

## SCENARIOS AT WORK

Oxford Scenarios Programme

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# A grave climate change scenario message from the top of the world

I have known Dawa Steven Sherpa for a while now. Dawa, only in his 20s, has already been on top of Mount Everest two times. His company organises an unusual Everest Expedition every spring – promoting modern and improvised techniques to minimise (almost nullify) pollution on the Everest trail. Besides, his expedition encourages the Sherpa climbers to bring back to the base camp tons of garbage left on the trail by the earlier climbers.

Over the course of a month, Dawa and I met some three-four times discussing our common concern on the impacts of Climate Change in the Himalayas and the tragedies it is likely to bring to all forms of lives inhabiting the Himalayan landscape. Even the best case scenario was just too dreadful to contemplate. The Climate Change has already arrived – worse nobody is noticing it.

The Himalayan glaciers are retreating at an unprecedented pace creating glacial lakes. The trillions of litres of waters that these lakes hold remain a constant reason for sleepless nights for the population living at the base of these lakes. The forests in Nepal are burning with intensity unprecedented in history. The villages even around Mount Everest have not had any snow for last two winters. Wild animals and insects are being observed moving to locations they have never been seen at in the past. Flowers bloom and fruits ripen before time.

In a highly religious society like that of Nepal, unfortunately, many attribute divine reasons for such occurrences – very few looking for scientific reasoning. Even the western world hardly considers Himalayas as a major victim of Climate Change. Dawa and I both felt that this scenario must change. If this does not happen, and the world remains indifferent to it, the impacts would be catastrophic as the Himalayas are not just a living place of a few thousands of indigenous communities, it provides water to more than a billion of the human population. It is not a just a thing of beauty, it is an economic asset the world cannot afford to ignore.

We decided to give a message to the world from the top of Mount Everest. We approached the Ace Mountaineer Apa Sherpa who has already been on top of Everest 18 times (a world record) to attempt his 19th ascent – and this time with a greater cause to deliver this message to the world. He happily agreed.

The picture below was widely covered by the global media and became a definitive image of an indigenous community raising their voice against the climate injustice meted out to them. Locally, the President and Prime Minister of Nepal personally met with Apa and the campaign team and expressed their solidarity with the cause.

This became the launching event for a year-long global campaign that my organisation WWF embarked on, called **Climate4Life**. I currently lead this campaign. Building on the goodwill and media support earned by the initial event, it is now a formidable campaign that has led me to engage with several heads of

state in the Himalayan countries and from the western world – to raise awareness of the impacts of Climate Change in the Himalayas, and call for appropriate actions.

My learning of Scenarios at the Saïd Business School came in handy on two counts. First it gave me a good handle to analyse the scenarios of climate change impacts on the Himalayas, and to assess the gravity of the situation that could be explained to any rational audience. Second, as the ascent to Mount Everest was fraught with risks the scenario analysis helped our team develop a good media strategy in all likely scenarios.

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