technological advancement.



**Dr. R.P. Mamgain**  
*Doon University*



Dr. RP Mamgain from Doon University mentioned that around 50 to 60 percent of voters in politics are not committed to any party or individual, termed as floating voters. This time, the floating voters didn't seem to have any reason for voting. It seems this segment is content with their situation, feeling that voting or not voting won't make a difference.



“

**Prof. Harsh Dobhal**  
*Doon University*



Prof. Harsh Dobhal pointed out that low voter turnout in remote areas reflects the state of development there. Local issues remained overlooked in the elections. He stressed the need for more research and study to understand low voter turnout better.

“

**Archana Gwadi**  
*Dhaad's Activist*



Dhaad's Archana Gwadi said that youth generally seemed unaware and disinterested towards voting. The NOTA option does not seem useful to voters.



**Ranbir Singh Chaudhary**  
*Social Worker*



Ranbir Singh Chaudhary stated that excessive focus on the Prime Minister's face and 400 seats made the election campaign lose its enthusiasm. He noted a lack of enthusiasm among women voters in Uttarakhand, despite their traditionally significant role.



**Roli Pandey**  
*Research scholar*



According to research scholar Roli Pandey, migration is the main reason for low voter turnout in Uttarakhand. A large number of youth in Uttarakhand work in nearby hotels and resorts. This time, due to the voting being on Friday and the weekend being of three days, hotels and resorts were already booked, so it was not possible for those youth to get leave for voting.



“

**Ravi Bijarniya**

*Deputy Director  
of Information*



Deputy Director of Information Ravi Bijarniya said that the Election Commission made significant efforts to increase voter turnout this time, but Uttarakhand still fell behind its target. However, this time the trend was observed throughout the country in the first two phases. He said that people look for their presence in the voter list of local body or Panchayat elections to be present in the voter list of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha as well, although both voter lists are prepared by different organizations in different ways.

“

**Iris Chauhan**

*Doon University  
student*



Doon University student Iris Chauhan said that this time the election in Uttarakhand revolved around a 26-year-old candidate, indicating the emergence of this youth. The fact that major political parties and politicians are becoming irrelevant to most people can also be a reason for low voter turnout. She said that there is still a lack of acceptability regarding NOTA.





**Anil Sati**  
Secretary,  
PRSI Dehradun



Anil Sati said that women have always played an important role in Uttarakhand, but this time there was not much enthusiasm among women regarding voting.



**Sanjeev Kandwal**  
Senior journalist



Senior journalist Sanjeev Kandwal summarized the dialogue, suggesting that the Election Commission should provide free rides to voters to increase voter turnout. Usually, such benefits are given during Raksha Bandhan, which can also lead to increased voting. He advocated for the Election Commission to seriously consider remote voting. He also proposed having alternative days for voting instead of just one day. Increasing the scope of voting at home could also be a reform to consider. Also, creating a robust one-state-one-voter list could prevent confusion among voters.

## TALKS & ROUND TABLE DIALOGUE



**Anoop Nautiyal**  
*SDC Foundation,  
Uttarakhand*



Anoop Nautiyal concluded by thanking everyone and stated that the report of the Round Table Dialogue on the topic "Why is Uttarakhand facing a decline in voter turnout?" would be shared with the Election Commission. He emphasized the need for political parties in the state and the Election Commission to address the serious issue of Uttarakhand's declining voting trend and public apathy with earnestness.

# Media Coverage

Dehradun

Dehradun, 1 May, 2024

www.garhwalpost.in

(Garhwal Post) 3

## Decline in voter turnout discussed at SDC Foundation Round Table

By OUR STAFF REPORTER

**DEHRADUN, 30 Apr:** Uttarakhand recorded a significantly low turnout of only 57.22% in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. This voter turnout percentage is lower compared to the previous two Lok Sabha elections in Uttarakhand. Even in these elections, there was a noticeable traditional gap between the plains and the hills regarding turnout trends. While the plains seats like Haridwar and Nainital witnessed comparatively higher voter turnout, there was general apathy observed in the hill regions of Almora, Garhwal and Tehri.

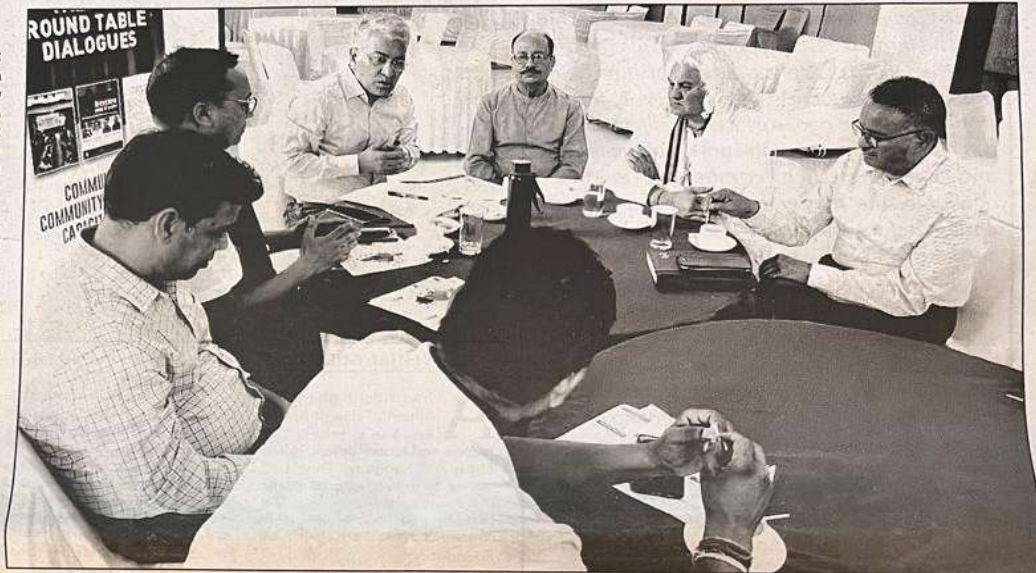
The SDC Foundation organised a round table dialogue on the topic, "Why is Uttarakhand facing a decline in voter turnout?" Addressing this issue were educators, social workers, media personnel, and representatives of the youth.

During the dialogue, speakers from various sectors attributed the low voter turnout to factors such as migration, a one-sided political narrative leading to voter disengagement, and to some extent, the issue of missing voters from the lists. Suggestions for improvement in this situation included providing incentives like free rides for voting, expanding the facility of voting from home, remote voting, and ensuring robust coverage of the voter list.

Starting the dialogue, Anoop Nautiyal of SDC Foundation mentioned that, in the first phase, Uttarakhand ranked 19th among 21 states and union territories. Out of the 70 assembly constituencies, 18 in the hills had more than 50% of the population not voting. This is concerning from a national security perspective for a border state like Uttarakhand.

Senior journalist Jay Singh Rawat pointed out that, this time, the dates of voting coincided with wedding ceremonies, which may have contributed to the low voter turnout. Additionally, complaints regarding fundamental amenities like roads remained unaddressed by the administration, leading to voter disenchantment. He also suggested that the disillusionment with established political parties and leaders in the state might be a reason for low voter turnout.

ADR State Coordinator Manoj Dhyani emphasised that migration is primarily responsible



for the low voter turnout percentage, along with responsibility lying with migrant voters who, under the emotional appeal of campaigns like "My Village, My Vote", might have registered their votes in their villages but failed to turn up for voting. According to him, the extensive exchange of leaders from political parties before the elections has also eroded the confidence of voters in the political process, leading to people abstaining from voting.

Senior journalist Varsha Singh stated that discrepancies in the voter list and daily issues faced by voters could be reasons for low voter turnout. Discussing the lack of options, she highlighted the need for technological advancement.

Dr RP Mangain from Doon University claimed that around 50 to 60 percent of voters in politics are not committed to any party or individual, termed as floating voters. This time, the floating voters didn't seem to have any reason for voting. It seems this segment is content with the situation, feeling that voting or not voting won't make a difference.

Prof Harsh Dobhal pointed out that low voter turnout in remote areas reflects the state of development there. Local issues remained overlooked in the elections. He stressed the need for

more research and study to understand low voter turnout better.

Ranvir Singh Chaudhary stated that excessive focus on the Prime Minister's face and 400 seats made the election campaign lose its enthusiasm. He noted a lack of enthusiasm among women voters in Uttarakhand, despite their traditionally significant role.

Additional Director, Information, Ravi Bijamiya said that the Election Commission made significant efforts to increase voter turnout this time, but Uttarakhand still fell behind its target. However, this time the trend was observed throughout the country in the first two phases. He said that people look for their presence in the voter lists of local body or Panchayat elections to be present in the voter list of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha as well, although both voter lists are prepared by different organisations in different ways.

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According to research scholar Roli Pandey, migration is the main reason for low voter turnout in Uttarakhand. A large number of youth in Uttarakhand work in nearby hotels and resorts.

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# Media Coverage

## मतदान प्रतिशत कम होने के कई कारण

■ एसडीसी फाउंडेशन की परिचर्चा में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के प्रतिनिधियों ने अपनी बात रखी

■ सहारा न्यूज ब्यूरो देहरादून।

उत्तराखण्ड में कम मतदान विषय पर मंगलवार को राजपुर रोड स्थित एक होटल में एसडीसी फाउंडेशन की परिचर्चा में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के प्रतिनिधियों ने अपनी बात को रखा। परिचर्चा में एसडीसी फाउंडेशन के संस्थापक अनूप नौटियाल ने कहा कि पहले दौर में 21 राज्यों और केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों में

उत्तराखण्ड 19वें स्थान पर रहा। वरिष्ठ पत्रकार जय सिंह रावत ने कहा कि इस बार मतदान के आसपास शादियों की तिथियां होना भी कम मतदान का एक कारण रहा। एडीआर के राज्य समन्वयक मनोज ध्यानी ने कहा कि कई प्रवासी लोगों ने अपना वोट गांव में बनाया हुआ है, लेकिन वे वोट देने अपने मूल गांव नहीं आ पाए।

दून यूनिवर्सिटी के डा. आरपी ममगाई ने कहा कि इस बार फ्लोटिंग वोटर श्रेणी के मतदाताओं के पास वोट देने की कोई वजह नजर नहीं आई। प्रोफेसर हर्ष डोभाल ने कहा कि दुर्गम क्षेत्रों में कम मतदान वहां विकास की हालत बर्बाद करती है। रणवीर सिंह चौधरी ने कहा कि इस बार 400 पार के दावे पर अत्यधिक जोर दिए जाने से भाजपा कैडर

मतदान के पहले ही बेफिक्र हो गया, वहीं विपक्ष कैडर का मनोबल पहले ही टूट गया। उप निदेशक सूचना रवि बिजारनिया ने कहा कि निर्वाचन आयोग ने मतदान प्रतिशत बढ़ाने के लिए इस बार भरसक प्रयास किए, लेकिन उत्तराखण्ड का लक्ष्य फिर भी पीछे छूट गया।

धार्मिक पदाधिकारी अर्चना ग्वाड़ी ने कहा कि युवा आमतौर पर मतदान को लेकर जागरूक नहीं नजर आए। दून यूनिवर्सिटी की स्टूडेंट्स इरिस चौहान ने कहा कि प्रेरणा देने वाले नेतृत्व का न होना भी कम मतदान का एक कारण हो सकता है। अनिल सती ने कहा कि इस बार महिलाओं में भी मतदान को लेकर खास उसाह नजर नहीं आया।

## मतदान का प्रतिशत बढ़ाने के लिए मतदाताओं को मिले प्रोत्साहन

देहरादून, मुख्य संवाददाता। उत्तराखण्ड में राष्ट्रीय औसत से कम मतदान विषय पर देहरादून में आयोजित एसडीसी फाउंडेशन की परिचर्चा में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के प्रतिनिधियों ने मतदान प्रतिशत बढ़ाने के लिए वोटर को निशुल्क यात्रा जैसे प्रोत्साहन के साथ ही रिमोट वोटिंग और मतदान के दिनों का विकल्प दिए जाने की पैरवी की है। मंगलवार को परिचर्चा राजपुर रोड स्थित एक होटल में आयोजित की गई। परिचर्चा की शुरुआत करते हुए एसडीसी फाउंडेशन के संस्थापक अनूप नौटियाल ने कहा कि पहले चरण में 21 राज्यों और केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों में

■ एसडीसी फाउंडेशन की परिचर्चा में हुआ मंथन  
■ विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के लोगों, प्रतिनिधियों ने दिए सुझाव

उत्तराखण्ड 19वें स्थान पर रहा। वरिष्ठ पत्रकार जय सिंह रावत ने कहा कि इस बार मतदान के आसपास शादियों की तिथियां होना भी कम मतदान का एक कारण रहा। एडीआर के राज्य समन्वयक मनोज ध्यानी ने कहा कि कई प्रवासी लोगों ने अपना वोट गांव में बनाया हुआ है लेकिन वो वोट देने अपने गांव नहीं आ पाए। दून यूनिवर्सिटी के डा. आरपी ममगाई ने कहा कि इस बार

फ्लोटिंग वोटर श्रेणी के मतदाताओं के पास वोट देने की कोई वजह नजर नहीं आई। प्रो. हर्ष डोभाल ने कहा कि दुर्गम क्षेत्रों में कम मतदान वहां विकास की हालत बर्बाद करती है।

उपनिदेशक सूचना रवि बिजारनिया ने कहा कि निर्वाचन आयोग ने मतदान प्रतिशत बढ़ाने के लिए इस बार भरसक प्रयास किए, लेकिन उत्तराखण्ड का लक्ष्य फिर भी पीछे छूट गया। धार्मिक पदाधिकारी अर्चना ग्वाड़ी ने कहा कि युवा आमतौर पर मतदान को लेकर जागरूक नहीं नजर आए। अनिल सती ने कहा कि इस बार महिलाओं में भी मतदान को लेकर खास उसाह नजर नहीं आया।

## एसडीसी फाउंडेशन ने कम मतदान की जानी वजह

देहरादून। सामाजिक संस्था सोशल डेवलपमेंट फॉर कम्युनिटी फाउंडेशन (एसडीसी) ने लोकसभा चुनाव में कम मतदान की वजह जानने की कोशिश की। राउंड टेबल डॉयलाग में अलग-अलग क्षेत्र के लोगों ने कम मतदान पर अपनी राय रखी।

पहले चरण में उत्तराखण्ड की पांच लोकसभा सीटों पर कुल 57.22 प्रतिशत मतदान हुआ है। यह मत प्रतिशत पिछले दो लोकसभा चुनावों के मुकाबले कम है। इस लोकसभा चुनावों में भी मतदान के रुझान को लेकर मैदान-पहाड़ के बीच फिर से परंपरागत अंतर देखने को मिला। हरिद्वार और नैनीताल सीट पर इस बार भी अपेक्षाकृत अधिक मतदान हुआ, तो अल्मोड़ा, गढ़वाल और टिहरी सीट के पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों में मतदान को लेकर उसाह नहीं रहा।

मतदान में मात क्यों खा रहा है उत्तराखण्ड विषय पर संवाद में खबरियों ने कम मतदान के लिए पलायन, एकतरफा जीत की राजनीतिक धारणा और कुछ हद तक निर्दिष्ट मतदाता को जिम्मेदार माना।

राउंड टेबल डॉयलाग में विभिन्न लोगों ने रखी राय

संस्था के अध्यक्ष अनूप नौटियाल ने कहा, पहले दौर में 21 राज्यों और केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों में उत्तराखण्ड 19वें स्थान पर रहा। 70 विधानसभाओं में से 18 में 50 प्रतिशत से अधिक लोगों ने वोट नहीं डाला।

राजनीतिक विश्लेषक जय सिंह रावत ने कहा, इस बार मतदान के आसपास शादियों की तिथियां होना भी कम मतदान का एक कारण रहा। साथ ही प्रशासन बिजली, पानी और सड़क जैसी बुनियादी बातों को लेकर मतदान बहिष्कार करने वाले लोगों की शिकायतें समय से दूर नहीं कर सका। एसडीआर के राज्य समन्वयक मनोज ध्यानी ने कहा, कम मतदान प्रतिशत के लिए पलायन को जिम्मेदार माना।

इस मौके पर बर्षा सिंह, प्रोफेसर हर्ष डोभाल, रणवीर सिंह चौधरी, सूचना विभाग के उप निदेशक रवि बिजारनिया, रिसर्च स्कॉलर रवी पांडेय, छात्र इरिस चौहान, अनिल सती ने भी अपने विचार रखे। ध्युरो

# Media Coverage

## Migration, political narrative, wedding season causes of low voter turnout in LS 2024

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Experts from various sectors have attributed the low voter turnout during the Lok Sabha elections 2024 in Uttarakhand to several factors like migration, a one-sided political narrative that led to voter disengagement, voting dates coinciding with several wedding ceremonies and missing names of voters from the voter's list. This was opined by several speakers in the Round Table Dialogue organised by the Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation on the topic, "Why is Uttarakhand facing a decline in voter turnout?" The founder of the foundation Anoop Nautiyal said that Uttarakhand ranked 19th among 21 states and union territories in the first phase of voting. The State

recorded a significantly low voter turnout of 57.22 per cent. In this election, there was a noticeable gap between the plains and the mountainous regions regarding voter turnout trends. Comparatively higher voter turnout was observed in plain seats like Haridwar and Nainital while general apathy towards voting was noted in hilly regions such as Almora, Garhwal, and Tehri. Out of the 70 assembly constituencies in the State, 18 constituencies in the mountainous region had a voter turnout of less than 50 per cent. This is concerning from a national security perspective for a border state like Uttarakhand, Nautiyal said. A senior journalist Jay Singh Rawat stated that this time, the dates of voting coincided

with wedding ceremonies which may have contributed to the low voter turnout. Moreover, complaints about essential amenities such as roads were not addressed by the authorities in several mountainous areas that possibly resulted in unsatisfied voters. He also suggested that the disappointment of people with major political parties and leaders might be a reason for low voter turnout. According to research scholar Roli Pandey, migration is the main reason for low voter turnout as a large number of youth in Uttarakhand work in hotels and resorts in the plains. Due to the voting taking place on Friday and the weekend being three days long, hotels and resorts were already fully booked. As a

result, those youth couldn't get leave to vote. The deputy director of the Information department Ravi Bijarniya said that the Election Commission of India (ECI) had made extensive efforts to increase voter turnout in Uttarakhand but it still fell short of its target. However, he pointed out that this trend of low voter turnout was observed throughout the country during the first two phases of the election. Several experts suggested that the public should be offered services like free rides to the polling stations. The ECI should also consider expanding the facility of remote voting and ensuring robust coverage of the voter list to encourage more people to vote, they added.

{ SAY EXPERTS DURING ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUE } LOK SABHA POLLS

## 'Migration, disengagement of voters resulted in low turnout'

HT Correspondent

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**DEHRADUN:** A roundtable dialogue has attributed low voter turnout in the Lok Sabha elections in the state to factors like migration, a one-sided political narrative leading to voter disengagement, and the issue of missing names of electors from the voting list, said a statement issued on Tuesday.

Speakers from various sectors said this while participating in the "Round Table Dialogue" organised by Dehradun-based NGO SDC Foundation on "Why is Uttarakhand facing a decline in voter turnout?" on Sunday.

Anoop Nautiyal from SDC Foundation said the state recorded a significantly low turnout of only 57.2%. "This voter turnout percentage is lower compared to the previous two general elections in Uttarakhand. Even in these elections, there was a noticeable traditional gap between the plains and the hills regarding voter turnout trends."

He said in the first phase,

Uttarakhand ranked 19th among 21 states and union territories. "Out of the 70 assembly constituencies, 18 in the hills had more than 50% of the population who boycotted voting in this poll. This is a matter of concern for Uttarakhand."

The voter turnout in the state, which went to polling in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections on April 19, is 57.2%. Of the total turnout (excluding postal ballot), the percentage of women voters was 49.35%, while those of men was 50.63%.

Senior journalist Jay Singh Rawat pointed out that this time, the dates of voting coincided with wedding season, which may have contributed to the low voter turnout. "Additionally, complaints regarding fundamental amenities like roads, remained unaddressed by the administration, leading to voter disenchantment," he said.

Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) state coordinator Manoj Dhayani said migration is primarily responsible for the low voter turnout percentage, along with responsibility

lying with migrant voters who, under the emotional appeal of campaigns like "My Village, My Vote," might have registered their votes in their villages but failed to turn up for voting.

RP Mangain from Doon University said around 50 to 60% of voters are not committed to any political party or individual, termed as floating voters. "This time, the floating voters didn't seem to have any reason for voting. It seems this segment is content with their situation, feeling that voting or not voting won't make a difference," he said.

Senior journalist Sanjeev Kandwal suggested that the Election Commission should provide free rides to voters to increase voter turnout.

"Usually, such benefits are given during Raksha Bandhan, which can also lead to increased voting. The EC should seriously consider remote voting. Increasing the scope of voting at home could also be a reform to consider. Also, creating a robust one-state-one-voter list could prevent confusion among voters," he added.



# About Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation

Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation is a Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group engaged in communication, capacity building and community mobilisation in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. Its key functional domains include climate and environmental conservation, sustainable urbanisation and solid & plastic waste management.

The foundation works in partnership with institutions of Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand, and other stakeholders such as research and academic institutions, community groups, civil society, media partners, NGOs, businesses and trade bodies, schools and colleges in the state.