

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Greetings from Contact Base!

The first ever Kalimpong Folk Festival is being organized at the Mela Ground in the town on 27 and 28 May. The event will showcase the rich culture and traditions of the people of Kalimpong as well as those in its adjoining areas in the Hills of Darjeeling. It is an occasion to celebrate the vibrant songs and dance forms of Dhimal, Tamang, Lepcha, Tibetan, Bhutia, Mangar, Baun, Sherpa and other communities of the Hills and strengthen the bonds of goodwill, social harmony and peace.

The event follows a two-day Darjeeling Festival held in Darjeeling town on 5 and 6 April. Both the festivals are part of the Rural Crafts and Cultural Hubs (RCCH) project — an initiative of the West Bengal Government's Department of Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises and Textiles (MSME&T), undertaken in association with UNESCO.

The RCCH project aims at strengthening grassroots entrepreneurships through the revival of traditional folk art and crafts forms. It follows our Art for Life (AFL) culture-based development model to address inclusion and poverty alleviation. AFL has already received global recognition as an alternative development methodology by alleviating thousands of people from poverty through the creation of sustainable livelihood, based on their traditional skills in arts and crafts.

AFL focuses on capacity-building of folk artists and crafts persons, providing them direct market linkages, and establishing creative networks for them through exchange and collaboration events. Documentation of traditional art and culture is another important aspect addressed by ADL. It is crucial for the artists to safeguard their art forms, and also for creating new audiences.

More than 35,000 artists and crafts persons are under the RCCH project at present. This includes 510 artists and crafts persons from different communities of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The upcoming festival is a celebration of their success as well.

We welcome the media to visit and cover the first edition of Kalimpong Folk Festival!