

CSR TODAY

RNI NO. MAHENG/2013/48866 ■ VOLUME 10 ■ ISSUE 12 ■ JULY 2023 ■ PRICE ₹100 ■ TOTAL PAGES: 52

IS THE WORLD MAKING REAL PROGRESS TOWARDS NET ZERO EMISSIONS?

Many countries and companies have set 'net zero' targets to curb global warming - but most have been criticised as insufficient

CSR OPINION

Role and Relevance of the Youth
in Policy-making and Governance:
India, Africa and G-20

CSR CONCERN

Alarming Air Pollution Study
Reveals Darjeeling to be Listed as
Non-Attainment City in 2024

CSR ISSUE

Monsoons in India
become unpredictable as
pollution wreaks havoc



CSR TODAY

RATE CARD

ADVERTISEMENT SIZE	DIMENSIONS		1X RATE
	Non-Bleed	Bleed	
Inside Front Cover	185 mm (w) x 250 mm (h)	225 mm (w) x 290 mm (h)	₹2,00,000
Inside Back Cover	185 mm (w) x 250 mm (h)	225 mm (w) x 290 mm (h)	₹1,50,000
Outside Back Cover	185 mm (w) x 250 mm (h)	225 mm (w) x 290 mm (h)	₹3,00,000
Full Page (Colour)	185 mm (w) x 250 mm (h)	225 mm (w) x 290 mm (h)	₹1,00,000
Half Page - Vertical (Colour)	85 mm (w) x 250 mm(h)	-	₹50,000
Half Page - Horizontal (Colour)	180 mm (w) x 120 mm(h)	-	₹50,000
Quarter Page (Colour)	85 mm(w) x 120 mm(h)	-	₹35,000
Full Page (B/W)	185 mm (w) x 250 mm (h)	225 mm (w) x 290 mm (h)	₹60,000
Half Page - Vertical (B/W)	85 mm (w) x 250 mm(h)	-	-
Half Page - Horizontal (B/W)	180 mm (w) x 120 mm(h)	-	₹30,000
Quarter Page (B/W)	85 mm(w) x 120 mm(h)	-	₹20,000

Bleed Advertisement charges: 20% extra for all sizes.



**INDIAN CENTRE
FOR CSR**

For More Information:

INDIAN CENTRE FOR CSR

106, Nirman Kendra, Dr. E Moses Road,
Mahalaxmi Estate, Mumbai-400 011
Ph: 9930139352

1.5 TW of new wind and solar capacity needed each year by 2030 to meet 1.5°C limit: report



Rajesh Tiwari
Publisher
rt@iccsr.org

Global wind and solar capacity needs to increase to around 10 TW by the end of this decade, up from 2 TW in 2022. This is achievable if the recent acceleration in capacity additions is maintained.

At least 1.5 TW of new wind and solar capacity needed each year by 2030 to meet the 1.5°C limit sustainably, according to a new report. The world needs 70% renewables in the power mix and must cut global fossil production 40% by 2030 – 6% a year, it states.

Global wind and solar capacity needs to increase to around 10 TW by the end of this decade, up from 2 TW in 2022. This is achievable if the recent acceleration in capacity additions is maintained.

“Everyone from the EU to the COP Presidency is calling for a global renewables target, but this must be based on the safest route to net zero. We’ve shown that if the world accelerates new wind and solar fivefold to at least 1.5 TW a year by 2030 while cutting fossil use by 40%, we won’t have to rely on potentially unsustainable amounts of carbon dioxide removal in the future,” says Claire Fyson, Head of Policy at Climate Analytics.


The study distils key milestones the international community needs to meet by 2030 to keep warming below 1.5°C, including rapidly scaling up renewables this decade to 70% of the global power mix, cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 8% a year to halve global emissions by 2030, and a 34% cut to global methane emissions over this critical decade for climate action. Methane emissions in the energy sector would need to fall even faster, by 66%.

“Our method takes only the latest global pathways with the most up-to-date information on technologies and costs. We know wind and solar can scale quickly and undercut fossil fuels on price. Our analysis shows they can do much of the heavy lifting so urgently needed this decade, so let’s fast-track their rollout,” says Dr Neil Grant, Energy and Climate Analyst at ClimateAnalytics. Not all pathways in the IPCC AR6 database are

fully compatible with the Paris Agreement. The study’s method focuses on the latest 1.5-aligned pathways that integrate sustainability constraints, filtering out older analyses and those that rely too heavily on risky assumptions. As a result, the study finds just 0.1% of global power would come from CCS by 2030.

A 1.5°C-aligned power sector transition is one dominated by renewables. Fossil fuels equipped with CCS play at best a very minor role, providing only 0.1% of power generation by 2030 in these Paris compatible pathways, and 0.7% of global electricity in 2050. This is even less than in the IEA’s Net Zero scenario, in which fossil CCS provides 0.7% of electricity in 2030 and 1.8% by 2050. However, both IEA and IAM pathways provide the same overall message – that CCS has at best a minor role in power sector decarbonisation.

Burning fossil fuels is the leading cause of global warming. All pathways that limit warming to 1.5°C require immediate and deep cuts in fossil fuel consumption. In the selected Paris-compatible pathways, fossil fuel production falls by around 40% over the decade (median of all pathways), as renewable electricity displaces fossil fuels as the main source of energy. Coal declines the fastest, at 79%, but strong reductions are needed in all fossil fuels. Fossil fuel production would need to have fallen by 5% per year from 2020 to 2030 to achieve this reduction. However, fossil fuel production is still moving in the wrong direction.

Since the Paris Agreement, coal, oil and gas use combined grew by on average 1% each year, with gas growing the fastest (2.5% per year), and fossil fuel production has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. Accounting for delayed action since 2020, a faster decline of at least 6% per year is needed from 2022 to 2030. 

Contents



30 | **Cover Story** Is the world making real progress towards net zero emissions?

CSR OPINION

33 Role and Relevance of the Youth in Policy-making and Governance: India, Africa and G-20

CSR CONCERN

36 As Nepal's rhino population increases, are threats being overlooked?

39 Alarming Air Pollution Study Reveals Darjeeling to be Listed as Non-Attainment City in 2024

40 Asia's mountain forests dwindling at 'alarming rate,' shows study

42 Waking up to the world's water crisis

CSR ISSUE

44 Climate-stressed Indian farmers seek to escape debt and suicide

46 Monsoons in India become unpredictable as pollution wreaks havoc

CSR FUTURE

48 The next wave of greenwashing: offsets, competitor claims and 'transition-washing'

REGULARS:

03 Publisher's note

05 CSR News

15 CSR India United

27 News You Can Use

CSR TODAY

JULY 2023 | VOL. 10 | ISSUE 12

PRINTER AND PUBLISHER: Rajesh Tiwari

EDITORIAL

Chief Consulting Editor: Kingshuk Nag

Consulting Editor: M Bose

Executive Editor: Devasia P. Devasia

INDIAN CENTRE FOR CSR

ADVISORY BOARD

Pankaj Pachauri, Ted McFarland, Mag. Martin Neureiter, Chandir Gidwani, Lou Altman, Kingshuk Nag, Toby Webb, Anil Bajpai, Rajesh Tiwari, Satish Jha, Jitendra Bhargava, Kapil Dev, Dr. Kamal Kant Dwivedi, Suhel Seth, Pradip Shetty, Sagar Adhikari

PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION AND LOGISTICS

Harish Rathod

HEAD OFFICE

CSR Today

106, Nirman Kendra, Dr. E Moses Road, Mahalaxmi Estate, Mumbai - 400 011

E mail: support @ iccsr.org,

Website: www.iccsr.org

REGIONAL OFFICES

NEW DELHI

Regional Directors: V. Chopra, Pratap Bhanu Singh

MUMBAI

Executive Vice President: Sangita Jha

Printed, Published and Edited by Rajesh Tiwari on behalf of Indian Centre For Corporate Social Responsibility. 106, Nirman Kendra, Dr. E Moses Road, Mahalaxmi Estate, Mumai-400 001

Editor: Rajesh Tiwari

Disclaimer

The publisher, authors and contributors reserve their rights in regards to copyright of their work. No part of this work covered by the copyright may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means without the written consent. The publisher, contributors, editors and related parties are not responsible in any way for the actions or results taken by any person, organisation or any party on basis of reading information, stories or contributions in this publication, website or related product. Reasonable care is taken to ensure that CSR Today articles and other information on the web site are up-to-date and accurate as possible, as of the time of publication, but no responsibility can be taken by CSR Today for any errors or omissions contained herein.

redBus in collaboration with the MakeMyTrip's foundation conducts free diabetes tests



redBus, India's largest online bus ticketing platform, has screened 4000 bus drivers across India, for vision and other health problems associated with the onset of diabetes, as part of its CSR initiative. The program was conducted in partnership with MakeMyTrip Foundation and VisionSpring Foundation, to promote road safety and ensure the well-being of bus drivers and bus operator staff.

The screenings were conducted in collaboration with qualified professionals from VisionSpring, guaranteeing high safety standards and hygiene, at 70 different camps held at convenient locations across Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune. During the screenings, the patients diagnosed with vision impairment were provided with free eyeglasses, and for cases requiring hospital intervention, Vision Spring's

backward integration with various hospitals enabled patients to be redirected to hospitals for treatment at subsidised rates.

"Bus drivers spend long hours on the road, and their health and well-being are of utmost importance," said Manoj Agarwala - Chief Business Officer of redBus. "Through Mission Vision, we aim to provide drivers with access to free eye tests and diabetes screenings, which can help them identify potential health issues early on and prevent long-term damage. We are grateful to VisionSpring for partnering with us on this initiative and helping us ensure the well-being of our partner bus operator's workforce."

Diabetes and vision care are important health parameters that are often overlooked. Due to their frequent travels and erratic schedules, bus drivers rarely have enough time

to get themselves tested. About 4000 bus drivers and other staff members undertook the screening and 2277 free eyeglasses were provided free of cost, 96% of whom were first time wearers. redBus observed an overwhelming response to the tests as the participants visited in large numbers.

"We are delighted to partner with redBus and Makemytrip Foundation on this initiative and provide drivers with access to free eye and diabetes screenings," said Anshu Taneja, Managing Director of VisionSpring India. "At VisionSpring, we believe that everyone deserves access to quality eyewear, and this initiative aligns with our mission to create a world where everyone can see clearly. We hope this initiative will raise awareness about the importance of regular health screenings and encourage more people to take charge of their health."

HUL and JSW sign strategic partnership to establish 10 new Suvidha Centres in Mumbai

Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) and JSW signed a strategic partnership to establish 10 new Suvidha centres in Mumbai. Launched in 2016, HUL runs 12 Suvidha centres in Mumbai through a pioneering public-private-partnership with Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and HSBC India impacting 300,000 people annually. The agreement signed through JSW Foundation will provide safe and dignified sanitation services to additional 200,000 people in low-income communities in Mumbai.

The key highlights of sanitation services provided at these Suvidha centres include:

1. New Suvidha centres to benefit additional 200,000 people through access to safe toilets, purified drinking water, showers, and laundry services.
2. All amenities will be available at affordable rates including drinking water at Rs. 1 per litre and a monthly pass at Rs. 150 for a family.
3. New centres will save 300 million litres of water over a decade and will run on solar energy.

Suvidha centres serve as a comprehensive solution for the hygiene and sanitation needs of low-income communities, all under one roof. The Centres are conceived keeping in mind the safety and well-being of women and children through inclusive design, adequate lighting, CCTV cameras and a panic button for emergencies.

Moreover, the partners will undertake an extensive behaviour change program on health and nutrition through home-to-home visits in the communities around the



centre. The centres will also be run by staff hired from the nearby communities, thereby building a sense of ownership and pride.

In addition to promoting hygiene, the Suvidha centres are also designed to be environmentally conscious and sustainable. Through the implementation of rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling methods, they will save over 300 million litres of fresh water in a decade. Additionally, HUL and JSW Foundation will work closely on further improving the community and environmental impact of the Suvidha Centres.

According to Sangita Jindal, Chairperson of JSW Foundation, "Our partnership with HUL and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to establish 10 state-of-the-art Suvidha centers in Mumbai reiterates our commitment to empower local communities and pave the way for a brighter future, particularly for women and children. Through this partnership with HUL, we are fostering a collective

social action to further expand the network of Suvidha centers in the city with the aim to provide fresh drinking water and other sanitation services to low income communities residing in Mumbai city."

Sanjiv Mehta, CEO and Managing Director, Hindustan Unilever, said, "Our Suvidha Centres exemplify how innovation and collective action by the public and private sectors can help address urban sanitation challenges. Launched as a small pilot with the invaluable support of BMC in 2016, Suvidha now impacts more than 300,000 people every year. We're delighted to have JSW Foundation join our mission to enable access to safe sanitation for all. This partnership is evidence that Suvidha continues to be a path breaking model in the field of community well-being".

Dr. Iqbal Chahal, Commissioner & Administrator, BMC, said, "BMC and HUL are delighted to announce the partnership with JSW to further our mission of providing safe and dignified sanitation through the Suvidha Centres. Together, through this public-private partnership (PPP) we are committed to expanding access to quality sanitation for an additional 200,000 people residing in urban slums, with a particular focus on ensuring the safety and well-being of women and children. With 12 Suvidha Centres already operational, we are committed to replicate and scale this model making quality sanitation and hygiene facilities a reality for a larger population in Mumbai. This partnership represents a significant step forward in our collective efforts to create a safe, inclusive, and healthy city for all.

After a successful journey in India, SATO, leader in affordable sanitation and hygiene expands its footprint into Southeast Asia

SATO, an award-winning social business part of LIXIL Group, has announced expansion of its operations into Southeast Asia. After a growth driven journey in India and Bangladesh, the brand introduces its innovative, aspirational, and affordable sanitation and hygiene products in Indonesia and Philippines to consumers and institutions in rural and peri-urban areas who need off-grid solutions.

The launch coincides with the brand's 10th anniversary this year and is aligned with SATO's purpose to empower people to have a better life, every day, and enjoy a brighter future, through innovative sanitation and hygiene solutions. The launch in Southeast Asia is another step towards achieving LIXIL's goal to improve the lives of 100 million people by 2025.

SATO's sanitation and hygiene products offer a practical and affordable solution to nearly 16 million Indonesian people and 7 million Filipinos who still open defecate or use unimproved toilets. In the Philippines, more than 20 million people have inadequate hand washing facilities at home according to WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP).

Commenting on the business's expansion, Suguru Sakata, Leader - Asia, SATO said "Our expansion into Southeast Asia is a significant milestone in our journey to make sanitation and hygiene accessible for all. SATO solutions are already making a difference in the life of millions across the world and we hope to help fill the gap in Indonesia



↑ Mr. Suguru Sakata, Leader Asia & Ms. Erin McCusker - Sr. Vice President, SATO at the launch of SATO In Southeast Asia



← Mr. Daigo Ishiyama, Leader Innovation at the launch of SATO In Southeast Asia

and Philippines, offering affordable solutions that advance progress towards safely managed sanitation, hygiene, and SDG 6.2. We are excited to work closely with local partners, governments, and communities to implement sustainable sanitation solutions that improve lives and foster healthier environments."

Through collaboration with local stakeholders, SATO ensures that its products are aligned with the unique requirements of each market, while also fostering local

manufacturing. In the Philippines, SATO has partnered with Manly Plastics, the largest provider of end-to-end plastic solutions whereas in Indonesia, Aqualon, a subsidiary of PT Cipta Aneka Agung, a renowned name in manufacturing plastic parts and PVC pipe products will be manufacturing the range of SATO products. These collaborations not only contributes to the local economy but also harnesses the expertise of two respected industry leaders to drive positive change.

CBRE CSR initiatives under 'CBRE Cares- 'Ek Pehal' project to support ~3 lakh migrant labourers'

CBRE South Asia Pvt. Ltd, India's leading real estate consulting firm, today announced the launch of its Pan-India CSR initiative CBRE Cares- 'Ek Pehal' for migrant labourers and their families with the leading Child rights organization – Bal Raksha Bharat across cities including Delhi- NCR, Bangalore, and Pune. CBRE envisions to support ~3 lakh laborers with access to quality health services, formal education, and enhanced nutritional standards, with Bal Raksha Bharat as implementing partner along with government support in the coming years. CBRE has set up a corpus of ~ INR 5 crore for CSR initiatives during this financial year which will be scaled up to ~ INR 15 crore by the end of the year.

'CBRE Cares- Ek Pehal' CSR initiatives this year are targeted at providing health services as a curative and preventive treatment, strengthening the health system in mapped government facilities, and ensuring enhancement in the nutrition standards of children, women, men, and adolescents of the target community. The initiative would also ensure children's access to formal education institutions by addressing the learning gaps and providing remedial measures focusing on learning continuity.

To achieve the desired impact, multiple interventions would be executed across the target cities. This will involve regular engagements with health department for routine health check-up camps in the intervention areas. The project team would set up health camps to ensure the well-being of families residing in urban slums, along with support from the concerned Civil Surgeon



Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE and Sudarshan Suchi, CEO, Save the Children

/ Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO). Before every health camp, population residing in the catchment areas will be mobilized and made aware by project staff and front-line workers such as – ASHAs and AWWs. Population visiting health camps will be encouraged to avail various government health schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, ABHA Card, etc. The program would also include sensitization on Menstrual Hygiene and providing Sanitary Napkins to Menstruating women and awareness activities on Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (MNCAH), and government schemes and programs. In addition, the initiative would support in Ayushman Bharat - School Health and Wellness Program (AB - SHWP) by building the capacity of teachers and school children.

In the education space, Multi Activity Centers (MAC) will be established, which would act as an accelerated learning centre set up in the intervention area for out-of-school children of the age group of 6-14 years, which include never enrolled and dropped out, including those engaged in child labour or living in street situations or multi-deprivation. To reach out to beneficiaries, CSR initiative will equip schools with learner-friendly, ICT-based resources and build the capacity of teachers on the installed digital resources to improve the learning experiences of girls & boys. Establishment of SMART classrooms Digital Libraries will provide children with access to physical and digital resources that will aid in children's education. Schools will be provided with tablets to facilitate access to digital resources for children and teachers.

Commenting on the initiative, Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE, said, "At CBRE, we believe that every life has an equal right to quality living. Today, millions of migrant workers and their families are building our modern spaces but are surrounded by poverty, illness, and despair; they are fighting a daily battle for survival. Our mission with the launch of our CSR program CBRE Cares – 'Ek Pehal' initiative is to create a positive change in their life. I firmly believe that along with our implementation partners, like Bal Raksha Bharat, this initiative will play a significant role in educating families and the community about good health practices. Integrating with ongoing initiatives would further expand the impact of these programs."

Commenting on the partnership, Sudarshan Suchi, CEO, Save the Children, said, "We are delighted to partner for the second year in a row with CBRE for 'Ek Pehal'. Through the partnership, Bal Raksha Bharat will support CBRE in its key objectives, including prioritizing urban malnutrition in children and women across intervention locations and addressing the learning gaps through Catch Up Clubs (CUCs). Bal Raksha Bharat staff will interact with the children and their parents to understand their needs and provide support for their child's well-being and education. Program will benefit families through mass awareness camps and round-the-year linkages to government schemes Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana".

Last year CBRE's CSR program impacted over lakhs of construction workers in Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi-NCR and Mumbai. The initiative benefited through awareness campaigns, health camps with nutrition/hygiene kits distribution to the migrant laborers and their families.

Marico Innovation Foundation's Scale-Up Program Powers S4S Technologies' journey to INR 100 cr.; Welcomes 6 new innovations aboard!

Marico Innovation Foundation (MIF) announced the latest milestone achieved by its Scale-Up Program member, S4S Technologies, as they hit an annual revenue of Rs 100 cr. S4S Technologies is India's only full-stack food-processing platform that has created a solar-powered dehydration system to unlock value for farmers, industrial customers, and the environment. Since MIF's Scale Up Program has worked closely with S4S Technologies since 2019 to help solve their key business challenges. The first innovation to have achieved the unicorn milestone from the MIF portfolio was Atomberg Technologies in year 2021. Incepted in 2016, MIF's rapid acceleration program Scale-Up, provides hand-picked innovations with equity-free support, bespoke mentorship and access to capital and markets. Over the years, the program has supported 50+ innovations to achieve exponential growth.

"Innovations are a vital driver in creating a positive social, economic, and environmental impact for the country. Through MIF's flagship program - Scale-Up, our goal is to catalyse the growth journey of disruptive innovations like S4S Technologies that are paving the way for India's new age economy," said Harsh Mariwala, Founder, Marico Innovation Foundation & Chairman, Marico Ltd.

On its INR 1-100CR growth journey, the Scale-Up Program helped S4S Technologies overcome multiple business challenges through deep rooted strategic and functional mentorship, which helped them build capacity and revenues. The interventions successfully addressed challenges ranging from packaging and procurement inefficiencies to increasing their manufacturing capacities, new product launches to business pivoting from B2C to B2B model.

Vaibhav Tidke, Founder and CEO, S4S Technologies, commented "With Scale-Up program's deep-rooted intervention and strategic guidance, we are thrilled to have achieved this breakthrough. This association played a critical role in shaping the trajectory of S4S Technologies' exponential growth. Using this as a steppingstone, we hope our innovation can further disrupt the agri-tech sector through digitalisation and expansion."

Speaking on the success of S4S Technologies Suranjana Ghosh, Head, Marico Innovation Foundation said, "The bespoke interventions designed by MIF's Scale-Up Program for S4S Technologies have accelerated their growth and resulted in a direct impact on sustainability and livelihoods. At MIF, we are intentional about the innovations we work with, for each of them to have a similar potential to grow exponentially through our strategic support and contribute to the need of the hour - a sustainable future." In addition to the success of S4S Technologies, the foundation also announced the addition of six game-changing innovations that were onboarded to the Scale-Up Program in FY 22-23. The Program works with innovations across sectors like agriculture, food supply chain, circularity in plastics, healthcare, education, and clean technology. These members are driven by a common goal of creating social, environmental, and economic impact at scale.

ICICI Bank commits a contribution of Rs 1,200 crore to Tata Memorial Centre

ICICI Bank announced a commitment to contribute Rs 1,200 crore towards Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), a premier institution that runs cancer treatment and research centres across the country.

ICICI Bank will donate the money from its CSR funds to set up three new buildings spanning over a combined area of 7.5 lakh square feet and equip them with state-of-the-art machines at TMC's centres at Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra, Mullanpur in Punjab and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

With the largest contribution from any institution to TMC, ICICI Foundation for Inclusive Growth (ICICI Foundation), the CSR arm of ICICI Bank, will implement the initiative, which is likely to be completed by 2027.

With modern equipment and specialised multidisciplinary teams, these new centres of excellence in oncology treatment will provide advanced and evidence based therapies to nearly 25,000 new patients a year, doubling the present capacity and providing a significant boost to the country's cancer treatment infrastructure.

ICICI Foundation has signed an agreement with TMC to express this commitment. Mr. Sanjay Datta, President, ICICI Foundation and Dr. R. A. Badwe, Director, Tata Memorial Centre signed the agreement in the presence of Mr. Girish Chandra Chaturvedi, Chairman, ICICI Bank and Mr. Sandeep Batra, Executive Director, ICICI Bank.

Mr. Chaturvedi also inaugurated the ICICI MRI Facility today at Tata Memorial Hospital at Parel in Mumbai in the presence of Dr.



Mr. G. C. Chaturvedi, Chairman, ICICI Bank at a conference in Mumbai, where the Bank announced its commitment to contribute Rs 1,200 crore to Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), a premier institution that runs cancer treatment and research centres across the country. Dr. R. A. Badwe, Director, Tata Memorial Centre looks on. This is the largest contribution by any organisation towards TMC. With this contribution, ICICI Foundation, the Bank's CSR arm, will set up three new buildings at TMC's hospitals at Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra, Mullanpur in Punjab and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. It will also equip them with state-of-the-art cancer care machines.



Mr. G. C. Chaturvedi, Chairman, ICICI Bank inaugurating the ICICI MRI facility at Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai. ICICI Bank today announced its commitment to contribute Rs 1,200 crore to Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), a premier institution that runs cancer treatment and research centres across the country.

Badwe and Mr. Batra. This facility is equipped with an advanced MRI machine supported by ICICI Foundation.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Girish Chandra Chaturvedi, Chairman, ICICI Bank, said: "ICICI Bank has a long-standing legacy of being in service of the nation. In line with this philosophy, ICICI Foundation has been working continuously to improve the well-being of citizens through its various initiatives in the areas of environmental conservation, skill development for sustainable livelihood, affordable healthcare and community development projects. Over the years, ICICI Foundation has planted over 2.6 million trees across the country, created capacity of harvesting 17.1 billion litres annually of rainwater at 5000 rural schools and watershed structures, implemented rooftop solar panel for rural schools, benefitted more than 2.9 million lives through skilling initiatives, with more than half being women. It has also benefitted over 6.5 million individuals through its social initiatives and over 1.5 million lives through its healthcare initiatives. Overall, ICICI Foundation has positively impacted more than 10.9 million beneficiaries through its various initiatives.

Today, we are committing Rs 1,200 crore for building three new blocks at TMC's centres at Navi Mumbai, Mullanpur and Visakhapatnam by 2027. As part of our commitment towards promoting healthcare, this initiative will enhance comprehensive cancer care services in different regions of our country by providing patients access to advanced and latest cancer therapies. These new buildings will also service as regional referral centres and mitigate the need for patients to travel long distance to visit Tata Memorial Hospital at Parel in Mumbai."

Adding on the occasion, Dr. R. A. Badwe, Director, Tata Memorial Centre, said, "We are extremely

This is the single largest contribution by any organisation to TMC

The money will be utilised to set up three new state-of-the-art blocks at TMC hospitals in Maharashtra, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh

The fund will also equip the new buildings with state-of-the-art medical facilities

Will double the capacity of patients to get advanced oncology treatment

grateful to ICICI Foundation for embarking on one of the largest CSR initiatives to improve cancer care across the country. The infrastructure which is being added at the three hospitals of Tata Memorial Centre at Navi Mumbai, Visakhapatnam and Mullanpur will provide timely and high quality treatment to people in the region at highly subsidised costs. It is critical that advanced cancer care is delivered closer to home so that more people from the region benefit from accessing such therapies.

The radiation therapy block at ACTREC, Navi Mumbai will play a vital role in not only providing timely radiotherapy to a large number of patients, but will also be delivered with the most advanced techniques, both of which are critical for a successful outcome. Childhood and adult blood cancers are highly curable but require very intense therapies. The ICICI centres being

established at Visakhapatnam and Mullanpur are dedicated children and blood cancer centres and will provide state-of-the-art multidisciplinary care. These centres will soon become regional hubs offering advanced therapies such as bone marrow transplant and cellular therapies to patients from the region."

The salient features of ICICI Bank's commitment are:

ICICI Foundation will set up an 'ICICI Radiation Oncology Block' at TMC's Advanced Centre for Treatment, Research & Education in Cancer (ACTREC) at Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra. This block will be equipped with state-of-the-art radiology facilities including CT scanner and MRT, new facility for outdoor patients, laboratories and radiotherapy facility for in-patients. All these together under one roof will help reduce waiting time significantly for investigations and hence enhance the quality of treatment.

ICICI Foundation will set up two 'ICICI Paediatric and Haematological Oncology Block' at TMC's Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre at Mullanpur in Punjab and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. These centres will provide an array of advanced equipment and therapies, which are required to treat paediatric and haematological cancer. The facilities will include intense chemotherapy, bone marrow transplantation, radiation therapy and newer immunotherapies like CAR-T cell, which are available only at super specialised centres. For the convenience of in-patient care, the centres will also have dedicated beds, day care units, ICUs, MRI and CT – PET Scan facility as well as laboratories for advanced testing including genetics, which are critical for treating paediatric and haematological cancers. These centres will also become regional referral centres in the entire southern and northern parts of the country.

Sistema.bio inaugurates World's Largest Manufacturing Facility For Biogas Plants in Pune

Sistema.bio, a renowned global social enterprise specializing in innovative biogas technology, achieved a momentous feat as it unveiled the world's largest manufacturing facility for biogas plants in Chakan, Pune on the World Environment Day. Spanning in an expansive area of 130,000 square feet. The advanced facility boasts an outstanding annual production capacity of 100,000 prefabricated biogas plants. With a staggering investment of 150 million INR (USD 1.8 million), this state-of-the-art manufacturing facility is poised to meet the growing demands of Asia Pacific and Africa.

During the inauguration event, Sistema.bio's Co-founder and CEO, Alexander Eaton, expressed his pride and appreciation for the facility, stating, "This facility is an example for the world of innovative technology and efficient business operations, creating a global impact. For every smart biogas unit that comes out of this facility, we can measure outcomes in farmers' lives impacted, better human health, and better climate health. I am incredibly proud of the team that designed and launched this facility and those that work hard here everyday!"

Presently, the factory operates at a daily capacity of 360 units, with future plans to double this output through automation. In comparison to the previous facility's production capacity of 30,000 units, the new factory exhibits an annual production capacity of 100,000 units. This colossal manufacturing facility will produce biogas plants at a scale like no other in India and has been certified under ISO 9001, demonstrating the delivery of high-quality products with strict quality standards and efficient production. Sistema.bio's



revolutionary biogas technology is patented in India for biogas reactor and membrane template. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) of the Government of India has officially recognized and approved Sistema.bio's modern and innovative biogas technology in December 2022.

Equipped with state-of-the-art machinery, the factory efficiently produces modern biogas plants, biogas booster pumps, H₂S scrubbers, and assembles a full suite of biogas plants including biodigester and cookstoves. Over the next five years, Sistema.bio India aims to implement automation to significantly increase

its capacity, enabling the company to extend its reach to hundreds of thousands of farmers across the country. Furthermore, Sistema.bio has set a goal to install one million biogas plants in India by 2030.

Sistema.bio works with multiple partners in India spanning from foundations, NGOs, co-operative & private dairy, and rural development organizations to reach lakhs of farmers every year. Its innovative Carbon financing model ensures farmers receive modern biogas technology at extremely affordable rates.

Piyush Sohani, the Country Director at Sistema.bio India said, "With the launch of the world's

largest manufacturing facility for biogas plants, we are celebrating a significant milestone in the sustainable energy landscape. This state-of-the-art facility will revolutionize the biogas industry, enabling us to meet the increasing demand for clean energy solutions in India and beyond. Our commitment to innovation, quality, and environmental stewardship is unwavering, and this

facility represents our dedication to impact millions of lives in India and creating a greener and more sustainable future."

Sistema.bio, headquartered in Mexico City, was founded in 2010 by Alex Eaton and Camilo Pages. With its India headquarters in Pune, Maharashtra and a workforce of 700+ people, Sistem.bio has made a significant impact by reaching

50,000+ families across 21 states in the country. The company goes beyond the designing, manufacturing, and supplying of its innovative and prefabricated biogas plants, it also offers installation, training, and comprehensive after-sales support services to farmers. These biogas plants come with a 10-year warranty and a lifespan of 20 years, ensuring their long-term effectiveness.

L&T Construction is all set to create Renewable Energy Infrastructure for the World's Largest Green Hydrogen plant at NEOM

The Power Transmission & Distribution Business of Larsen & Toubro has achieved important milestones for the Power Elements and Grid packages of the world's largest green hydrogen plant being built by NEOM Green Hydrogen Company. Located at Oxagon in Saudi Arabia's region of NEOM, NEOM Green Hydrogen Company (NGHC) is an equal joint-venture by ACWA Power, Air Products and NEOM.

NGHC is setting up a mega plant to produce green hydrogen at-scale for global export in the form of green ammonia with a total investment of USD 8.4 billion. Supported by 23 local, regional, and international banking and financial institutions, the project has now achieved full financial close and construction is moving forward.

A few quarters back, L&T received the nod to establish the Renewable Energy Generation, Storage and Grid infrastructure, from Air Products, the system-integrating EPC Contractor and exclusive off-taker of green ammonia to be produced from the project. The value of the packages awarded to L&T aggregate to USD 2.779 billion.

Since then, significant progress has been achieved in various activities including surveys, design & engineering, establishment of temporary facilities and procurement of long lead items.

Under these contracts, L&T will engineer, procure, and construct a 2.2 GWac PV Solar Plant, 1.65 GW Wind Generation Balance of Plant and a 400 MWh Battery Energy Storage System under the Power Elements package. It will also construct 3 Nos of 380 kV Switching Stations, 306 KM of 380 kV Overhead lines and UG Cables required to the Kingdom's Grid network. The scope also includes the Energy Power Monitoring System (EPMS) for the complete network.

Appreciating the bold vision of the Kingdom and the project proponents, the CEO and MD of Larsen & Toubro, Mr. S. N. Subrahmanyam said, "Such initiatives at scale have the potential to speed up global energy transition. Also, these technology-led projects are aligned with L&T's aspirations towards propelling our next wave of growth and reflect the customer's trust in our commitment to professionalism, timely delivery, and quality".

Commenting on the development, Mr. T Madhava Das, Whole-Time Director & Sr. Executive Vice President (Utilities), Larsen & Toubro said, "We are proud to be associated with the project that will integrate 4GW of renewable energy to enable production of up to 600 tonnes of carbon-free hydrogen per day."

In a recent statement, Wolfgang Brand, Vice President of NEOM Green Hydrogen from Air Products, the prime EPC contractor and system integrator for the entire facility, expressed enthusiasm for the progress made towards the world's largest green hydrogen production facility in NEOM. "We are pleased to commence the full execution of this lighthouse project and are proud to work with our partner L&T in their ambition to produce carbon-free hydrogen using renewable energy," said Mr. Brand.

"NGHC is excited to be leading the global energy transition and having the right partners is essential in making this happen, so we are thrilled to be working with Larsen & Toubro on our green hydrogen generation, grid infrastructure and storage", added David R. Edmondson, CEO of NEOM Green Hydrogen Company.

IHCL stays the course to reduce dependence on plastic



Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Andamans – India's first zero-single use plastic hotel

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), India's largest hospitality company, ahead of the World Environment Day 2023, reaffirms its commitment to reduce the use of single-use-plastic across its hotels.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Gaurav Pokhariyal, Executive Vice President – Human Resources, IHCL, said, "In line with the vision of IHCL's ESG+ framework of Paathya, we are committed to phase out single-use plastic from all our hotels. From elimination of plastic straws, replacing plastic-wrapped dry amenities with eco-friendly substitutes, introduction of bottling plants to initiating Zero-single use plastic hotels in the country, IHCL has stayed the course on beating plastic pollution."

IHCL, which is credited with the introduction of the country's first ever 'Zero Single-Use Plastic Hotel' – Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Andamans, has taken many strides over the years to beat plastic pollution and focus on environmental sustainability. The company has undertaken the initiative to phase out plastic water bottles from its hotels by replacing them with reusable glass water bottles, bottled with treated water. Earlier in its journey, IHCL hotels eliminated the use of plastic straws and also is replacing the use of plastic wrapping of the dry amenities in the rooms, such as toothbrush, shaving kit etc. with eco-friendly substitutes.

IHCL has announced its sustainability commitments for the year 2030 under Paathya, weaving in sustainable and responsible practices in business operations.

EESL targets to deploy 10 million energy efficient fans in India

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) under the Ministry of Power, organized a workshop – in collaboration with the Collaborative Labeling and Appliance Standards Program (CLASP) – aimed at accelerating the adoption of energy-efficient fans in India. The workshop brought together government agencies, civil society organizations, fan manufacturers, fan manufacturer associations, retailers and several other stakeholders to share views and insights on how to accelerate the adoption of energy-efficient fans and enable market transformation in India.

EESL has been actively dedicated to encouraging the adoption of energy-efficient appliances, such as LED bulbs, tube lights, and high-performance fans. Notably, ceiling fans contribute to approximately *40% of total residential electricity consumption, which accounts for over a quarter of India's overall electricity usage. By replacing all current ceiling fans with the most efficient models available today, nearly 20% of total residential electricity consumption can be diminished. EESL aims to capitalize on this potential for savings by deploying 10 million 5-star energy-efficient ceiling fans across India.

Venkatesh Dwivedi, Group Executive Director, EESL said, "Ceiling fans are one of the most widely used household appliances in India. Fans are also amongst the leading contributors to electricity consumption. At EESL, our endeavor is to ensure easy and affordable access to energy efficiency solutions. We now aim to procure/ distribute energy-efficient fans that consume 60% less energy than conventional fans and make them affordable and accessible to every household. Switching to these fans will help in securing an energy-conscious and sustainable future for all."

Bishal Thapa, Senior Director – India, CLASP, said, "Fans are a critical cooling appliance for millions across India and around the world. Replacing all of India's residential ceiling fans with super-efficient models can save a remarkable 15% of residential power consumption annually. Energy efficient fans have the potential to increase access, reduce energy use as well as carbon emissions. We are pleased to be partnering with EESL on this important effort to promote increased deployment of energy-efficient fans."

Milind Deore, Secretary, Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) said, "The demand for cooling is expected to surge with the rising temperatures. This in turn will increase the burden on power generation and transmission systems. Adoption of energy-efficient fans is crucial for improving indoor comfort, lowering costs, reducing peak demand, and driving environmental sustainability. EESL's energy-efficient fans thus hold multiple benefits for individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole."

CSR INDIA UNITED



HCL Foundation, National Cooperative Union of India join hands to enhance livelihood opportunities for marginalized groups

HCL Foundation, which delivers the corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda of leading global technology company HCLTech, has partnered with the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) to train over 5,000 women, youths and artisans from marginalized communities for sustainable income-generating opportunities. As part of the tie-up, HCL Foundation and NCUI's Centre for Entrepreneurship Development and Cooperation (CEDC) will set up a livelihood-cum-entrepreneurship

development center in Noida. "HCL Foundation is committed to enhancing the standard of living of the marginalized through its sustainable interventions. By joining hands with India's leading cooperative institutes association, we aim to empower women, youths, and artisans across India and promote the cooperative movement," said Dr. Nidhi Pundhir, Vice President, Global CSR, HCL Foundation. "The HCL Foundation-NCUI livelihood-cum-entrepreneurship development center will be a pioneering initiative to promote

opportunities to earn skills and livelihood in diverse communities."

Over the next three years, NCUI and HCL Foundation will develop and provide training infrastructure, market platforms and branding support to self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives across India. Through the tie-up, HCL Foundation and CEDC will help increase the employability of women and youth in the private sector and other organizations.

"Our memorandum of understanding (MoU) with HCL Foundation is a significant step forward in our efforts to strengthen the capacities of self-help groups and cooperatives in India," said Dr. Sudhir Mahajan, Chief Executive, NCUI. "Together with HCL Foundation, we look forward to promoting vocational training and sustainable livelihood models, allowing grassroots organizations to generate economic growth and social progress. By creating an enabling and inclusive environment that supports skill development and entrepreneurship, we aim to impact lives and communities across the country."

This livelihood-cum-entrepreneurship development center will teach participants basic financial and digital concepts and offer them regular health check-ups. HCL Foundation and NCUI also aim to support over 200 SHGs with over 3,000 members and 50 multi-purpose cooperatives. This partnership will replicate the NCUI Haat and Incubation Center projects in many states, mobilizing communities and forming self-help groups and cooperatives.

The partnership with NCUI aligns with HCL Uday, the urban CSR program of HCL Foundation, which is committed to the equitable and sustainable development of the communities living below the poverty line. To date, HCL Uday has impacted the lives of 890,000 people in 11 locations.

Home Credit India with Indian Development Foundation successfully concludes Financial Literacy CSR initiative 'Saksham'; educating 30,000 marginalised women & girls as beneficiaries

Home Credit India (HCIN), a local arm of the leading global consumer finance provider, recently concluded its Financial Literacy CSR initiative “Saksham”, educating nearly 30,000 marginalised women & girls as beneficiaries in collaboration with implementation partner, Indian Development Foundation (IDF), a private non-profit organization. Project Saksham was a 9-month financial literacy initiative carried out from July 2022 till March 2023.

The core objective behind Saksham financial literacy project is to impart basic financial education among marginalized women & girls to empower and enable them to make informed financial decisions. Saksham project covered nearly 30,000 women (including girl students, homemakers, maids, and daily wage earners) through 605 financial literacy workshops conducted primarily in north (Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi NCR), west (Maharashtra) and east (Bihar, West Bengal) regions of the country. As Project Saksham included 30% girl students over the age of 15 years, it got the leverage of falling under the Financial Literacy program under NEP implemented since 2020.

Speaking on the success of Saksham project, Ashish Tiwari, Chief Marketing Officer, Home Credit India, said, “In India and globally, financial literacy is far behind general literacy and amongst women it is at dismal levels. For Home Credit India, Financial Literacy is one of the key ESG pillars and we are working on it by promoting financial and digital literacy to drive a ‘responsible



borrowing culture’ in the society. We are happy to have successfully completed the first phase of Saksham project in collaboration with the Indian Development Foundation and this is just the beginning to empower & enable marginalized females in our society to attain financial skills that will instill confidence and help them take their personal and household financial decisions.”

As a responsible consumer lender, Home Credit India believes basic financial knowledge & skills are essential for individuals to manage personal finance and make informed decisions. Saksham’s curriculum for financial literacy workshop covered topics such as budgeting, savings, credit worthiness, and investment planning.

Speaking on the project implementation, Dr. Narayan Iyer, CEO, IDF, said, “Financial literacy has become the need of the hour especially with the government’s focus upon the penetration of financial inclusion in the country. By targeting marginalized women, we have begun financial education from the bottom of the society, which will create a sound

foundation in spreading its relevance to the wider society. Beneficiaries attending our literacy workshops have given a resounding response, with requests for more such regular trainings and to include males of the family for a bigger impact. IDF has been working on education & skill development for decades and with Home Credit’s persuasion of promoting financial literacy in the country, our synergies are in line to take this initiative much more ahead.”

According to the National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE), promoted by RBI and other financial regulators, India has a literacy rate of nearly 80% of its population, however, only 27% of its adult population is financially literate and for women, this number is around 21%.

As part of the financial literacy initiatives, Home Credit India has also engaged with over 3 million people through its in-house ‘Paise Ki Paathshala’ microsite, blogs and social media campaigns. Home Credit has always believed in the power of technology and digital innovation to foster financial inclusion and accessibility to all.



Mumbai Based Citizens Initiative turned non-profit Khaana Chahiye Foundation Wins the World Summit Award 2022 & WSA Global Champion award for Inclusion & Empowerment

Khaana Chahiye Foundation, a non-profit working on hunger eradication has been selected as World Summit Award Winner for 2022 in the category of Inclusion & Empowerment. The World Summit Awards (WSA) is a United Nations based global award initiative selecting and promoting outstanding digital innovations with a positive impact on society. Experts from more than 180 UN member states nominate local solutions demonstrating global diversity and richness in the smart use of ICTs.

The award came to Khaana Chahiye for smart use of Chatbots for grocery support and outreach. Built in partnership with Gupshup and Whatsapp, the chatbot allowed beneficiaries to reach out directly to the Khaana Chahiye team on WhatsApp. The chatbot, available in English, Hindi and Marathi helped the non-profit reach out to thousands of people in need, also enabling its volunteers to engage with these people seamlessly.

Out of the 45 winning solutions, Khaana chahiye were also announced as a Global Champion along with 7 more initiatives at the WSA Award Ceremony in Puebla for being one of the 8 best initiatives working on the UN SDG goals among the 45 winning projects selected from submissions from 187 countries

The other winning Global Champion initiatives are BindiMaps (AUS), Stymie (AUS), Aloï (SGP), Skooqs (NGR), Teachers Lead Tech (LTU), Volunteer Circle (LBN) and Agricos (MEX):

“It is a huge honour for Khaana Chahiye to be selected as a WSA Global Champion 2022 on a global stage among high calibre and innovative digital solutions that are committed to solving the biggest challenges humanity faces, towards the achievement of UN SDGs. We are trying to use a mix of tech and community outreach to support vulnerable communities across Mumbai. We hope that as we develop this further, our dream of a hunger free Mumbai

is realised. This is a key part, in our endeavour to develop a replicable playbook to solve for urban hunger in India, starting with our city of Mumbai”, said Swaraj Shetty - Co-Founder and Director - Growth/Marketing at Khaana Chahiye.

The Khaana Chahiye team represented Mumbai and India, sharing the story of Mumbai’s fight against hunger & advocating for the zero hunger cause to a multi-stakeholder audience with representatives from government, UN, UNDP, ICC, civil society, academia, private sector, and fellow entrepreneurs at the World Summit Awards in Puebla, Mexico.

“It’s wonderful to see Khaana Chahiye win a global award for their work on hunger eradication through digital means. We are honoured to have played a small role in their success by helping them leverage the power of conversational technology for rooting out urban hunger. We want to continue driving social transformation using the power of conversational technology and chatbots”, said Beerud Sheth, Co-founder and CEO, Gupshup.

Besides the chatbot, Khaana Chahiye also has a report hunger web form and uses its extensive network of 200+ grassroots community mobilisers and institutional partners like Centre for Study of Social Change (CSSC) & M-Power Study Center powered by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) to identify and support needy families with short term grocery support.

Post their relief work during the lockdowns, the collective turned NGO gauged that hunger was not limited to the pandemic and the need was only amplified. They needed to devise other ways to reach the extremely needy. On realising that their short term food support wasn’t accessible to all, they worked on using technology for good, and launched a multi-lingual WhatsApp chatbot to provide round-the-clock assistance to citizens in need of food.

P&G Shiksha's Nationwide Movement spotlights the #InvisibleGap in a Child's Education, Receives Overwhelming Response

P&G Shiksha, the flagship CSR program of P&G India, recently began a first-of-its-kind nationwide movement to highlight a hidden issue in children's education across the country – an 'Invisible Gap'. When a child falls behind and their current learning level is not in line with the expected learning level as per the defined curriculum, an invisible learning gap is formed.

The movement was flagged off with a high-octane 360-degree campaign which began on April 20 and over the next 6 weeks, has continued to garner high engagement from varied stakeholders. The 360-degree campaign began with a thought-provoking panel discussion centered around the theme of 'Bridging Invisible Gaps' featuring National Award-Winning Actress, Shefali Shah Girish Kalyanaraman, Vice President – Brand Operations, P&G India; Ritesh Agarwal, Assistant Vice President, Educational Initiatives; and Sagar Singh, Faculty Mathematics, Gov. High School Banah Ki Ser, Sirmour (HP). On the day, P&G Shiksha also unveiled a first-of-its kind film which highlighted the crisis of 'Invisible Gap' through the heartwarming story of Bindiya, a young girl who is impacted by the invisible gap and struggles to cope in the classroom.

Studies indicate that students in schools often fall behind in keeping pace with their classes. One concept, one subject, one class, can give way to a larger issue where the child develops a gap in the fundamental conceptual understanding, called the invisible learning gap.

This nationwide movement was therefore dedicated to making these



invisible gaps visible, by driving awareness and urging collective action to bridge these invisible gaps, which often go unnoticed and create a significant roadblock in a child's learning and development progress.

Speaking about the success of the overall campaign, Girish Kalyanaraman, Vice President – Marketing Operations, P&G India said "We are happy that the movement we began to make invisible gaps visible, a few weeks ago, has already garnered widespread reach and a heartwarming response across India. While we continue to work tirelessly with our partners on the ground to address the learning gaps via various programs, what gladdens me the most is knowing that our efforts to uncover this hidden issue will significantly impact children across the country who may be silently impacted by it. I am proud that today it has brought together individuals, communities, and organizations to address the #InvisibleGap. P&G Shiksha has continued to

provide access to education to millions of underprivileged children since its inception 18 years ago and remain steadfast in our commitment towards playing our role in the social growth of the country."

He added, "This has been a movement towards igniting a nationwide dialogue to drive change. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has actively participated and supported the cause, unlocking the power of collective action. Together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of these children."

To drive the intended awareness and urge collective action to bridge invisible gaps, P&G Shiksha leveraged multiple platforms and touchpoints across the country in a three-pronged manner. This included:

Engagement for Awareness:

P&G Shiksha focused on proactively engaging with people across the country to bring up the issue of invisible gaps and create a ripple effect that amplifies awareness,

promotes meaningful dialogue, and inspires action to address the issue at hand. This included:

- A captivating sand-art at a beach in Puri, in Odisha, by renowned sand-artist and Padma Shri Awardee – Sudarsan Pattnaik that depicted a hidden girl, creating buzz and curiosity to kick start the initiative.
- A unique virtual reality tour which transported people to a P&G Shiksha supported school in a scenic village in Himachal Pradesh, using a virtual reality device, where people could meet the students and the teachers at the school and hear their stories of overcoming the invisible learning gap.
- A compelling art-installation of a girl hiding behind a desk at what appears to be a classroom, to showcase how learning gaps impact children.
- Power-packed nukkad-nataks to simplify the issue of learning gaps and drive awareness on the ways it manifests itself in children.

Partner Engagement:

P&G Shiksha leveraged the long-standing associations of P&G India with several renowned brands, who came together in an unprecedented manner and lent the power of their voices to create collective awareness on invisible gaps. As part of this:

- To amplify the impact of this campaign, reach a wider audience, and spark a transformative shift in attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions surrounding the issue, brands like Swiggy Instamart, Apollo Pharmacy, Hero Lectro E-cycles, Amazon India, and Sunstone among others, tweaked their brand logos on social media. The new visual depicted Bindia, the protagonist of the campaign, hiding behind the logos to spotlight the impact invisible gaps cast on a child's confidence.
- Further, large shopping stores



The 360-degree initiative was launched 2 months back, to drive awareness and trigger collective action towards bridging invisible learning gaps in education

Since its launch in 2005, P&G Shiksha has continued to make holistic educational interventions, impacting over 35 lakh children across the country

like Apollo Pharmacy, Vishal Mega Mart and D-Mart prominently and visibly highlighted the issue of learning gaps at the store, in an endeavour to create intrigue in the minds of the shoppers and motivate them to learn more about the issue.

- Heart-warming thank-you notes shared by children positively impacted by P&G Shiksha's educational interventions. These notes were sent along with every P&G product that consumers ordered online on e-commerce channels like Swiggy Instamart during the campaign. Several consumers took to social media to share these notes with unique Instagram filters developed specially for driving awareness on invisible gaps.

Urging Collective Action:

P&G Shiksha highlighted that while

several interventions are being implemented on ground to bridge invisible learning gaps by varied stakeholders, taking collective action to tackle this issue is the need of the hour. It further highlighted that collective action is needed to ensure that every child in India receives an education that empowers them to build a better future for themselves and their communities. As part of this, the campaign offered multiple ways to people in which they can join the cause. As part of this:

- P&G Shiksha encouraged people to identify learning gaps in children around them, by helping them take a unique baseline assessment, which it developed and made accessible to everyone as part of the #InvisibleGap campaign, in collaboration with its digital remedial learning program implementing partner – Educational Initiatives. The assessment intends to enable everyone in the country to identify learning gaps in children around them in a timely manner.
- Further, upon completion of the assessment and identification of a learning gap, P&G Shiksha recommended various remedial measures that parents/guardians can avail to bridge the invisible gap in children. This included a free 7-day trial of Educational Initiative's digital remedial learning tool – Mindspark.

Raigarh incorporates Blockchain to monitor industrial CSR Tree Plantation

The Raigarh District Administration has launched a sustainable Blockchain Based Monitoring System for tracking industrial Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plantation activities in the city. Utilizing NEAR Protocol's fast and low cost operational platform and the innovative technological offerings of Airchains, a cutting-edge blockchain-based middleware SaaS solution, the administration is determined to make significant elevations to the tree plantation mechanism to enable transparency, traceability, and accountability within the sector and regenerate its lost greenery.

Raigarh as a district is home to several industries, including steel, power, and cement, among others. These industries have been actively engaged in CSR activities, including plantation drives, to contribute to the local community and environment. However, ensuring that industries abide by their commitments and monitor the progress of plantation activities is a daunting task for district administrations. The administration also faces a significant challenge of verifying the accuracy of the reports shared by industries outlining their tree plantation and CSR initiatives which requires serious capital and labour.

Leveraging blockchain technology that has been increasingly penetrating different sectors due to its secure, transparent, and immutable nature provides for the perfect solution. The blockchain based monitoring system, developed by Airchains, is focused on providing accurate, immutable, verifiable, and real-time information to the stakeholders of the project along with ensuring the listed industries are compliant with the regulations related to the plantation sector.

"The Raigarh District is elated to partner with NEAR Protocol and Airchains to launch the blockchain based monitoring system. We are committed to the cause of bringing back the flora and fauna of the area and believe that it is pertinent to hold companies accountable to their CSR initiatives in a seamless and transparent manner. This initiative aligns with our commitment to sustainable development and environmental conservation. Furthermore, we can monitor any deviation or delay in our progress and take the required corrective actions within stipulated time." Shri Taran Prakash Sinha, IAS, Collector & District Magistrate commented.

"The initiative to incorporate blockchain technology to enable a trackable and verified system for our industrial CSR efforts is a step forward towards a greener tomorrow. The key problems of the sector can be placated with the use of this immutable tech designed to reduce inefficiencies and capital consumption by providing an automated and accurate alternative. Enabling real time data monitoring and access to the public and any stakeholders, we are nurturing transparency in otherwise opaque administrative processes for the public." Shri Abinash Mishra, IAS, Zilla Panchayat CEO, Raigarh Chhattisgarh added.

The system provides different functionalities including a unique Tree Aadhaar for easy tracking and storing of data, dashboard login for district administration and listed industries, and the latest plantation data covering holistic aspects such as type, location, time, date, number of trees planted. Additionally, the platform has a smooth user interface designed for listed industries to feed information readily into the system

and tracks real-time Air Quality Index (AQI) which is accessible to any visitor to depict the direct effect of these afforestation efforts for public and stakeholders consumption.

"We are honoured to partner with the Raigarh District administration to fulfill their sustainability and CSR objectives. Through this system, they have established a groundbreaking precedence of establishing transparency and traceability to the CSR initiatives in the district and are leading the way with their technological adoption. We believe that this system will set a new standard for sustainable forest management and inspire other governments and organizations to adopt similar initiatives." Ankur Rakhi Sinha, Co-founder and CEO, Airchains

"We are thrilled to be partnering with Raigarh District Administration to empower sustainable development through blockchain technology. As a public sector player in the forefront of innovation for the public good, they are leading the way in India and we are happy to be a positive catalyst to their initiative with our solution." said Arpit Sharma, Managing Director, India, SE Asia, and Middle East.

The one-of-its-kind project has two phases of implementation with the first phase including the onboarding of industries, verifying data relating to their tree plantation activities, generating a unique Tree Aadhaar for each tree, and monitoring their maintenance. The second phase aims to monitor the effectiveness of this system for better future planning and geographical assessment. Along with that, the system will further monitor the carbon footprint or lack thereof, to present opportunities for the district administration to leverage carbon credits.



Microsoft joins forces with Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to train youth in digital and cybersecurity skills

Committed to empower youth in India with future-ready skills, Microsoft has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), to train students and educators at government-led Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and National Skills Training Institutions (NSTIs). As part of this collaboration, Microsoft will offer a wide range of courses, including training in AI, cloud computing, web development and cybersecurity skills for nearly 6,000 students and 200 faculty members.

This training will empower young students with industry-relevant skills, enhancing their employability, and connecting them to relevant job opportunities. In addition to future skills training for AI fluency and fundamentals,

cloud computing and web development, students have the opportunity to learn from industry experts and engage in deep-dive sessions, multifaceted capstone projects. Train-the-Trainer workshops will be conducted to empower faculty members on AI fluency and fundamentals, cloud computing, web development, Power BI, and soft skills. These trained faculty members can then train ITI students attending computer operator and programming assistant (COPA) training. The CyberShiksha program focusing on basic and intermediate cybersecurity skills training will also be expanded to students and educators at 10 NSTIs for women.

Welcoming the initiative, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Minister of State (MoS), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship; and Ministry of Electronics and IT, said, "With acceleration in digitalization

post-Covid, there has been a huge demand for talent and skilled workforce in the tech space. Our platforms like DGTs, ITIs and STIs are driving the skilling efforts from the frontline. I firmly believe that collaborations like that of DGT and Microsoft, will play a pivotal role in nurturing talent and Young Indians will get better access to skills that are more relevant in this fast-changing digital age. Our ambition as a nation is to become a trillion-dollar digital economy by 2026 and therefore investments and policies are being put in place to drive our growth in that direction. The Government's top priority is to safeguard our digital nagriks from cybersecurity challenges like data breaches, hacking attempts, identity theft, and malware attacks, etc. For this purpose, it is crucial that our skilling efforts help build a skilled workforce that is capable of effectively protecting and defending digital systems and networks."

Jean-Philippe Courtois, executive vice president and president, National Transformation Partnerships, Microsoft, said, "Empowering India's youth with digital skills is crucial to building economic resilience and ensuring a brighter future for all. We are pleased to collaborate with DGT to train the country's youth with the skills to succeed in today's digital economy. Together, we can build an inclusive future for the young leaders of tomorrow and unlock the full potential of the country's workforce through this sustainable flywheel of skilling and employment."

Microsoft collaborates with several non-profit organizations to offer a comprehensive range of courses. With support from DGT, Microsoft will facilitate the placement of successful learners from this project, through collaborations with recruitment and placement agencies, and statewide job fairs to promote employment opportunities.



Microsoft and AirJaldi Networks strengthen collaboration to provide internet access for underserved communities in 12 states

Microsoft and AirJaldi, a leading innovator and implementer of technically and economically viable internet connectivity solutions for rural areas, signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Titled 'Contentful Connectivity', the program aims to advance access to high-speed internet and meaningful connectivity as a fundamental right in collaboration with private, public, non-profit sectors and build solutions for broadband adoption and digital transformation, benefitting underserved communities in rural regions of India.

Over the next three years, the program will:

- **Expand AirJaldi Networks into three new states** namely, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha, with an increase in the number of network locations
- **Strengthen AirJaldi Networks in nine states** by extending the wireless and wired infrastructure and supporting extension of reach and connectivity provision for underserved users. AirJaldi Networks will deploy, implement, and test new connectivity technologies, approaches, and connectivity-related solutions to improve the quality and richness of services offered and sustainability of the networks.
- **Enhance skilling, education and entrepreneurship training programs** by strengthening the courses for women entrepreneurship and rural connectivity and

integrating Microsoft modules on digital productivity, employability skills, and AI fluency skills for 15,000 underserved community members, in particular women, youth and high school children in 12 states. These network-led training programs would be based on a multi-faceted training approach combining face-to-face training, online sessions and online Learning Management System (LMS) courses delivered through Microsoft Community Training platform, as well as a 24/7 learning help desk to provide course support and career guidance.

- **Build Internet of Things (IoT) based connectivity-related solutions** in the rural regions on networking, e-learning, skilling, telemedicine, agriculture, accessibility, and environment to transform livelihoods and well-being of enterprises and communities.
- **Build partnerships with government and corporate organizations for sustenance** in three states where the networks are getting created in the areas of education, diverse skills for jobs, or women entrepreneurship.

Antony Cook, Corporate Vice President and Deputy General Counsel, Microsoft, said, "We believe access to the internet should be available to everyone and that digital skills create and enable economic prosperity for people, businesses and governments. Partnerships are foundational to the success of Airband and, by working with AirJaldi Networks, we will extend internet access to 500,000 beneficiaries in underserved communities in rural India. Beyond solving for internet access to help the country's digital capabilities continue to grow, Microsoft expects that this expanded access to the internet will also help these beneficiaries to enhance their digital productivity, AI and employability skills."

Michael Ginguld, Director Strategy and Operations, AirJaldi

Networks, said, "I am delighted and excited to sign this MoU with Microsoft India. This partnership, which is a continuation of our fruitful work with Microsoft since 2016, is a significant step forward in achieving our joint goals of providing wide-ranging, meaningful and impactful connectivity across India. I believe that the combination of connectivity, digital tools and digital skills are essential building-blocks in ensuring the central role of internet connectivity in improving people's lives. We at AirJaldi are

thankful for being able to be part of this process."

The Microsoft Airband initiative was launched to bring transformative connectivity to underserved communities around the world. Through the Airband initiative and its partners, Microsoft is serving as a catalyst to enable affordable access to connectivity, specifically focusing on regions with lower digital connectivity rates. Partnering with Microsoft's Airband Initiative, organizations like AirJaldi Networks have additional support to create

the infrastructure needed to provide connectivity support in many different ecosystems that ultimately drives self-empowerment and sustainable development and growth. These partnerships are essential in providing local expertise and experience to help achieve a greater goal tied to what can be harnessed with the support of connectivity. As technology, like AI, advances, being connected provides a path forward to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

1,00,000 rural women receive entrepreneurship skilling under nasscom foundation program supported by Google.org

Nasscom Foundation's Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Program supported by Google.org has reached more than 1,00,000 rural women to support them in pursuing their entrepreneurial aspirations. The program has covered 18 districts, spread across six states including Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, and Rajasthan.

The initiative has equipped more than 1500 women entrepreneurs to become master trainers who collectively have trained over 20,000 other marginalized women through a cascade model with digital, financial, and entrepreneurial skills, enabling them to leverage digital literacy and generate income opportunities. Additionally, the program's DigiVaani call center initiative has reached out to more than 90,000 women in rural communities in Northern India. Through mobile-based outreach, these women have been offered guidance and support to leverage digital skills for their businesses and create new avenues to improve their livelihoods.

One of the key benefits of the program has been an increased awareness

and access to various government schemes, as 92 percent of the master trainers now have knowledge of these schemes and 61 percent have gone on to avail their benefits. There has also been a significant impact on the adoption of digital payments, with 52 percent of them adopting various digital payment platforms for making business transactions. About 58 percent are currently pursuing entrepreneurship as an outcome of the program, of which 73 percent are now leveraging social media platforms to gain exposure, enhance their skills, and promote their products to reach a wider audience. Moreover, at least 82 percent of the entrepreneurs among the master trainers are now aware of various e-commerce platforms and their uses.

Nidhi Bhasin, CEO, nasscom foundation, said, "Women entrepreneurs in India play a significant role in advancing the country's economic growth. Empowering women entrepreneurs is not just about providing them with the resources and tools to succeed, it's about unlocking their potential to drive innovation, create jobs, and transform communities. With the support of Google.org, we have cultivated a powerful ecosystem

for women entrepreneurs, equipping them with the skills, networks, and opportunities they need to thrive."

Marija Ralic, Lead, Google.org APAC, said "We are proud to have supported, through Google.org, the work that nasscom foundation is doing with women entrepreneurs in rural communities, and it's been heartening to hear so many inspiring stories of these beneficiaries being equipped with the necessary skills, resources and support to unleash their full potential and drive innovation in the digital economy. Thank you to nasscom foundation for helping to foster a more inclusive and diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact these women will have on society and the economy."

Women entrepreneurs are much less represented in the digital economy than men. This gap translates into missed economic opportunities and may also aggravate existing gender inequalities. Launched in 2021, the program was designed to address similar challenges faced by women entrepreneurs by providing them digital, financial and entrepreneurship skills that have resulted in increased income and economic independence.

Dreams Take Flight: Etihad Airways' transformative education mission for India

Etihad Airways empowers more than 20,000 Girls from remote areas in India with the help of Online Skills Development Program

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, recently announced Phase 4 of its "Giving Your Dreams Flight" global education initiative in India. The multi-phased program is a transformative endeavour by the airline to pave the way for a brighter and more promising future, and is part of Etihad's commitment to supporting underprivileged children and providing access to quality education.

Dr Nadia Bastaki, Chief People and Corporate Affairs Officer, Etihad Airways, emphasised the significance of this initiative for the airline, stating, "As part of our CSR efforts, Etihad Airways firmly recognises the importance of empowering children and expanding educational horizons. In line with this vision, we have actively sought out partnerships with like-minded organisations and partners who share our commitment to making a positive impact. By investing in educational programs and opportunities, we aspire to create an environment where children can flourish and excel."

Phase 1 (2016) - A Remarkable Transformation: Noshera Mewat Public Middle School

In partnership with the UAE embassy and SMART, an Indian NGO, Etihad launched a renovation and



Etihad Airways team in 2016, pictured in front of Noshera Mewat Public Middle School as part of a renovation and refurbishment project for the local school.



The Etihad Airways CSR delegation at the opening of the IT skills development center in Mewat, in 2019.



Ahead of the friendly match between Etihad cricket player volunteers and the Noshera School students.

refurbishment project for Noshera Mewat Public Middle School, located near New Delhi. Through the power of collective action, this endeavour equipped over 1000 students and people of determination with essential school supplies, including bags, stationary, nutritious meals, uniforms, shoes, and various other garments.

Phase 2 (2017) - A Haven for Knowledge: The Spectacular Library Project

Under the patronage of H.H Sheikhha Bodour bint Sultan Al Quasimi, and in collaboration with the UAE Board on Books for Young People (UAEBBY), Etihad opened the Phase 2 School Library Project in India. This awe-inspiring educational facility, inaugurated on March 25, now serves as a beacon of

knowledge, benefiting over 1000 students annually.

Phase 3 (2019) - Empowering Girls for a Digital Future: The IT Skills Development Centre

Etihad established the IT Skills Development Centre in Mewat, focusing on empowering young girls with essential skills for future employment. With generous donations and steadfast efforts, Etihad aims to equip girls with the cutting-edge tools necessary to excel in the ever-evolving technological landscape.

Phase 4 (2023) - Harnessing the Power of the Digital Realm: The Online Skills Development Program

In its recent effort to embrace the digital age, Etihad introduced an online skills development program,

dedicated to enhancing English language proficiency and fostering personality development. With the assistance of passionate volunteers, this program has reached approximately 10,000 children, predominantly girls, from remote areas of India. Engaging learning sessions are meticulously recorded and shared across various platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and the community radio station, Radio Mewat.

In addition to the programme's launch and reinforcing its commitment to making dreams come true, Etihad organised volunteers to play a friendly cricket match with orphans studying in the Noshera school. The four top players among the orphans will then be given an opportunity to attend the upcoming ICC World Cricket Cup.

Habitat for Humanity India, Aramco India build sanitation facilities for local community

Habitat for Humanity India, a leading housing non-profit organization, in partnership with Aramco Asia India Pvt Ltd (Aramco India), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Aramco, handed over sanitation units to 257 families and four Zilla Parishad schools in the villages of Wada, Chas and Kadus, located in Khed block, Pune district.

The handover ceremony took place in the presence of Mohammed S. Al-Herbish, President of Aramco India, and was attended by representatives from both sides and local residents.

"Building household toilets is key to improve sanitation and hygiene and protect against infections for local residents, particularly during monsoon season. By having a toilet at doorstep, all families will save on medical expenses and be protected from insect-borne diseases. It is a huge benefit that the toilets were constructed before the monsoons," said



Mina, who works as an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) in Wada village.

Commenting on the collaboration, a spokesperson from Habitat for Humanity India said, "Habitat India builds sanitation units, as it is a basic need of a family, and is required to make a home adequate. Building school sanitation units will ensure that children in these villages will have access to improved sanitation facilities in their schools, as well as their

homes. The project will benefit 257 families and nearly 400 students. By prioritizing hygiene and sanitation, this initiative will create a ripple effect which will lead to a widespread adoption of hygienic practices, ultimately improving the overall health and well-being of communities. We are thankful to Aramco for partnering with

Habitat for Humanity India."

Al-Herbish said, "Access to adequate sanitation facilities is crucial for building sustainable communities and addressing health disparities. We are pleased to be part of this initiative in partnership with Habitat for Humanity India. By emphasizing the importance of hygiene and sanitation, the initiative not only benefits the families directly but also communities in a holistic manner."

Habitat for Humanity India and ExxonMobil build anganwadi centres and sanitation facilities in government schools

Four government schools in Bengaluru and Chikkaballapur now have access to new and upgraded sanitation units and clean drinking water facilities thanks to Habitat for Humanity India, a leading housing non-profit organisation, and ExxonMobil Services & Technology Private Limited (ExxonMobil). The new infrastructure offers improved access to safe and hygienic sanitation facilities and clean drinking water to more than 1,200 school students.

Additionally, two anganwadi centres in Chikkaballapur have gone through a complete makeover, with one being newly constructed and another renovated. Pregnant women, mothers and children up to 5 years of age who visit the anganwadi centres to avail the integrated child development services will benefit from the newly built infrastructure.

The facilities were handed over to the schools and anganwadi authorities in a handover ceremony held on 1st June, 2023. The ceremony was attended by Vipin Rana

(ExxonMobil, India Market Manager – Lubes), Chinedu C Agbalaka (ExxonMobil Technology Center Subsurface Manager), Kirti N Parmar (ExxonMobil, Technology Center IT Manager), Sartaj S Ghai (ExxonMobil - Technical Advisor), Habitat India's team and dignitaries from the schools and anganwadis.

Under the project, sanitation units and hand-washing facilities have been built in Swami Vivekananda High School in Hoskote; Siddhartha Educational Society in Lingarajpuram, Bengaluru; Model Primary School and Government Higher Primary school in Avathi, Chikkaballapur district. The anganwadis are located in Mandikal village in Chikkaballapur district. The development of the school sanitation infrastructure and anganwadis is part of Habitat for Humanity India's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and community infrastructure development initiative.

Commenting on the initiative, Habitat for Humanity India's

spokesperson said, "We are thankful to ExxonMobil for their generous support. Through our partnership with government schools and anganwadi centers, we are proud to have constructed sanitation units, built a new anganwadi center, and renovated another anganwadi centre. These efforts not only enhance the learning environment but also empower children with dignity and the opportunity to thrive. Habitat for Humanity India remains committed to creating sustainable and inclusive spaces that nurture the dreams and aspirations of our future generations."

ExxonMobil said, "No child should be held back due to a lack of basic sanitation services. But this problem disproportionately impacts girls. In fact, it's viewed as one of the primary reasons they are denied a real chance at education. That's why, at ExxonMobil, we back impactful initiatives such as this one that create more "pull factors" for children to complete their schooling and build themselves a promising future."

STAY INFORMED...

SUBSCRIBE & SAVE

Order **CSR Today** Magazine now

To subscribe, contact:

CSR TODAY, Indian Centre for CSR, 106, Nirman Kendra,
Dr. E. Moses Road, Mahalaxmi Estate, Mumbai- 400 011 (India).

Tel: +91 9930139352



Eye-Q collaborates with Pinnacle School of Optometry to Empower Youth with Upskilling and Guaranteed Employment Opportunities

More than 105 people per year are set to benefit from these courses, with a special focus on empowering youth, accounting for over 90% of the total beneficiaries.

Eye-Q, the leading hospital eye care chain, announced the collaboration with Pinnacle School of Optometry, a pioneering platform aimed at upskilling and providing employment opportunities to youth through its short-term paramedical courses. Affiliated with Centurion University of Technology and Management, Odisha, the school offers courses in Ophthalmic Assistant, Ophthalmic Surgical Assistant, and Optical Sales Executive, each consisting of 1-year academic training plus 6 months of practical training.

Eye-Q will provide 100% guaranteed employment to the students who successfully complete the program.

Each course requirement of 10+2 with 55% in PCB/PCM. The courses have limited availability, with only 35 seats available per course. More than 105 students per year are set to benefit from these courses, with a special focus on empowering youth, accounting for over 90% of the total beneficiaries. In this collaboration, the faculty will comprise. Eye-Q's esteemed doctors from AIIMS and Sankara Nethralaya and will operate under the efficient stewardship of Deepti

Jaiswal, Principal of Pinnacle School of Optometry. Commenting on the launch, Dr. Ajay Sharma, founder and CMD of Eye-Q, expressed his profound enthusiasm stating, "At Eye-Q, we believe in transforming lives through education and skill development, and our collaboration with Pinnacle School of Optometry is a testament to that vision.

This is aligned to our Prime Minister Mr. Modi's Vision of Skill India. Our commitment to providing quality education, coupled with practical training and job placement, ensures that our students have a solid foundation for a successful career. By focusing on empowering youth and offering scholarships, we strive to create a more inclusive and diverse workforce in the eye care industry. Moreover, this momentous launch reflects our unwavering pursuit of excellence and determination to set new standards in creating transformative opportunities for individuals seeking to make a difference in the field of optometry."

The launch of the Pinnacle School of Optometry comes at a crucial time, with the growing prevalence of eye-related conditions in India. By providing specialized training and employment opportunities, we are not only addressing the growing demand for skilled professionals but also ensuring that individuals are well-equipped to contribute effectively to the eye care sector. These courses serve as a catalyst in building a competent workforce, dedicated to improving the vision and overall eye health of our communities." said

Sumit Bhasin, Vice President- Human Resources at Eye-Q

Pinnacle School of Optometry offers a comprehensive training program that combines both physical and online training modes, ensuring a well-rounded learning experience for the trainees. The advantages of enrolling in the courses at Pinnacle School of Optometry are manifold. Trainees have the unique opportunity to learn from highly qualified doctors and optometrists, benefiting from their extensive expertise in the field. The practical training will be facilitated through state-of-the-art equipment, ensuring that trainees gain hands-on experience with the latest tools and technologies. Upon successful completion of the 18-month training program, Eye-Q guarantees 100% job placement for all trained individuals with immediate onboarding into their designated roles. Additionally, trainees also have the advantage of availing a 10% scholarship on the course fee.

Eye-Q remains committed to expanding its Skill Development Campaign and touching more lives with the knowledge and skills required to excel in the eye care industry. The launch of the Pinnacle School of Optometry is just one of the many initiatives undertaken by Eye-Q to create meaningful employment opportunities. Building on its previous successes, Eye-Q has successfully trained hundreds of individuals through its multiple upskilling initiatives, demonstrating its competence and expertise in providing industry-ready courses.

Students from aspirational districts secure impressive percentile in JEE Mains 2023 with BYJU'S and NITI Aayog's Career Plus Program (CPP)

BYJU'S Career Plus Program (CPP), an exclusive initiative for India's aspirational districts in collaboration with NITI Aayog, has enabled students from these areas to attempt and achieve outstanding results in the highly competitive JEE Mains 2023. Out of 63 CPP aspirants, 23 have qualified for JEE Advanced 2023 with impressive percentile scores, an otherwise distant and inaccessible dream for students hailing from these socio-economically weaker areas. By providing students with BYJU'S high-quality, tech-driven learning programs for free and the additional support of BYJU'S Education for All fellows, 8 out of the 23 students have scored above 80 percentile. Notably, girls form about 22% of the qualifiers. The results were announced by the National Testing Agency on April 29.

Since 2021 BYJU'S Career Plus Program has supported numerous students from socio-economic weaker sections across 112 aspirational districts, providing them with free tech-driven learning programs to attempt and ace engineering and medical entrance exams. The selected students hail from 17 different aspirational districts across India showcasing the CPP's wide reach at the grassroots level. This has been achieved by the consistent support, mentorship, and guidance provided by BYJU'S Education For All fellows.

Commenting on this achievement, Mansi Kasliwal, VP - Social Initiatives, BYJU'S, said, "Through our BYJU'S Career Plus Program for aspirational districts, we aim to

BYJU'S CPP student Shubham Gupta from Moga, Punjab secured 96.40 percentile

8 out of 23 students score an impressive 80 percentile and above; qualified for JEE Advanced

22% of the qualifiers are girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds

empower and equip students with tech-enabled learning programs so that they do not lag behind in their preparation for competitive exams like the JEE and NEET. For students in these areas, aspiring for an engineering or medical seat is next to impossible given the high cost of coaching and lack of qualified teachers or materials. Many of these students are also first-generation learners. The outstanding results secured by the aspirants from these districts is a testament to the quality of coaching provided

to them under the guidance of our fellows appointed across these districts. We are hopeful of witnessing more students coming out with flying colours in the coming years."

Shubham Gupta, a BYJU'S CPP student from Moga, Punjab who achieved an overall 96.40 percentile in JEE Mains 2023, said, "Scoring over 96 percentile in JEE Mains is a dream come true for me. I am very grateful to BYJU'S Career Plus Program that has been instrumental in my preparation journey. JEE Mains is considered as one of the toughest exams to crack but the constant support and guidance from BYJU'S, coupled with my dedication and hardwork, have helped me qualify for JEE Advanced 2023. Moreover, my mentor's personalized attention, high quality study material, and regular assessments have played a key role in my success. I am confident that with the unwavering support from BYJU'S CPP, I will be able to crack the JEE Advanced Exam."

The JEE (Main) is one of the most sought-after engineering entrance exams in India and is conducted twice a year, providing students with an additional opportunity to improve their scores. While JEE (Advanced) is exclusively for admission to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), JEE Main is for admission to several National Institute of Technologies (NITs) and other government-aided engineering colleges across the country. It's important to note that students must appear for JEE (Main) to be eligible for JEE (Advanced).

ACT Fellowship Program invites applications for 2023-24 cohort; seeks young professionals aspiring to be social change-makers

ACT, a non-profit venture philanthropy platform, has launched applications for the second cohort of the ACT Fellowship Program - an opportunity for young professionals to gain real-world experience in leveraging venture philanthropy for creating social impact at scale while honing their leadership and entrepreneurial skills. The program is a great fit for those who are looking to build their career in social impact, pivot their professional journey toward impact investing, or hope to become a social entrepreneur.

The nine-month, full-time program will commence in September 2023 and enable Fellows to learn how venture capital principles are applied to philanthropy, from leading investors, founders, and social impact leaders. Each Fellow will be matched with one of ACT's four focus areas - ed-tech, public healthcare, climate action, and gender inclusivity - and will work with the ACT team on a wide array of live projects including sector research, deal-flow sourcing, due diligence, investment pitches, portfolio management, impact assessment, collaborative programs, industry events and partnerships, etc.

The nine-month, full-time program is designed to help Fellows learn how venture capital principles are applied to philanthropy to catalyse social impact at scale

Fellows will be matched with one of ACT's four focus areas of ed-tech, public healthcare, climate action, and gender inclusivity


The Fellowship is fully-funded and each Fellow will receive a monthly stipend of Rs. 60,000 in addition to a letter of experience on successfully completing the program

"Our first cohort of Fellows has recently graduated and their positive learning experience has fuelled us to refine the program further.

The Fellowship is our way of bringing in the best and brightest of young minds into the social impact space and we're looking for ambitious go-getters who are genuinely interested in creating social change, passionate about the role of technology and innovation, and deeply curious about venture philanthropy," said Alankrita Khera, Director at ACT.

The 2023-24 cohort will accept five Fellows into the program and the minimum eligibility criteria are for applicants to be a resident Indian citizen, a graduate in any discipline from an accredited university in or outside India, and have a minimum of two years of startup/investing/consulting/social sector work experience.

Interested candidates will need to complete and submit an online application form - those shortlisted will be invited for an in-person/virtual interview with a member of ACT's leadership team. Such interviews will be conducted on a rolling basis and since the program has limited spots, applicants are recommended to submit their application as soon as possible.

Application Deadline: 11.59 PM on 7th August 2023 

CSR TODAY

INDIA'S FIRST MAGAZINE ON
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

To subscribe, contact: CSR TODAY, Indian Centre for CSR, 106, Nirman Kendra, Dr. E. Moses Road, Mahalaxmi Estate, Mumbai- 400 011 (India). Tel: +91 9930139352

IS THE WORLD MAKING REAL PROGRESS TOWARDS NET ZERO EMISSIONS?

Many countries and companies have set 'net zero' targets to curb global warming - but most have been criticised as insufficient

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has said man-made carbon dioxide emissions need to fall by 43 per cent by 2030, from 2010 levels, and reach "net zero" by mid-century to give the world a good chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change. *Image: eugene yoo, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.*



about three-quarters of countries have now set the net-zero emissions targets that scientists say must be met by mid-century to keep global warming to agreed limits. But putting them into practice is another matter, as cities and companies lag behind.

A 2023 update by the Net Zero Tracker research initiative notes that 148 nations and the European Union now have a net-zero goal, up from 124 in December 2020, indicating “a clear consensus to curtail greenhouse gas emissions to net zero”.

But the extent of action taken at the national level has yet to be matched by states, regions, cities and businesses, which is likely to hinder progress on cutting emissions at the pace and scale needed to meet wider climate goals, the initiative warned.

“Implementation requires all hands on deck,” said Thomas Hale, a professor of public policy at the University of Oxford’s Blavatnik School of Government.

“By incentivising and supporting companies and sub-national governments to set rigorous net-zero targets and plans, countries can boost the credibility of national climate goals.”

The report also cast doubt on the credibility of targets, noting only “very limited” signs of improvement on things like the use of carbon offsetting and financing for fossil fuels within net-zero strategies over the past year.

WHY DOES NET ZERO MATTER?

Now a common term in the world of climate action, scientists and policy-

makers say reaching net-zero emissions is key to keeping us safe from harm as the planet warms.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has said man-made carbon dioxide emissions need to fall by 43 per cent by 2030, from 2010 levels, and reach “net zero” by mid-century to give the world a good chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change.

However, based on countries’ current climate commitments, global greenhouse gas emissions will rise by 10.6 per cent by 2030 compared to 2010 levels, according to a UN report in October 2022.

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, nearly 200 countries said they would act to curb the rise in global average temperatures to “well below” 2C above pre-industrial times and strive to keep it to a ceiling of 1.5C.

But the world has already heated up by about 1.2C and is set for warming of close to 2.5C this century, even if current pledges to rein in still-rising emissions by 2030 are implemented, researchers estimate.

In May, the World Meteorological Organization said global average temperatures are more likely than not to breach 1.5C in the next five years, on a temporary basis.

Scientists say surpassing 1.5-2C of warming for a longer period would bring worsening extreme weather and potentially catastrophic sea level rise, making some parts of the planet uninhabitable and fuelling hunger and migration.

These risks - and mounting public pressure to act on climate change threats - are why a fast-rising number of countries, companies and others are now promising to cut their planet-warming emissions to net zero by 2050 or soon after.

If the mid-century net-zero goals set so far are actually met, global warming could be kept to about 1.8C, analysts say. But some climate activists have criticised 2050 net-zero goals for enabling countries and companies to postpone emissions reductions until a vague far-off date.

WHAT IS NET ZERO?

Achieving net-zero emissions isn’t the same as eliminating all emissions. It means ensuring any human-produced carbon dioxide (CO₂) or other greenhouse gases that can’t be avoided or locked up are removed from the atmosphere some other way. This can be done naturally, such as by restoring forests that suck CO₂ out of the air. It can also be done using technology that captures and stores

emissions from power plants and factories or directly pulls CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Planting more trees is a popular way to absorb and store more carbon, but human-made technologies that perform the same job remain expensive and have yet to be deployed on a large-scale.

Scientists say carbon “removals”, in any form, cannot substitute for cutting emissions as fast as possible - although some removals are likely to be needed and deployed to help curb rising temperatures.

There is fierce debate around the growing enthusiasm for carbon offsetting - where governments, companies and individuals pay for their emissions to be compensated by clean energy and conservation projects that reduce CO₂ emissions elsewhere. Those emissions reductions are then counted as part of the government, company or individual's own carbon-cutting efforts.

WHO HAS COMMITTED TO NET ZERO?

At a country level, the picture is looking fairly rosy, according to the latest Net Zero Tracker report from the Britain-based Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit, Data-Driven EnviroLab, NewClimate Institute and Oxford Net Zero. But things are advancing more slowly among businesses and cities.

National net-zero targets now cover 92 per cent of global GDP, up from 68 per cent in December 2020, and represent at least 88 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, with 72 goals - or about three-quarters of the emissions covered by national goals - enshrined in law or policy documents.

Large cities are lagging, with 252 having set a net-zero target, accounting for over one-third of the 2.1 billion people living in cities with populations above 500,000. But 934 have yet to do so.

In the corporate sector, net zero has now become the norm, with almost two-thirds of the annual



Implementation requires all hands on deck. By incentivising and supporting companies and sub-national governments to set rigorous net-zero targets and plans, countries can boost the credibility of national climate goals.

-THOMAS HALE

Professor, University of Oxford
Blavatnik School of Government

revenue of the world's largest 2,000 companies covered by a net zero target. Nonetheless, 37 per cent of the world's largest companies have yet to set any kind of greenhouse gas mitigation target.

Europe is doing best in terms of the proportion of companies with net-zero targets, with 79 per cent covered, compared with 49 per cent in North America. But the analysis flagged that only 4 per cent of company net-zero commitments meet the revised criteria set out in June 2022 by the UN “Race to Zero” campaign. Those include coverage of all greenhouse gases emitted in the supply chain, clear conditions for the use of carbon offsets, rolling out immediate emissions-cutting measures and reporting each year on interim and longer-term targets.

In addition, a rising number of companies - about a quarter - plan to use carbon dioxide removal to cut emissions in their value chains, it notes. The number of fossil fuel companies setting net-zero emissions targets has risen sharply over the past year, to 75 of the world's largest 112 firms, but most fail to address key concerns, making them

“largely meaningless”, Net Zero Stocktake noted.


HOW DO WE SET A CREDIBLE NET ZERO TARGET?

The World Resources Institute (WRI) and the 2050 Pathways Platform - which work with governments and others on their climate commitments - say cutting emissions within national boundaries should be the priority, with efforts to offset what remains considered only after that.

To be credible, net-zero targets should cover all greenhouse gases, including methane, and all economic sectors, as well as international aviation and shipping, WRI says. Plans for net-zero emissions should be achieved by 2050 or earlier, with the highest-emitting countries doing the most, fastest - and the targets should be crafted in consultation with those they will affect and clearly communicated, WRI recommends.

Company net-zero targets often cover very different sources of emissions, with different baselines - and can be challenging to compare, although the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) has released guidelines to help remedy that.

In 2022, UN chief António Guterres launched a high-level expert group to help develop stronger and clearer standards for net-zero pledges by businesses, investors and local governments, as well as to verify progress towards them and accelerate their implementation through new rules and regulations.

“We are making progress but we are still too far from where we need to be,” it said in a November report. 

This story was published with permission from Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, climate change, resilience, women's rights, trafficking and property rights. Visit <https://www.context.news/>.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/is-the-world-making-real-progress-towards-net-zero-emissions/>)



Role and Relevance of the Youth in Policy-making and Governance: India, Africa and G-20

By Pooran Chandra Pandey

G-20 Presidency, 2023

India's assumption of G-20 presidency for the on-going year is the one pivotal episode that offers myriad opportunities and variety of challenges in various sectors

and focal areas across technology, economic transformation, climate change, supply chains, entrepreneurship and design driven solutions shaping the future of shared prosperity, both for the country

itself, G-20 and beyond. India being credited as a civilizational nation state, largest functional democracy, most populous nation with the largest youth population of over 600 million in the age groups of 18-35

years, out of which more than 450 million are enrolled across country's schools, colleges and institutions of higher learning, making it the largest place of millennial and Gen Z in the world.

Scale and magnitude of the Indian youth power

Comparatively, this 450 million enrolment numbers in India equal to that of the EU population, offering size and scale to the possibilities that India has as youth dividend. These many numbers of the youth, in productive category, is by far the biggest and the largest anywhere in the world at a time when most nations, with exception of the African continent, have been either facing the challenge of a shrinking or aging population and in some cases even combination of the both.

While the debate on its youth population, trajectory of policies for their purposeful deployment continues, India has been pushing in finding solutions to complex issues of socio-economic and political nature through its youth power, their creativity and innovations across range of sectors and focussed areas through skilling, entrepreneurship, employment guarantee schemes and support through education and innovations. National Education Policy 2020 in this direction further lays out the systematic vision and progressive mechanism to create a sustained and sustainable development model in India by 2040, coinciding with India's independence centenary.

Africa's youth and its place in the world

Relevance of African continent in emergence of the future of a 'new world order' also assumes a vital significance as the continent has over 407 million youth population in the age groups of 25 and 49 years. If the numbers of the youth populations from India and Africa get added,

they alone total up to more than a billion youth population, twice the size of the European Union. It's thus evident and even fair to state that inclusion of Africa into G20 mechanisms could be considered in collectively searching for solutions to humanity's most complex problems that could range from unleashing youth power for innovation, skills, social development, education, entrepreneurship, climate change, migration, poverty reduction, income inequality, among others. Pathway to solutions for shared prosperity is potentially going to significantly pass through India-Africa 'youth power and youth laboratory' corridors in large measures.

Fiscal value of youth's (unpaid for) contributions

Amid on-going economic and geopolitical episodes and to keep the focus trained on supporting the

IMF forecast, among the fastest in the world. Alongside, as the world continues to experience unpredictable socio-economic unpredictability's and cost of living challenges, riveted by bilateralism, India's focus on self-reliance, indigenous supply chains, country continues to push forward for resource optimization and revitalization of socio-economic resources, in the aftermath of the global pandemic.

There is also a need where governments around the world need to find avenues to measure and quantify the 'unpaid work' contributed by the youth and reflect that through the growth and development numbers accordingly to local context, circumstances and household realities.

India's case and a collective call to action

India's push for entrepreneurship and self-reliance has shown green

Relevance of African continent in emergence of the future of a 'new world order' also assumes a vital significance as the continent has over 407 million youth population in the age groups of 25 and 49 years.

youth and its work, Federal government and its central bank in India have been acting concertedly and in unison with their fiscal and monetary policies and economic tools to continue to provide solace on cost of living front for the youth population, among other beneficiaries. The country, due to its fiscal prudence and better monetary policy management, is expected to grow at 7 per cent growth rate as per

shoots reflected through success of national initiatives such as Make in India, Start-up India, Production Linked Incentive Scheme and Local for Global – leading to greater incentivisation offered to the industries, start-ups led by the youth, and communities resulting in large investments. India today tops the entrepreneurial landscape with more than youth led 100 start ups in category of unicorns (valuation of USD 1 billion

or more) against a total number of 1200, internationally.

In addition, India as the largest democracy has been an experiment ground for youth politics and change on the ground levelling up its diversity in schools, colleges and politics both in the federal parliament and state legislative assemblies in its constitutional make up of quasi-federal ingredient, holding the base and foundation of governance across judiciary, executive and legislative branches of the government, a potent lesson in how to keep democracy vibrant for international community.

Youth and entrepreneurship

The self-reliance pivot with entrepreneurship ecosystem has also led to country's diminishing dependence on fragile supply chains and unpredictable delivery systems, in lead up swelling international investments in defence, technology, health care, physical infrastructure, education, innovation and vaccines protocols, as key focus areas of the G-20 under India's presidency, where a large number of youth population is being driven in direction of focussed areas through 'policies by design' approaches and mechanisms.

While such trends continue to deepen and expand, results thereof continue to benefit country's youth population through a number of socio-fiscal incentives and revitalization of local economies while opening up opportunities for them at devolved levels. Such empowering outcomes are likely to further reduce poverty, tapering off the gaps in income inequality, while triggering robust fiscal incentives for the youth population across rural and urban areas.

Digitization, economic disruptions and future of the youth

As country continues to ramp up its progress in terms of economic size

at scale and impact, India would need to consider likely adverse impact of fast paced digitalization processes set in force not seen in decades since industrialization may likely adversely impact lives and livelihoods of the youth population. The nation would also need to consider taking adequate and cautionary measures to secure safety nets of the poor and the vulnerable youth population in pursuit of balancing out human welfare with economic growth.

India's current approach to striking a tenuous balance between 'economic development and human welfare' amply triggers the goal of regional prosperity and international cooperation. This is also reflective of essential ingredients of a replicable model to secure rapid economic growth with well-being of the diverse youth population amid techno economic disruptions reflected through fragile supply chains and uncertain labour market conditions, across the country, G20 territories and beyond. Such contexts also build a case for safeguarding the youth as an asset through time bound capability development and their welfare through innovative policy instruments.

Partnership for progress

As G20 is a premier grouping of both developed and developing econo-

mies accounting for over a third fourth of the world's gross domestic product and world trade, the role that the youth would decidedly play in further ramping up their contribution in creating a world shaped by shared prosperity at all levels – economic, political, legislative and beyond. A collective approach to partnership driven model involving the governments, industries and civil society actors with youth representation at the centre would need to be developed and deployed to better harness possibilities in shaping a sustainable, inclusive and growth oriented mechanism for a world shaped by shared prosperity and collective collaborations.

India, Africa together in G20

India's role as G20 presidency, as the largest democracy and its responsibility as the fastest growing economy is being keenly watched out by international community including its resolve and ability to shape a 'new socio-economic world order' based on the principles of 'One World, One Family', values and compassion.

Furthermore, Africa's inclusion within the fold of G20 and India-Africa partnerships particularly, keeping the youth at the centre, could catapult and reshape the face and future of technology, socio-economic development and entrepreneurship for the shared prosperity. 



Pooran Chandra Pandey

Pooran Pandey is a Non-Resident Fellow – Sustainable Development at Nkafu Policy Institute. Contributor to (Springer Nature, Germany) first global encyclopedia on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2019), Pooran Chandra Pandey is also the founding CEO of the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute, a Berlin, Germany, based international think tank (2016-2018)



In February 2023, Chitwan National Park hosted the 3rd Asian Rhino Range Countries, which saw the adoption of the Chitwan Declaration for Asian Rhino Conservation 2023 by delegations from Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal. Image: sunriseOdyssey, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

AS NEPAL'S RHINO POPULATION INCREASES, ARE THREATS BEING OVERLOOKED?

A steady rise in rhino deaths in Chitwan National Park over the last decade has triggered multiple investigations and committees, but few recommendations are being enacted on the ground, writes **Gobinda Prasad Pokharel**



On 20 January 2023, two rhinos were found dead near the bank of the Narayani River in Nepal's

Chitwan National Park. According to postmortems conducted by park officials, the 14-year-old female rhino and 4-year-old male calf had been killed by electrocution. The horn of the female rhino was missing.

Ganesh Prasad Tiwari, a spokesperson for Chitwan National Park, says the case is being treated as poaching and is under investigation. He tells The Third Pole that poachers may have fixed a wire across the rhinos' regular movement routes, hooked up to the power supply from a nearby temple.

The pair were among a total of 14 rhinos that have been found dead in Chitwan National Park and its surrounding buffer zones since the start of the 2022-23 fiscal year (July 2022 to July 2023), according to data provided to The Third Pole by Nepal's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC). Although this total is lower than in previous years, the last decade overall has seen an upward trend in the number rhinos dying in Chitwan.

Experts tell The Third Pole that in many cases, human activity may be to blame, from the impacts of infrastructure projects, invasive species, and perhaps most worrying, a resurgence of poaching.

Rhino poaching re-emerges in Nepal

According to Nepal's latest rhino census, the country's population of one-horned rhinos – a globally vulnerable species that survives only in the floodplains of lowland Nepal and northeast India – has been steadily on the rise for the past two decades. The 2021 census put the national population at 752, compared to 409 in 2005. Over 90 per cent live in Chitwan National Park, with smaller



During the lockdown, people returned home from cities and were jobless, so poachers may have used locals to kill rhinos and paid them.

– GANESH PANT

Ecologist, Nepal Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation

populations in Bardia, Shuklaphanta and Parsa National Parks.

Chitwan's rhino population has had a chequered history. Deforestation and poaching caused the population to fall from thousands to around 100 in the late 1960s. The population rebounded after the establishment of the national park and successful conservation efforts, but fell once again in the early 2000s during a wave of poaching coinciding with a period of armed conflict and political instability in Nepal. 94 rhinos were poached in Chitwan National Park between 2000 and 2004.

Since 2006, conservation initiatives have seen Chitwan's rhino population gradually increase once again. In a remarkable conservation success, only one rhino was killed by poachers between 2014 and 2019, in April 2017.

But poaching resurfaced in 2020, coinciding with the Covid-19 pandemic. Four rhinos were poached in 2020 and two more in 2021 – in each case, the horn was removed. "During the lockdown, people returned home from cities and were jobless, so poachers may have used locals to kill

rhinos and paid them," says Ganesh Pant, an ecologist at the DNPWC.

In the fiscal year 2021-22, Nepal's National Park Authority filed three cases against individuals suspected to be involved in rhino poaching in Chitwan, and 13 people were arrested in rhino-related cases, Ganesh Prasad Tiwari tells The Third Pole. Despite an international ban on trade in rhino horn, there is still substantial demand in China and Vietnam, where it is used in traditional medicine and as a status symbol.

Invasive species

Aside from poaching, human activity may be indirectly responsible for many more rhino deaths in Nepal. In the fiscal year 2021-22, 10 rhinos died after becoming stuck in mud in swampy areas of Chitwan National Park. Detailed data collated by the DNPWC and shared with The Third Pole reveals a consistent rise in the number of rhino deaths due to drowning or getting stuck in swamps between 2017-18 and 2021-22.

According to Pant, this increase may be due to the spread of non-native plant species which, after being introduced by humans, have now covered many ditches and swampy areas inside the park. "[While] grazing, the rhinos get entangled with invasive species and sometimes fall into the swampy areas and get stuck there," Pant explains.

The American creeper species *Mikania micrantha* has been identified as a serious threat to rhino habitat in Chitwan National Park, and the 2021 rhino census found that 35 per cent of rhino habitat in the park had been invaded by the species. Babu Ram Lamichhane, chief of the National Trust for Nature Conservation-Biodiversity Conservation Centre says that the spread of other invasive plant species in Chitwan's grassland habitats such as *Parthenium hysterophorus*, *Lantana camara*, *Chormolaena*

odorata are posing new threats to the habitat of rhinos and other grassland-dependent species, and that precautionary measures are needed to limit their spread.

Construction impacts on Nepal's rhinos

In July 2022, Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Environment formed a five-member committee to investigate the increase in rhino deaths in Chitwan National Park. According to the committee's report – which was submitted to the government on 18 September 2022 but was not made public – the deaths of six rhinos in the last five years were linked to construction activities inside and near Chitwan National Park.

The latest incident took place on 25 January 2022, when an 11-year-old male rhino died after falling into a roadside ditch. This had been dug to expand a road near Chitwan National Park, in the Bharatpur metropolitan area. The government of Nepal issued a directive in April 2022 on building infrastructure in a wildlife-friendly way, but critics say this is yet to be properly implemented in practice.

Maheshwar Dhakal, director general of the DNPWC, tells *The Third Pole*: “We have just brought this policy in, and it might take some time to fully implement it, but we are very serious [about it] and have been monitoring [its implementation].”

The July 2022 committee report also suggests that construction upstream on the rivers that flow into Chitwan National Park – the Narayani, Rapti and Reu – may have resulted in changes to their flow, with consequences for the park's rhinos. The report says that embankments constructed for irrigation on the Rapti River have narrowed its natural flow, causing a decrease in the extent of flood plains that provide habitat for the rhinos. Sand is also extracted at several locations on the rivers upstream of Chitwan.

“Those activities have limited the movement of rhinos and confined them in a small area leading to higher density that has resulted into increased fighting among males,” the report says.

According to the DNPWC investigation report, 36 rhinos have died in Chitwan in fights with other rhinos since July 2017.

Some rhino deaths expected

According to rhino expert Shanta Raj Gyawali, not all the recent rhino deaths in Chitwan are cause for alarm. “We have a good population of rhinos in Chitwan National Park, so there is no need to worry much about natural deaths. It would have been of bigger concern if deaths were due to diseases.” He says that deaths caused by ditches, falls and getting stuck in mud are normal given the size of Chitwan's rhino population.

However, Gyawali emphasises that caution is needed. He says man-made threats are a persistent threat to rhino conservation, and that while currently at low levels, they can escalate at any point in the absence of strong security. “We don't have to panic but we should be careful and increase our patrolling as much as possible,” he says.

Failure to act on recommendations

The July 2022 committee was the third established by the Nepal government to look into the causes of rhino deaths in Chitwan. But according to Maheshwar Dhakal, current director general of the DNPWC, many of the resulting recommendations have not been put into action.

For instance, the committee formed in early 2020 had suggested keeping two elephants at security posts for use in anti-poaching patrolling, but the next committee, formed in October 2020, found that this was not implemented. This second

committee also highlighted a failure by the national park authority to undertake management of grassland habitat twice a year to ensure it remains suitable for rhinos, so they don't need to go outside the park to find food, putting them at risk of electrocution or poaching.

The March 2020 committee also offered recommendations on regular patrolling, removal of invasive plant species, implementation of a joint operation cell, improvement of grassland habitat and swampy areas, coordination between park officials and farmers to reduce pesticide use, and translocation of rhinos. But the July 2020 committee highlighted the failure to enact these recommendations.

Maheshwar Dhakal says this is down to a lack of resources to implement recommendations. Due to lack of budget, he says, the DNPWC has also been unable to implement ID-based rhino monitoring or establish a forensic laboratory. He also points to a lack of a yearly plan from park officials as a reason why recommendations of the investigation committees have not been actioned.

In February 2023, Chitwan National Park hosted the 3rd Asian Rhino Range Countries, which saw the adoption of the Chitwan Declaration for Asian Rhino Conservation, 2023 by delegations from Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal. Among a suite of actions the countries committed to, many could help to reduce threats to Chitwan's rhinos, including strengthening patrolling, improving habitat management, tackling invasive species, and “adopting wildlife-friendly measures in developmental projects to minimise adverse effect on rhino habitat”. 

This story was published with permission from The Third Pole.

(SOURCE: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/as-nepals-rhino-population-increases-are-threats-being-overlooked/>)

Alarming Air Pollution Study Reveals Darjeeling to be Listed as Non-Attainment City in 2024

Researchers forecasted that PM10 pollution in Darjeeling would surpass the Indian standard in 2024, reaching approximately 63 micrograms per cubic metre of air.

If you were contemplating an escape from the polluted lanes of your city to the pristine hills for a lungful of clean air, you may have to think twice. A recent study has revealed that a popular hill station in eastern India, Darjeeling, which is a favourite haunt for millions of tourists hoping to rejuvenate themselves after the dust and pollution of metros, may soon become a non-attainment city.

A non-attainment city is one whose air has failed to fulfil national ambient air quality criteria for at least five years. The groundbreaking study, published in the journal 'Atmospheric Environment' by Dr Abhijit Chatterjee, Associate Professor at Bose Institute, Kolkata, has unveiled a startling revelation about the air quality in Darjeeling. Along with Dr Chatterjee, the study, undertaken by Dr. Abhinandan Ghosh of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, and Monami Dutta of the Bose Institute, indicates that Darjeeling could soon be added as one of the polluted cities (131 as of now) discovered across the country.

The research, spanning from 2009 to 2021, focused on characterising PM10 levels (very small pollutant particles found in dust and smoke) in Darjeeling. It determined that summer (March-May) and winter (December-February) were the two seasons in Darjeeling when PM10 concentrations exceeded 70 micrograms per cubic metre of air, surpassing the Indian standard of 60 micrograms per cubic metre. However, the level of PM10 pollution is far beyond the safe limit prescribed by WHO (15 micrograms per cubic metre). The analysis revealed that the

main cause of this high pollution was the ultrafine components of PM10, specifically PM1 (particulate matter less than 1 micron).


The study found a significant increase in PM10 levels since 2014 due to a rise in ultrafine particles. It highlighted that PM2.5 concentrations had already exceeded the Indian standard of 40 micrograms per cubic metre over Darjeeling since 2018. During summer and winter, PM10 increased at a rate of 3.8 micrograms per cubic metre per year since 2014, primarily driven by a 4.2 micrograms per cubic metre per year increase in PM1. Dr Abhijit Chatterjee said the study highlights the urgent need for attention from policymakers regarding the significant pollution load experienced in Darjeeling, a high-altitude Himalayan tourist destination in India. "Despite its geographical, climatic, and ecological importance, Darjeeling has remained overlooked by policy makers. The study raises concerns that Darjeeling may soon become a non-attainment city, emphasising the necessity for central and state pollution control boards to establish robust and continuous monitoring stations for air pollutants in such regions."

Using a predictive model, the researchers forecasted that PM10 pollution in Darjeeling would surpass the Indian standard in 2024, reaching approximately 63 micrograms per cubic metre of air. Dr Abhinandan Ghosh, the first author of this paper, said "The projections raise serious concerns as PM10 levels are expected to exceed 105 in summer and 90 in winter. Moreover, ultrafine particulate matter (PM1) is predicted to approach 50 micrograms per cubic metre of air, surpassing the Indian standard for PM2.5 (40 micrograms per cubic metre). This level of pollution would place Darjeeling on par with many polluted cities in the Indo-Gangetic Plain region and other urban areas of India."

The study shed light on the major sources of ultrafine particulate matter pollution in Darjeeling. During the summer, vehicular

emissions from tourist activities contributed 33%, while biomass burning from roadside eateries accounted for 21%. Dust transport from the Indo-Gangetic Plain, coal combustion from eateries, domestic use, and the Toy Train, as well as secondary sources, also played a role.

In winter, biomass burning for low-temperature requirements contributed 27%, vehicular emissions constituted 25%, and coal combustion accounted for 20%, with dust and secondary sources contributing to the remainder. Overall, combustion activities, including diesel, petrol, coal, and biomass, were responsible for approximately 70% of ultrafine particulate matter pollution. Vehicular emissions alone accounted for over 90% of PM10 in summer, while biomass burning contributed more than 80% in winter.

These findings raise concerns about uncontrolled tourist influx, unplanned urbanisation, unauthorised land-use, biomass and combustion activities, and the use of old vehicles and diesel-driven generator sets in Darjeeling, added Dr. Chatterjee. The National Clean Air Program (NCAP), initiated by the Government of India, aims to mitigate air pollution in 131 cities across the country, focusing on aerosols, PM2.5, and PM10. However, certain regions with polluted urban environments, including Darjeeling, should also be brought under such a mission or at least draw attention of the policy makers. Dr Chatterjee said that by doing so, a comprehensive database can be built to enhance understanding of the aerosol pollution scenario in these important yet neglected areas. "The study also emphasises the importance of accurately identifying the size and sources of composite aerosols to develop effective policies and action plans for mitigating PM2.5 and PM10. The findings of this study serve as an example of the appropriate approach to aerosol pollution control, facilitating efforts and financial investments towards successful mitigation programs." 



Protected areas help reduce mountain forest loss within their boundaries, particularly in high-biodiversity areas where farming and ranching are the leading causes of deforestation.

Image: Rod Waddington, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

ASIA'S MOUNTAIN FORESTS DWINDLING AT 'ALARMING RATE,' SHOWS STUDY

More than 7 per cent of mountain forests worldwide were lost between 2001 and 2018, with rates of loss almost doubling after 2010, says **Liz Kimbrough**

More than 7 per cent of all mountain forests have been destroyed during the past two decades, according to a new study published in the journal *One Earth*.

Using high-resolution satellite data and maps of mountain terrains, researchers found that 780,000 square kilometres (301,000 square miles) of mountain forest — an area the size of Texas or twice the size of Norway — were lost worldwide between 2001 and 2018.

The study notes an “alarming acceleration in mountain forest lost worldwide over the past two decades,” with rates of forest loss nearly doubling after 2010.

The study’s findings are a significant concern for biodiversity, as more than 85 per cent of all bird, mammal and amphibian species live all or part of their lives in mountain forests. Many species have a limited range, making them highly susceptible to extinction even with minimal forest loss.

“Mountains have exceptionally high levels of biodiversity, and many of these species are dependent on forests for their survival,” study co-author Paul Elsen, a climate adaptation scientist at the Wildlife Conservation Society, said in a statement. “The high levels of forest loss we observed in mountains could be catastrophic for these sensitive mountain species.”

“[T]he use of large-scale data such as remote-sensing satellite products are a great tool to monitor forest change in almost real-time,” Marco Mina, a researcher at the Institute for Alpine Environment, Eurac Research, in Italy, who was not involved in the study told The

Guardian. “However, we should be cautious to draw global conclusions based solely on remote-sensing products ... A forest that is well managed through a careful planning process can still provide high levels of habitat for plants and animal species.”

The leading cause of deforestation in mountainous regions was logging, accounting for 42 per cent of the loss, while wildfires were responsible for 29 per cent, shifting or slash-and-burn cultivation for 15 per cent, and permanent or semi-permanent agriculture for 10 per cent.

In the tropics, forest loss was caused mainly by shifting agriculture, while in temperate regions it was forestry practices. In boreal

areas, most of the forest loss was caused by fires.

The amount of forest loss also varied by region, with tropical mountain forests being lost almost three times faster than temperate forests and more than eight times faster than boreal forests. The study found that the expansion of farming into highland areas of Southeast Asia was a significant cause of this accelerated rate in the tropics. Between 2001 and 2018, more than half of all forest loss in the world occurred in Asia.

The researchers also found that protected areas help reduce mountain forest loss within their boundaries, particularly in high-biodiversity areas where farming and ranching are the leading causes of deforestation.

“It was encouraging to find that protected areas were associated with far lower relative forest loss rates within regions of high biodiversity,” Elsen said. “This provides evidence that continued management and investment in protected areas can conserve biodiversity that would otherwise be under much more significant threat from forest loss.”

The authors call for urgent conservation action, including, Elsen said, “increasing sustainable harvesting of forest commodities, making adjustments to supply chains to be deforestation-free, ramping up forest restoration initiatives, and creating collaborative partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities leading to co-management of forests.”

This story was published with permission from Mongabay.com.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/asias-mountain-forests-dwindling-at-alarming-rate-shows-study/>)



Mountains have exceptionally high levels of biodiversity, and many of these species are dependent on forests for their survival. The high levels of forest loss we observed in mountains could be catastrophic for these sensitive mountain species.

—PAUL ELSEN

Climate Adaptation Scientist, Wildlife Conservation Society



A child fetches water near a dam in Baligubadle, Somaliland, northwest Somalia. Image: UNDP Climate, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

Waking up to the world's water crisis

In the World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Risks Report, nine of the ten biggest risks for the next decade have a water-related component, points out **Quentin Grafton, Joyeeta Gupta and Aromar Revi**

The world is becoming accustomed to the drip-drip of catastrophic headlines following each new climate-driven disaster. Increasingly frequent and severe heatwaves are causing wildfires in California and widespread coral die-offs in Australia. Unprecedented floods have wreaked havoc

in Pakistan, Germany, China, and New Zealand. Drought in the Horn of Africa is causing famine for millions. And this list could go on.

The common element underlying all these cataclysms is water. From the forced shutdown of nuclear reactors in France to the heavy snowfall that covered large swaths of North America in December, or the recent

cholera outbreak in Lebanon, we are witnessing the symptoms of a mounting global water crisis – either too much, too little, or too dirty.

Yet water remains mostly absent from global discussions. While concerns about the geopolitical order, climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic have understandably been in the spotlight, water is rarely discussed outside the context of humanitarian responses to local, national, or transboundary floods or droughts. This is a major blind spot: In the World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Risks Report, nine of the ten biggest risks for

the next decade have a water-related component.

For at least the last 5,000 years, human communities and civilisations have deliberately regulated water in order to survive. Even today, many people see water as a gift from God – or, in more secular terms, as a key part of a universal cycle that demands our respect and appreciation. However, in most places where water is “controlled” through dams and pipes, and made safe and available around the clock, we have come to take it for granted. And when concerns about access to safe water or exposure to extreme weather events are raised, they are generally ignored or treated as a low priority.

This apathy is no longer tenable. The injustices associated with water-driven disasters are growing, and the global water cycle itself is changing. Human freshwater use has exceeded blue-water capacity (rivers, lakes, and aquifers), creating huge risks for everyone and the planet’s ecosystems. Around 20 per cent of global water consumption for irrigation now comes from overuse of groundwater sources, and about 10 per cent of the world’s food trade comes from non-renewable groundwater.

Climate change is amplifying these challenges. Global warming increases demand for water as temperatures rise and as water requirements for food increase with the decline in relative air humidity. By 2070, two-thirds of the world’s land mass will experience a reduction in terrestrial water storage, and the land area subject to extreme hydrological droughts could more than double to 8 per cent. Southwestern South America, Mediterranean Europe, and North Africa are all projected to suffer unprecedented and extreme drought conditions by 2050.

The UN 2023 Water Conference in March – the first such gathering in almost a half-century – must mark

a turning point in our relationship with water and the water cycle. Only by fundamentally re-examining our relationship with water, revaluing its many uses, and treating it as a local and global common good can we achieve a safe and just future.

As the lead experts at the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, we see three areas that require transformation. First, we must consider the entire water cycle and how it is connected with biodiversity, the climate, human well-being, and ecosystem health – all key factors in socioeconomic and ecological prosperity. That means

its alteration by humans. Creating such a framework must begin by acknowledging water’s central role in driving economic, sociocultural, and environmental change.

Lastly, we must bring everyone into the decision-making process – starting with marginalised communities – to develop new strategies for properly valuing water. When nature and freshwater are not valued in the marketplace, we still pay a price for their misuse, which increases dramatically when we cross planetary boundaries.

The UN 2023 Water Conference offers a unique opportunity for the

When concerns about access to safe water or exposure to extreme weather events are raised, they are generally ignored or treated as a low priority. This apathy is no longer tenable.

“connecting the dots” and promoting resilient relationships between water and food, water and energy, and water and the environment.

Second, water and the water cycle must be governed as global common goods. The ongoing proliferation of water crises calls for a new economic framework based on a systems approach to the water cycle, societies, and economies. We must develop a better understanding of existing “lock-ins” (including property rights, bilateral treaties, and corruption) and other structural challenges that impede water reallocation for the common good.

Moreover, an inclusive interdisciplinary framework – with a portfolio of new instruments and metrics – is needed to manage the systemic risks associated with the water cycle and

world to respond effectively to a critically important but neglected issue. Confronted with the world water crisis, we can either embark on a sustainable and just pathway or carry on with business as usual. The survival of human civilisation as we know it demands that we make the right choice. 🌍

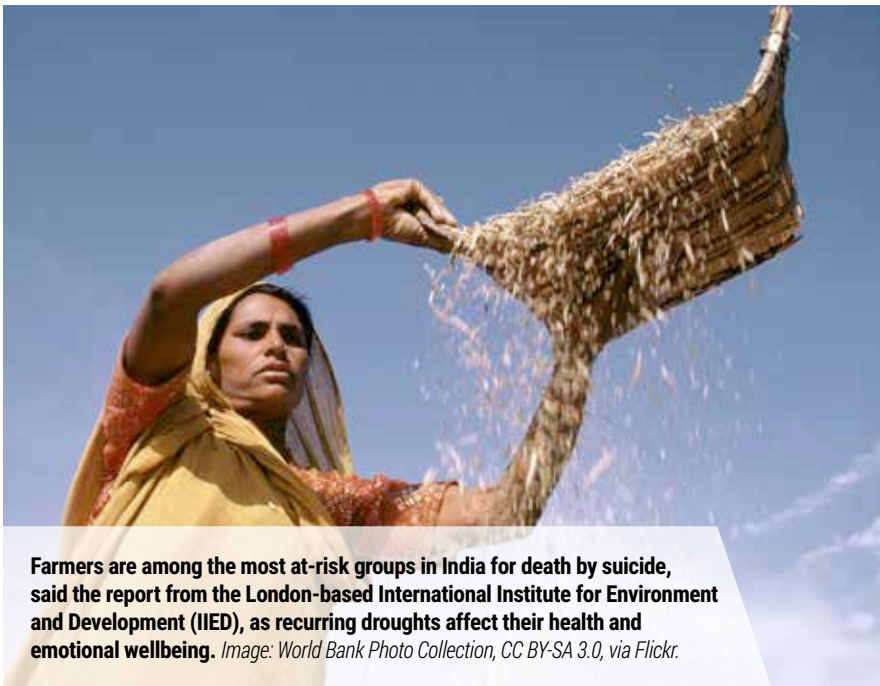
Quentin Grafton is Professor of Economics at the Crawford School of Public Policy at Australian National University.

Joyeeta Gupta is a member of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Amsterdam.

Aromar Revi is Director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements.

© Project Syndicate 1995–2023

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/waking-up-to-the-worlds-water-crisis/>)



Farmers are among the most at-risk groups in India for death by suicide, said the report from the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), as recurring droughts affect their health and emotional wellbeing. Image: World Bank Photo Collection, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

Climate-stressed Indian farmers seek to escape debt and suicide

India's farmers face mounting losses as drought worsens, with some even driven to suicide, spurring calls for social protection to ease the pressure.

Farmer Ganpatram Bheda, 66, fears he will lose his two acres of land in northwest India after scarce rainfall and extreme cold in recent years hit crop yields, trapping him in a web of loans with little help from the state to overcome his financial woes.

As small-scale Indian farmers like Bheda grapple with growing climate uncertainties, researchers this week called for a robust rural jobs scheme, crop insurance and mental health-care to ease growing distress and suicide in agrarian communities.

In a new report linking rainfall deficits to higher farmer suicide rates in India's drought-prone states, researchers said climate change was making "agriculture an extremely risky, potentially dangerous and loss-making endeavour".

Farmers are among the most at-risk groups in India for death by suicide, said the report from the London-based International Institute for Environment and Develop-

ment (IIED), as recurring droughts affect their health and emotional wellbeing. For more than two decades, rural India has struggled with farmer suicides, as consecutive years of drought, poor harvests and costly animal feed have fuelled debt and mental anxiety.

Nearly 11,000 farmers, cultivators and agricultural labourers took their own lives in 2021, averaging about 30 deaths a day, according to India's most recent crime data cited in the IIED report. But experts estimate that the real numbers are far higher.

Madhura Swaminathan, an economist with the Bengaluru-based Indian Statistical Institute, said the official figures cover only reported cases. More robust research is needed on the linkage between suicides and climate change in order to better plan ways to make Indian agriculture more climate-resilient, she added.

Ritu Bharadwaj, a principal researcher with the IIED, noted that climate change impacts are "a stress multiplier".

In particular, they are exacerbating economic pressures on farmers through recurring droughts, she said. While droughts are not a new problem, "climate change has made (them) more intense and more frequent, and it has increased (their) geographical coverage," she said in a phone interview.

More than 250 million people in India, or nearly half of all workers, are employed in agriculture and related sectors, according to India's last census in 2011 - and the vast majority depend entirely on their farm incomes to survive.

New interventions are needed to protect this huge community as the planet warms, said the IIED report, noting that early warning systems and insurance policies can offer protection against extreme weather.

While the Indian government has some support programmes in place for farmers, including crop

insurance and a rural job guarantee scheme, those suffer from poor budgeting and patchy implementation, said campaigners for farmers' rights.

Debts pile up

For farmers like Bheda, a bad harvest spells doom. In the last four years, he has accrued loans amounting to 4 million rupees (\$48,911) from local moneylenders and banks to tide him over crop losses, buy expensive fodder for his cows and pay off other debts.

"We depend only on farming, we have no other income source - and I don't have any other skill either," said Bheda, speaking from Sikar district in Rajasthan state. Last year, he lost millet and peanuts to a poor monsoon and mustard to a cold wave. "I take one loan to repay another. If I don't do that, the bank will take away my land," he said.

India still does not map "the hazard, risks and vulnerabilities" affecting farmers at "a hyper-granular level", said Abinash Mohanty, division head for climate change and sustainability at IPE Global, an international development organisation. This limits understanding of the real impacts of climate change on people, he added.

In recent years, environmental groups have equipped some farm communities with weather information and alerts via text message, as well as resilient seeds for climate-smart farming.

State-run agricultural research institutions also issue weather-based advice on crops. Yet drought is still forcing many farmers to migrate to cities for work, while some see no way out and end their own lives.

"The likelihood of these cases (of suicide) increasing in the future is high," said the IIED's Bharadwaj, whose assessment of rising risk is based on rainfall variation and suicide data.

Her team studied rainfall patterns between 2014 and 2021 in drought-



Climate is a factor, but vulnerabilities like poverty, illiteracy and lack of social safety nets, or knowledge about how to access them, come together to create a difficult situation.

-RITU BHARADWAJ

Principal Researcher, International Institute for Environment and Development

prone Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana states, which recorded the highest farmer suicides, and found more cases during periods of below-normal rainfall.

"Climate is a factor," Bharadwaj explained. "But vulnerabilities like poverty, illiteracy and lack of social safety nets, or knowledge about how to access them, come together to create a difficult situation."

Employment scheme

The IIED report recommends a shift from insuring against poor crop yields to insuring against bad weather, giving farmers an immediate payout when it hits, regardless of actual losses.

India's rural job guarantee scheme - which promises 100 days of paid labour a year to each rural household - can also be a shock absorber, the report said. The scheme created much-needed jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic when tens of thousands of people returned to their villages from cities as industries shut down. But its budget was

trimmed this year and its implementation is increasingly patchy.

Peoples' Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG), a collective of academics and campaigners which tracks the scheme's implementation, recorded a 30% fall in the work created this year up to April, compared to the same period last year.

There have also been problems with workers not getting paid, as attendance is now recorded using an app and some rural areas have poor phone networks, said M.S. Raunaq, a PAEG member.

IIED researcher Bharadwaj said she had found that regions where jobs were available under the scheme registered lower suicide numbers despite erratic rainfall. But the scheme needs to offer better wages and more skills training to open up other job options beyond digging wells and canals and building school walls, researchers said. For now, farmer Bheda said he and his fellow villagers are planning a protest this month at the district administrative office to demand work under the rural jobs scheme.

But he is not too hopeful, despite scoring a rare win this year: a payout of 48,000 rupees from the state crop insurance scheme for his losses last year. "The money has gone to the bank, and it gets deducted there for loan repayment. I don't want to be a loan defaulter or I lose my land," he said.

When it comes to the troubles he is experiencing, the blame cannot be put on the climate alone, he added.

"The state has failed to protect farmers," he said. 

This story was published with permission from Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, climate change, resilience, women's rights, trafficking and property rights. Visit <https://www.context.news/>.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/climate-stressed-indian-farmers-look-to-escape-debt-and-suicide/>)



Climate change is fuelling a range of extreme weather around the world, with wet areas generally getting wetter while dry regions are hit by more droughts. Image: Tushar Dayal, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

Monsoons in India become unpredictable as pollution wreaks havoc

Forecasters are struggling to catch up with changes to India's monsoon rains that are ruining farmers' crops and livelihoods.

In a small laboratory on the outskirts of the Indian city of Hyderabad, professor Kirti Sahu is studying raindrops. Using a machine that simulates the conditions of clouds, he is among a number of scientists aiming to understand how climate change and pollution are changing the monsoon

rains that underpin the country's agrarian economy.

"The Indian monsoon is full of mystery. If we can predict rainfall, it will be huge for us," said Sahu, a researcher in the department of chemical engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad.

The monsoon, the lifeblood of the country's US\$3 trillion economy, delivers nearly 70 per cent of the rain that India needs to water farms and recharge reservoirs and aquifers. The country of 1.4 billion plans its planting season, harvests and even weddings around the seasonal rains. But climate-changing emis-

sions from burning fossil fuels for energy, and pollution, are changing the monsoon, impacting on agriculture and making forecasting harder.

Climate change is fuelling a range of extreme weather around the world, with wet areas generally getting wetter while dry regions are hit by more droughts.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) notes that although climate change is likely to lead to increased rainfall over Asia, the South Asian monsoon has weakened in the second half of the 20th century. That change in the monsoon is linked to a rise in aerosols – tiny

particles or liquid droplets in the air - as a result of human activities, the IPCC said.

Burning fossil fuels, vehicle exhaust, dust, and sea salt all add to aerosols in the atmosphere.

India has long struggled with high levels of air pollution that periodically cloak major cities in toxic smog. In recent years, India has seen a shorter, more intense rainy season that leaves some areas flooded and others parched, said experts including GP Sharma, the lead on meteorology and climate change at Skymet, a private weather forecaster.

Six major droughts have hit the subcontinent since 2000, but forecasters failed to see them coming, Sharma said.

Loss of crops

Since antiquity, India's rulers have tried to predict the monsoon. Today, the government advises farmers on when to start planting. So crucial are these forecasts that, in 2020, farmers in the state of Madhya Pradesh told Indian media that they planned to file a lawsuit against the state meteorological department for incorrect predictions.

To better predict the monsoon, the government has invested in satellites, supercomputers and a network of specialised weather radar stations named after the Hindu god of rain, Indra. But these have brought only incremental developments in accuracy.

The interplay of the impacts of climate change and aerosols in India are making it more difficult to predict rainfall accurately, said Steven Clemens, a professor of Earth, environmental, and planetary sciences at Brown University, whose research largely focuses on the Asian and Indian monsoons.

In recent years, the distribution of monsoon rainfall has become more erratic, said Madhavan Rajeevan, a scientist at India's Ministry of Earth



Generating advisories is helpful, but as we talk about adapting to climate change, there is an extra step. Someone who lives in a space and is aware of all the weather information but who also carries ancestral knowledge - those are the lived experiences that will enrich the policy process.

-THARA PRABHAKARAN

Researcher, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology

Sciences. "It rains for fewer days, but when it rains, it rains more heavily," he said. Monsoon clouds have also changed their path to traverse across central parts of the country, Sahu said.

"Several states ... have witnessed excessive rainfall during the monsoon season," he said, while others have struggled with historically light rainfall in recent years.

The effect of the changes can be devastating for farmers said Anshu Ogra, an assistant professor working on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction at the School of Public Policy within the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi.

"Cumulatively speaking, the rains haven't failed," she said.

"They have come, but as intense downpour. That means there is not sufficient time for plants to absorb water. Flowers won't turn into fruit, so you see a net loss of crop."

Better forecasts would help authorities prepare for extreme weather, from planning evacuations

from floods to adaptation efforts including collecting rainwater where it falls and transporting it to regions stricken by drought, said Rajeevan.

Flying laboratory

In his Hyderabad workshop, Sahu uses a raincloud simulator to study how changes in aerosols, humidity, air currents, temperature and other factors impact on water droplets and influence when raindrops form.

Meanwhile, Thara Prabhakaran, an expert in cloud microphysics at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, collects data on temperature, pressure and aerosols within clouds from her "flying laboratory" aboard an aeroplane.

The two scientists, who collaborate to compare findings, are among researchers aiming to improve forecasts by better understanding how changing conditions are impacting on the monsoon.

Ogra said that it was increasingly important for meteorologists and other officials to ensure new efforts to help farmers were built on the farmers' own knowledge and were something they could actually use, as new forecasts and agricultural policies such as insurance schemes are developed.

"Generating advisories is helpful, but as we talk about adapting to climate change, there is an extra step," she said.

"Someone who lives in a space and is aware of all the weather information but who also carries ancestral knowledge - those are the lived experiences that will enrich the policy process." 📌

This story was published with permission from Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, climate change, resilience, women's rights, trafficking and property rights. Visit <https://www.context.news/>.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/monsoons-in-india-become-unpredictable-as-pollution-wreaks-havoc/>)



THE NEXT WAVE OF GREENWASHING: OFFSETS, COMPETITOR CLAIMS AND ‘TRANSITION-WASHING’

A report on how Asia’s finance industry can navigate misleading ESG claims presents consumers and regulators with new headaches to remedy as greenwashing evolves and intensifies. But tackling greenwash in Asia cannot be left to regulators alone, states **Robin Hicks**

A new wave of greenwashing is emerging that will give regulators in Asia still trying to figure out how to police misleading or bogus sustainability claims a fresh set of problems to navigate.

Newly launched guidelines for how Asian financiers can avoid

greenwashing identified a medley of emerging forms of malpractice in how companies report their sustainability progress, including the over-use of carbon offsets by companies claiming to be “carbon neutral” without first reducing their emissions. Speaking on a panel to launch the guide, Herry Cho, group

head of sustainability and sustainable finance at Singapore Exchange (SGX), said that greenwashing can have a “devastating effect” on the financial markets, especially given the relative nascency of climate finance in Asia.

“If unchecked, it will represent long-term risks and will impede progress by preventing effective resource allocation for impactful climate action – and in the short term, a loss of public trust,” she said.

Another emerging trend is companies accusing their competitors of using fudged green claims to outdo their own sustainability brand

positioning, the report by environmental law charity ClientEarth and Asia Investor Group on Climate Change found.

A less obvious new variant is greenwashing by association, when asset managers include companies in their green portfolios based on that firm's greenwashing, and present their portfolios as sustainable to investors. This type of greenwashing also includes firms that have joined net-zero alliances but do not meet their commitments, or those that fund organisations which lobby against climate goals.

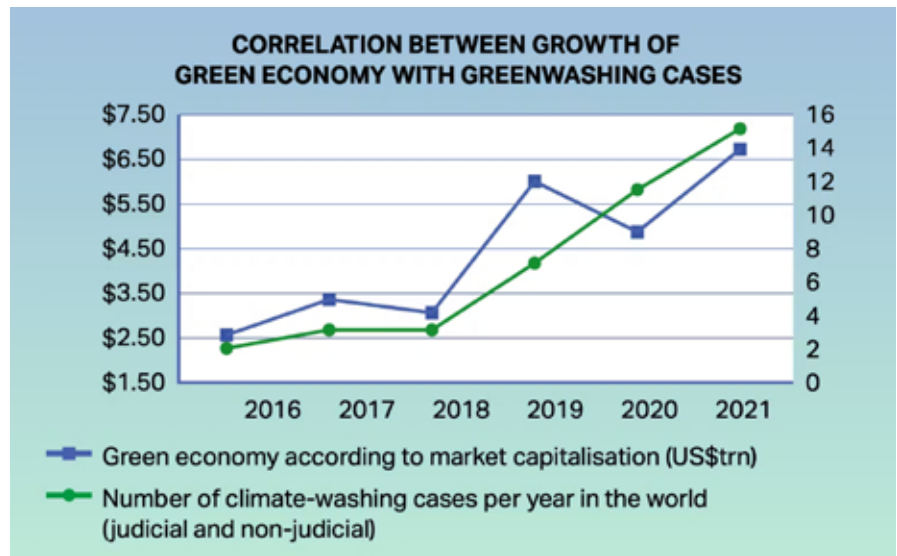
Arguably the biggest cause for concern is “transition-washing”, when companies provide so-called green finance to bankroll carbon-intensive firms that do not use the capital to pivot their business models away from fossil fuels, or only use the funds to transition in certain jurisdictions – a problem when firms only invest in the green transition in countries where regulations squeeze carbon-intensive finance.

Regulation is not enough

The prevalence of greenwashing has ballooned in tandem with a market appetite for environmentally sustainable financial products that has soared since the Covid-19 pandemic.

From 2016 to 2021, the market for environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing has grown by an average compounded annual growth rate of 27 per cent in global assets under management (AUM), according to data from professional services firm KPMG, as have incidences of firms accused of greenwash – albeit mainly in the West.

Asia – which has experienced the slowest growth in ESG investing outside of Japan, with just 2 per cent growth between 2019 and 2021 – has been relatively slow to legislate against greenwashing. However, territories including Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia and South Korea have started to tighten rules



The size of the global green economy growing alongside the number of climate-washing cases between 2016-2021 Sources: Climate Social Science Network, FTSE Russell, Greenwashing and how to avoid it

for how companies disclose their environmental impact.

Speaking on the panel to launch the guide, Sean Tseng, a legal consultant at ClientEarth and co-author of the guide, said that regulation to grapple with greenwashing is difficult, because it involves trying to “control an ever-evolving and amorphous problem.”

Relying on what companies are telling investors in sustainability

reports is risky, and efforts to mandate companies to disclose their climate impact since 2016 “unfortunately haven’t addressed greenwashing sufficiently,” Tseng said.

Asia is a patchwork of approaches to sustainability disclosure. Malaysia has mandated ESG reporting for all listed firms since 2016. South Korea is maintaining voluntary disclosure until at least 2025.

Companies in Asia may be particularly prone to sustainability overclaims, as the region is pursuing ambitious economic growth while at the same facing international pressure to decarbonise, said David Smith, senior investment director, Asia Pacific, at Abrdn, an asset management firm.

Southeast Asian ride-hailing firms Grab and GoTo and Indonesian steel maker Gunung Raja Paksi have spoken of the difficulty in setting credible decarbonisation targets that stand up to scrutiny while chasing heady business growth targets.

Smith said that while regulators “set the tone” for the finance industry with frameworks and expectation-setting, asset managers should recognise that regulators “can’t do it all” and need to “roll up our sleeves” to

“

The main problem is that there is no clear definition of what green is, what ESG is, or what defines sustainability.

– ELAINE NG

Associate Director, International Affairs and Sustainable Finance, Securities and Futures Commission, Government of Hong Kong

better interrogate the environmental claims firms are making.

“Even if there’s a disclosure that looks as though it’s gone through a [due diligence] process, we can’t assume that regulators have looked at everything in every annual report. We can’t take it at face value.”

Smith said that some greenwashing is “terrifically easy to spot”, particularly around the claims companies make about how well aligned they are with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sustainability targets the United Nations has set for the world to meet by 2030. “Some firms are claiming alignment with every single SDG,” he said.

What does green mean?

Smith noted that a considerable amount of greenwashing is unintended and is not the result of a company or individual “trying to pull the wool over investors’ eyes.” Finance executives can find themselves accidentally greenwashing because of the shifting landscape for what constitutes greenwash and the myriad sustainability reporting frameworks designed to mitigate the problem.

Elaine Ng, associate director, international affairs and sustainable finance, for the Securities and Futures Commission for the government of Hong Kong, said the main problem with tackling greenwashing is that “there is no clear definition on what green is, what ESG is, or what defines sustainability.”

Sophia Cheng, chief investment officer of Cathay Financial Holdings, Taiwan’s biggest financial group, welcomed moves to harmonise sustainability frameworks to bring greater clarity to ESG reporting and reduce greenwashing risk.

Next month, the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), which was formed after the COP26 climate talks in 2021 to create comparable disclosure standards, is set to introduce a global baseline for

HOW TO AVOID GREENWASHING IN FINANCE

▶ “Screen your green”. The accuracy and credibility of any green statement must be scrutinised.

▶ “In good and green faith”. Be transparent about how green objectives are integrated into the financial product and/or its financial objective.

▶ “Walk your green talk”. Ensure the firm or fund’s green image is consistent with the internal actions of the company or fund and their actions in relation to third parties.

▶ Observe the changing shades of green. Expectations and regulations are fast evolving, so monitor developments in relevant jurisdictions.

▶ Be alert to green duties. Know your legal and fiduciary duties to investors, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Source: Greenwashing and how to avoid it: An introductory guide for Asia’s finance industry

climate reporting which is expected to be widely incorporated into disclosure requirements globally.

Cheng noted that are challenges for implementing harmonised

frameworks in Asia, a region at different stages of economic development with a range of national climate commitments that nudge businesses towards reliable disclosure at different speeds.

Competition between territories in the region, for instance the rivalry of Singapore and Hong Kong as regional green finance centres, is likely to push Asia towards progress in sustainability standard-setting and minimising greenwashing, she said.

Regulators need the right tools to be able to understand where greenwashing is happening, and “teeth” to properly enforce their regulatory frameworks, Cheng noted.

Punishment for greenwashing firms has been all but absent in Asia to date, with only South Korea declaring that it would fine companies found guilty – albeit with penalties (a maximum of US\$2,300) unlikely to deter large polluters from making iffy green claims. While regulators tighten the rules for ESG claims, non-government organisations are taking the lead in policing greenwashing. The act of filing a legal claim against a company sends a “signal” that can drive change through the market, said Zoe Bush from the Environmental Defenders Office.

NGOs are now focusing their work on how well aligned companies’ businesses models are with climate goals rather than how well prepared they say they are for the energy transition, said Bush.

“It’s not in anyone’s interests to penalise genuine transition efforts. So we’ll see more of a focus [from NGOs] on corporate alignment with the energy transition. And we’ll see more focus on the laggards rather than the leaders,” she said. ■

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/the-next-wave-of-greenwashing-offsets-competitor-claims-and-transition-washing/?sw-login=true>)

Make the Right Move

ABC

Ready to Lease Office Spaces



ABC

Assotech Business Cresterra
Sector - 135, Expressway, Noida

1

Integrated Intelligent IT Park Complex

2

1.8 Million SQFT Mixed Use Development

3

LEED Gold Certified Green Building Complex

4

Market Leading Floor Efficiency of 83% [+2%]

5

70% leased out of Phase - I



SERVICED APARTMENTS
Phase - I



OFFICE SPACES



RETAIL
Phase - I


ASSOTECH
www.assotech.in

Assotech Realty Pvt. Ltd.
46, First Floor, Janpath, New Delhi - 110001
Ph: +91 - 8010821111
info@assotech.in

Our Leasing Partners
CBRE

"The Plans, images and facilities shown in the advertisement are merely indicative in nature (not a legal offer) and are subject to variations and modifications at the sole discretion of the Company or the competent authority. The Project is being developed as an IT/ITES complex as per the IT Policy of Government of Uttar Pradesh. Phase 1 of the Project has been completed and Phase - 2 of the Project consisting of Tower No 4, 5 & 6 is under construction and has been registered under UP RERA vide Registration No. UPRERAPRJ1594."

SAVE LIVES GIVE SMILES

Every Year, **35,000+** children are born with cleft lip and palate in India. Untreated clefts lead to difficulties in eating, breathing, hearing and speaking. The children often face social stigma and drop out of school.

Cleft treatment can change this. Forever.

OUR LEGACY & REACH:



640,000+
cleft surgeries
since 2000



150+
partner
hospitals



30+
states
and UTs



300+
cleft medical
professionals

Smile Train empowers local medical professionals with training, funding, and resources to provide free cleft surgery and comprehensive cleft care to children across the country. We advance a sustainable and scalable global health model for cleft treatment, drastically improving children's lives, creating both an immediate and long-term impact.



Let your CSR Program transform lives and create lasting impact.

Join us to change India, one smile at a time.

Contact us:

Email ID: csrindia@smiletrain.org

Address: Plot No. 3, LSC, Sector C Pocket 6&7,
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110070 Ph: 011 47856300
www.smiletrainindia.org



National Cleft Helpline – 1800 103 8301