

CSR TODAY

RNI NO. MAHENG/2013/48866 ■ VOLUME 13 ■ ISSUE 02 ■ SEPTEMBER 2025 ■ PRICE ₹100 ■ TOTAL PAGES: 52

CLIMATE CHANGE IS CREATING 'NEW VULNERABILITIES' FOR DISEASE PANDEMICS

CLIMATE CHANGE IS CREATING "NEW VULNERABILITIES" FOR PANDEMICS, ACCORDING TO NEW RESEARCH





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Himalayan mountains vulnerable because of climate change: experts



Rajesh Tiwari
Publisher
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Climate change has been consistently altering monsoon weather patterns, disturbing the distribution of the rainfall. Western Himalayan states, which are located on the northern edge of the Indian monsoon, are highly vulnerable to heavy rainfall. Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have witnessed several devastating floods exacerbated by rising temperatures.

Changing snowfall and rainfall patterns due to climate change have made the Himalayan mountains vulnerable with glacier retreat and permafrost thaw have decreased the stability of mountain slopes and the integrity of infrastructure, meteorologists and climate change experts said in the wake of cloudburst triggered mudslide and flash flood in Uttarkashi's Dharali village.

This comes as a major cause of concern - and there is a need to put together a mechanism to reduce the impact.

Climate change has been consistently altering monsoon weather patterns, disturbing the distribution of the rainfall. Western Himalayan states, which are located on the northern edge of the Indian monsoon, are highly vulnerable to heavy rainfall. Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have witnessed several devastating floods exacerbated by rising temperatures.

"Ecologically, the Himalayas are very fragile as they are the youngest mountain range in the world. This makes it a very sensitive region. Concerned authorities and local bodies should include scientists while carrying out any construction in the region, as they are well-versed in the geology. When such torrential rainfall occurs over hill slopes, it becomes more dangerous as debris flow leads to erosion due to landslides, making flash floods more powerful and disastrous," said Prof Y P Sundriyal, Adjunct Faculty, Geology, Doon University, Uttarakhand.

"With the axis of the monsoon trough running through the foothills of the Himalayas, we had already predicted a red alert for Uttarakhand. While the affected region is prone to cloudbursts, such a turn of events is due to the climate change-led rise in temperatures," said Mahesh Palawat, Vice President, Meteorology and Climate Change, Skymet Weather.

"A huge influx of moisture from the abnormal warming of oceans increases the capacity of the air to hold more water vapour. The Himalayas act as barriers, which give rise to vertically developed convective clouds, known as Cumulonimbus clouds. Sometimes, the vertical height of such clouds might even reach up to 50,000 feet. These clouds are like a column of water, which, when restricted due to topography like the mountains, can lead to the release of water over a smaller area in a shorter duration. This may lead to similar conditions to what we have witnessed in Uttarakhand," he added.

"The rapid warming over the Middle East and the Mediterranean is a signature of global warming. This regional warming has been pulling the southwestern winds northward over the Arabian Sea. There is excess moisture being pumped into the Himalayan foothills. Similar conditions are being cited during the ongoing seasons as well. Because of this northward shift of the south-westerly winds, we might end up with more heavy rainfall events all the way into Himachal Pradesh and Leh Ladakh before the season is over," said Dr Raghu Murtugudde, Climate Scientist, Emeritus Professor, University of Maryland & Retired Professor, Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay.

"Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) play a vital role by providing real-time data from the Himalayas, especially in their upper reaches. This information helps authorities issue timely alerts, enabling communities to prepare and evacuate in advance, thus saving lives and reducing damage. Given the rising intensity of climate-induced disasters, India must expand its network of AWS and invest in advanced forecasting technology to build a more resilient and prepared society," said Prof Anjal Prakash, Clinical Associate Professor (Research) and Research Director, Bharti Institute of Public Policy, Indian School of Business and IPPC Author. 

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SEPTEMBER 2025 | VOL. 13 | ISSUE 02

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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

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IIT Madras partners with SBI Foundation to launch Para-Athlete Sports Scholarship Program

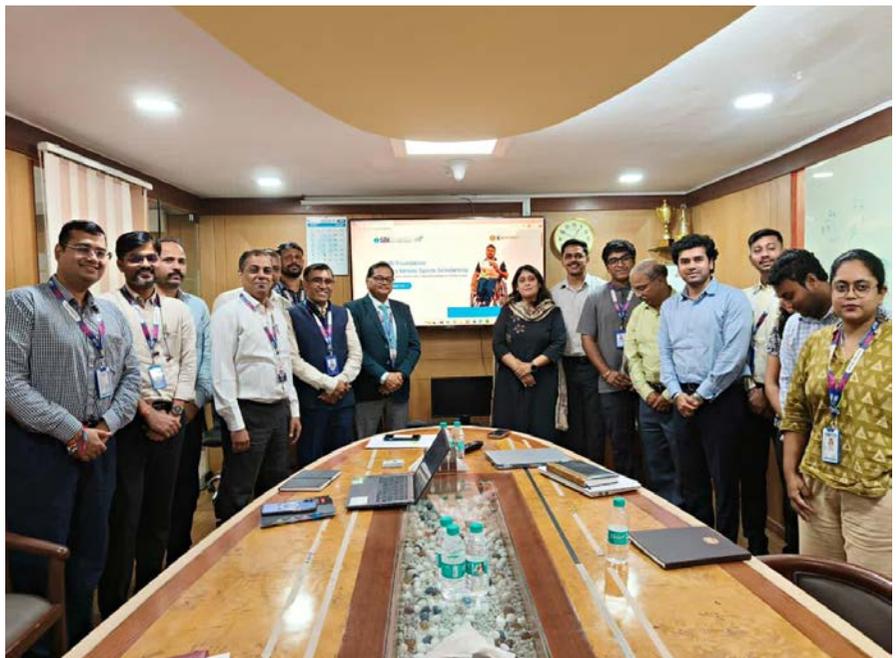
Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) and SBI Foundation have joined hands to launch a pioneering Para Athlete Sports Scholarship program aimed at empowering 100 para-athletes across India.

The program will provide selected athlete with a monthly stipend of ₹40,000 each, supporting their journey toward National and International sporting excellence. Further, scientific training will also be provided under this initiative.

The program was formally launched today (14th August 2025) in the presence of Mr. Sanjay Prakash, Managing Director and CEO, SBI Foundation, and other stakeholders.

Looking forward to encouraging para-athletes, Sanjay Prakash, MD and CEO, SBI Foundation, said, “At SBI Foundation, we believe in the unlimited potential of the para-athletes of India. Their dedication, talent, and resilience are highly inspiring. With the launch of SBIF PASS (Para Athletes Sports Scholarship), we take another step towards enabling them to chase their dreams and bring glory to our Nation.”

Sanjay Prakash added, “This initiative is not just about financial support – it is about giving our para-athletes the recognition, resources, and confidence they deserve. Together, let’s champion their journey and celebrate their success. We are proud to stand beside them – now, and always.”



Lauding the funding support, Prof. Ashwin Mahalingam, Dean (Alumni and Corporate Relations), IIT Madras, said, “At IIT Madras, we deeply value our partnership with SBI Foundation and the opportunities it creates. The Para Athlete Sports Scholarship program is clearly aligned with the values of diversity and inclusion in sports that we have been championing over the years. It levels the playing field for para-athletes by opening up avenues for them to aspire, dream and grow on both the National and International stage.”

By combining financial support with scientific training, the scholarship ensures that para-athletes have access to the resources, data, and

mentorship they need to compete at the highest level. The goal is to create a robust ecosystem of support and inclusivity in Indian sport, while building a strong pipeline for events like the Paralympics and other international events for para athletes.

This marks a significant step forward in recognising and nurturing the potential of differently-abled athletes, aligning with both institutions' shared vision of inclusive growth and excellence.

The technical assistance for this initiative is being provided by Acrophase, an IIT Madras Center of Excellence for Human Performance under the leadership of Prof. Mohanasankar Sivaprakasam.



SAP and UNICEF YuWaah Launch Yutopia to Advance Institutional Collaboration with Young People

SAP and UNICEF YuWaah (the India Chapter of Generation Unlimited) are proud to jointly launch Yutopia – an initiative that unites public, private, and civil society stakeholders to build inclusive systems that truly understand, reflect, and respond to the needs and aspirations of young people, placing youth at the centre of every effort.

The launch event, hosted at the UN House in New Delhi, brought together leadership from the private sector, civil society organizations along with government participation from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS) and young changemakers.

In a world facing complex social and environmental challenges, young people are not only among the most impacted but also uniquely positioned to drive change. As innovators, digital natives, and community leaders, they bring fresh perspectives and bold ideas to the

table. However, their meaningful participation in institutional processes remains limited, causing a gap between intent and impact. This presents a critical opportunity: by actively engaging young people as equal stakeholders, institutions can design more relevant, inclusive, and future-ready solutions.

Yutopia seeks to bridge this gap by co-creating pathways and frameworks for institutions to engage young people not merely as beneficiaries or employees, but as active collaborators. By embedding youth leadership and participation across policies, programmes, and platforms, Yutopia aims to place young people at the heart of systems change.

Yutopia will co-create new ways for youth to drive structural changes within organisations by:

- Convening partners, including ministries, private Sector and civil society organisations to spark collaboration across sectors

- Building capacities of organisations for meaningful youth engagement
- Using human centre design thinking approach to co-create frameworks and best practices that advance youth centrality and then amplify thought leadership

“At SAP, we firmly believe that young people must be at the heart of how organizations think, lead, and grow. Our global corporate social responsibility initiatives are dedicated to equipping youth with the skills, mentorship, and leadership opportunities they need to thrive. With Yutopia, in partnership with UNICEF YuWaah, we are deepening this commitment—creating systems where young people are not just participants, but active co-creators influencing decisions and shaping the workplaces of the future,” said Sindhu Gangadharan, Managing Director, SAP Labs India, and Head, Customer Innovation Services, SAP.

“The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is committed to empowering young people as key partners in India’s development. Through initiatives like the National Service Scheme and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, we engage youth in leadership, service, and nation-building. We continue to strengthen systems that ensure young people are heard, included, and involved in shaping programmes and policies. We congratulate YuWaah on this initiative that is in alignment with our commitment. By work with diverse stakeholders we aim to embed youth leadership across institutions and create opportunities for young people to drive national progress.” said Dr. Sarah Jayal Swakmie, Director, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Arjan De Wagt, Deputy Representative, UNICEF India said “UNICEF believes every child and young person has the right to be heard and to participate meaningfully in decisions that impact their lives. We are committed to strengthening systems that support their development, protection, and engagement at every stage. India has a sizeable youth population, YuWaah works with diverse groups of young people to co-create pathways to facilitate their voices and inform every stage of our programmes. Yutopia is a timely initiative to position young people as equal stakeholders in shaping inclusive, youth-responsive organisations, reflecting our commitment to work for youth and with youth.” “When young

professionals are given the space to make decisions, to learn, and even to grow from their mistakes, they bring fresh energy, creativity, and new perspectives to an organisation. This not only helps them build confidence and leadership skills but also enables the organisation to benefit from innovative ideas and approaches. All we need is the right support and the freedom to explore, experiment, and contribute meaningfully” said Pooja Mahaldar, Young People’s Action Team Member, UNICEF YuWaah.

With over 350 million young people in India, Yutopia marks a strategic step toward building youth-affirmative systems that engage young people as equal stakeholders in national development.

Majority Indians worried about global warming: report

Majority Indians have knowledge about global warming and are worried about climate change, according to a survey report released in the United States by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and CVoter International. “India is already experiencing climate impacts, from record heat waves to severe floods to stronger storms,” said Dr. Anthony Leiserowitz of Yale University.

“While many in India still do not know much about global warming, they overwhelmingly think the climate is changing and are worried about it,” he added. “Indians strongly support ambitious and credible climate policies, despite being aware of the challenges in shifting to a clean energy powered-economy that is just and equitable,” said Dr. Jagadish Thaker of the University of Queensland. “Despite high levels of worry and vulnerability, Indians see climate action as a way to secure a bright future for the country,” he added.

The report, titled “Climate Change in the Indian Mind, Spring 2025,” finds that more than half people in India (53%) say they know at least “something” about global warming. However, 27% say they have “never heard of” global warming. When given a short definition of global warming and how it affects weather patterns, 96% of people in India say they think global warming is happening.

Around 90% of people in India are worried about global warming, including 58% who are “very worried.” Majorities think global warming affects weather in their local area (79%) and monsoons in India (83%) either “a lot” or “some.”

Indians experienced the hottest year on record in 2024, with temperatures over 1°C above normal in several Indian states. More than 450 heatwave deaths were officially reported, including government officials who died conducting elections in the world’s largest democracy.

When asked about specific causes of global warming, 82% understand that vehicles that use petrol or diesel cause global warming “a lot” or “some.” Additionally, 61% understand that electricity power plants that use coal or propane cause global warming. However, only 26% think that raising animals for food causes global warming. Meanwhile, 84% think that plastic pollution (which is not a major source of greenhouse gas emissions) causes global warming, while 37% attribute global warming to God’s will. “Climate change communicators in India need to urgently address public misconceptions about the causes and effects of climate change,” said Dr Leiserowitz.

“As extreme weather harms people across the country, Indians want to learn more about climate change, support government action, and are willing to get personally involved in reducing emissions and preparing for the impacts,” said Yashwant Deshmukh, founder and director of CVoter International. “Indians strongly support ambitious and credible climate policies, despite being aware of the challenges in shifting to a clean energy powered-economy that is just and equitable,” said Dr. Jagadish Thaker of the University of Queensland. “Despite high levels of worry and vulnerability, Indians see climate action as a way to secure a bright future for the country.”



Wadia Hospital Distributes Lifesaving Cystic Fibrosis Medicines Free of Cost To 40 Children

Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children at Parel in Mumbai has rolled out a unique initiative, providing cystic fibrosis medication costing ₹1.5 crore per child, free of cost to 40 children, this year. This effort seeks to ease the financial burden on families while delivering essential treatment for a chronic and life-threatening condition.

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is a genetic disorder that primarily affects the lungs, pancreas, and other organs, resulting in the buildup of thick, sticky mucus. This makes breathing difficult and impacts digestion. “CF is caused by a mutation in the CFTR gene, which affects the movement of salt and water in and out of cells. Symptoms seen in children are chronic cough, recurrent chest infections, difficulty gaining weight, and poor growth. Cystic fibrosis is a progressive condition that, if not

managed on time, leads to irreversible lung damage and life-threatening complications. With early intervention and medication, it is possible to improve both the quality and length of a child’s life. This initiative will be a lifeline for many children,” highlighted Dr Parmarth Chandane, Head of Pulmonology Dept of Wadia Hospital.

“For 14 years, we have watched our son Bhavik suffer from severe lung infections. It was heartbreaking, and with our limited means, we had almost lost hope. But now, with this free and timely treatment, he can finally breathe freely and live like other children. We are truly grateful to Wadia Hospital for giving my son a second chance at life. This support means everything to our family, said the patient’s mother, Tanuja Khare from Murbad, Thane district of Maharashtra.

“Every year, countless children suffer silently from cystic fibrosis because they cannot afford the prolonged and expensive treatment it demands. At Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital For Children, we believe in not just treating but transforming lives. By offering such costly and essential medication free of charge, we’re removing financial barriers for families. We will continue to take up such life-saving missions to ensure no child is deprived of care due to cost. With this initiative, we’re not just giving out medicines; we’re giving these children a chance to breathe easier, grow healthier, and live longer. It is our mission to help families who have nowhere else to turn, and this is only the beginning of many such efforts to come,” concluded Dr Minnie Bodhanwala, CEO of Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital For Children.

Kia India signs MoU with ASDC to develop talent pool for automotive industry

To impart structured training, certification, and recruitment, aligning with Skill India Mission

Kia India, leading mass premium carmaker of the country, has signed a MoU with Automotive Skill Development Council (ASDC). This MoU is a milestone towards promoting industry-academia partnerships, building a sustainable skilling ecosystem, and enhanced placement support. With EV adoption and customer experience playing a central role in India's mobility transformation, this joint effort is expected to significantly boost workforce readiness in these critical areas.

The program is designed as an immersive 30-day training module, combining classroom-based theoretical learning and practical on-the-job experience. The specially designed course includes 15 days of foundational training at ASDC-certified training centers covering core automotive concepts and dealership functions. The training will have a Kia-specific process to familiarize candidates with brand standards, systems, and product knowledge. The curriculum also includes 15 days of experiential learning at authorized Kia dealerships under expert supervision.

On the occasion, Joonsu Cho, Chief Sales Officer, Kia India, said, "This collaboration with ASDC represents a pivotal step in Kia India's commitment to shaping a future-ready ecosystem, one that is anchored in skilled human capital and elevated customer experience. By creating a robust talent pool through structured training and certification, we



L to R - Mr. Bhimsen Gulabani, Vice President, Customer Experience, Kia India, along with Mr. Arindam Lahiri, CEO, ASDC

are not only empowering India's youth with meaningful employment but also reinforcing our dealer network with professionals who embody Kia's values of quality, care, and innovation. Ultimately, this initiative will translate into a more seamless, informed, and rewarding journey for every Kia customer across the country."

This partnership will exemplify the alignment of Kia India's commitment with national skilling objectives. The specially designed curriculum goes beyond conventional training, and more focused nurturing a new generation of automotive professionals who are

not only technically sound but also attuned to evolving customer expectations. This initiative will set a benchmark in dealership workforce readiness while empowering youth with meaningful and future-proof career opportunities.

This co-developed learning model ensures that candidates gain both the technical know-how and workplace readiness to be effective from day one. Upon successful completion of the program, candidates will undergo an evaluation at the ASDC centre, get certificate jointly awarded by Kia India and ASDC, and eligible for the direct recruitment by Kia dealerships into Sales and Service roles.



FICCI honours corporate champions driving India's inclusive growth at the 21st CSR Awards

FICCI has recognised leading corporations across public and private sectors for their outstanding corporate social responsibility initiatives at its 21st CSR Awards, celebrating organisations that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to India's inclusive development agenda.

NTPC Limited claimed the top honour in the women empowerment category among public sector undertakings, whilst ITC Limited secured the corresponding private sector award for companies with annual turnover exceeding Rs 3,001 crore. The awards ceremony highlighted corporate India's evolving approach to social responsibility, marking a shift from mere compliance to strategic collaboration in addressing societal challenges. In a significant recognition of skill development efforts, Schneider

Electric India Private Limited and Bridgestone India Private Limited shared the joint winner status in the skill development and livelihood category, underscoring the critical role of private enterprises in building India's human capital infrastructure. AkzoNobel India Limited received a jury commendation certificate in the same category.

The environmental sustainability category witnessed dual winners, with Dow Chemical International Private Limited and Asian Paints Limited jointly receiving recognition for their contributions to ecological preservation. This acknowledgement comes at a time when Indian corporations are increasingly integrating environmental considerations into their business strategies.

Anand Group of Companies secured the education category

award, whilst Minda Corporation Limited was honoured for its work in inclusive development of persons with disabilities. Axis Bank Limited claimed the food security and agriculture category, reflecting the financial sector's growing engagement with rural development initiatives.

"For all of us, today is a defining day, because we applaud the CSR companies and their champions. They have made an outstanding contribution to inclusive growth, agriculture, sustainable livelihood, sustainable development, women empowerment and other development-led initiatives," said Rajashree Birla, Chairperson of Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development. The event emphasised that "for all of you gathered here CSR is a calling", she noted, adding that achieving the



Viksit Bharat vision requires collaborative effort.

The recognition extends beyond large corporations, with awards acknowledging contributions across different business scales. Alkem Laboratories Limited won in the health, drinking water, sanitation and hygiene category for companies with turnover between ₹201 crore and ₹3,000 crore, whilst Gameskraft Technologies Private Limited was recognised in the 'any other' category for the same revenue bracket.

Tata Capital Limited received honours in the aspirational district category, highlighting efforts to develop India's most backward regions. Samta Energy Private Limited claimed the small and medium enterprises award, demonstrating that

impactful CSR initiatives transcend company size.

Additional jury commendation certificates were awarded to LIC Housing Finance Limited for women empowerment, AkzoNobel India Limited for skill development, Syngenta India Private Limited for health and sanitation initiatives, and Maruti Suzuki India Limited for exemplary innovation in CSR practices.

The awards ceremony emphasised corporate India's role in achieving the government's Viksit Bharat vision, which aims to transform India into a \$30 trillion economy by 2047. The summit preceding the awards, titled 'Powering Bharat's CSR for Inclusive Transformation and Sustainable Rural Transformation', showcased what organisers

described as a fundamental "mindset change" in corporate approach to social responsibility.

"It was very encouraging to see the experts displaying a growth mindset as against a fixed mindset. From compliance to collaboration. From simply allocating money to co-creation. And from projects to partnership," said Birla, highlighting the evolution from traditional CSR models to strategic development partnerships.

"The award is a testament to the amazing work done by the winning companies and to being a 'Force for Good'," she noted, praising the robust and transparent judging process that has made the FICCI CSR Awards increasingly aspirational within corporate circles.

Mrs Birla emphasised that the Viksit Bharat target "goes beyond the government", describing it as "the moral responsibility of every corporate, every Indian to work towards this goal in whatever capacity, regardless of the scale".

As India maintains its position as the world's fastest-growing economy, these awards underscore the private sector's expanding role in ensuring that economic growth translates into inclusive development, addressing challenges spanning rural transformation, environmental sustainability, and social equity across the subcontinent.

Driving Grassroots Transformation

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation and Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship recognise Social Entrepreneur of the Year - India 2025

Amid growing recognition of grassroots innovation as a force for systemic change, the Jubilant Bhartia Foundation and the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, a sister organisation of the World Economic Forum, honored Piyush Tewari with the 16th Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award (SEYO) – India 2025.

The prestigious award was presented at a ceremony in New Delhi, in the distinguished presence of Suresh Prabhu, Former Union Minister and India's Sherpa to G7 and G20, along with dignitaries from policy, business, academia and civil society.

Anshu Gupta, Founder Director, GOONJ, also graced the event with his presence.

The work of this year's winner and finalists put the spotlight on the varied societal challenges ranging from poverty alleviation, improving road safety & emergency medical care, building sustainable livelihoods for rural artisans and community led development in under-served regions.

Piyush Tewari has been recognised for his pioneering work in road safety and emergency care through the Zero-Fatality Solution (ZFS), a data-driven model deployed across 36 highways in 16 states, significantly reducing road crash deaths by up to 67% on key corridors. Under his leadership, SaveLIFE Foundation has influenced landmark policy reforms such as the Good Samaritan Law, ensured safer



travel for over 190 million people and mobilised over USD 70 million in public investment for road safety infrastructure and trauma care. His approach combines engineering, enforcement, emergency response and community engagement to create safer roads nationwide.

Speaking at the event, Prabhu, applauded the awardees, stating, "The greater contribution of all the social entrepreneurs is truly commendable. My congratulations to all finalists. The final goal is to make all lives happy. Social institutions are essential for the betterment of society. Today's program will be another accelerator in that direction. I feel

fortunate to be here — among those who are working to make the lives of others better."

Echoing this sentiment, Hilde Schwab, Co-Founder and Chairperson, of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, and Professor Klaus Schwab, Founder of the World Economic Forum and Co-Founder of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, said, "Social entrepreneurs in India continue to inspire the world with their deep-rooted commitment to equity, inclusion and innovation. This year's finalists have built locally embedded, people-centric models—from empowering

rural women to transforming public safety—that deliver real, systemic change. Social entrepreneurship is about reshaping how societies function through empathy, courage and resilience. As we mark 16 years of partnership with the Jubilant Bhartia Foundation, we are proud to celebrate these visionary leaders who are redefining development and influencing global conversations on inclusive growth."

Shyam S Bhartia, Chairman and Founder and Hari S Bhartia, Chairman & Co-Founder, of Jubilant Bhartia Group and Founder Directors of Jubilant Bhartia Foundation, congratulated the winner and finalists and shared, "This year's finalists are true nation-builders. Their work—in the areas of public safety, women's economic empowerment, rural innovation and artisan leadership embody a spirit of self-reliance and dignity. Through the SEOY India platform, we are proud to honour changemakers who are solving India's toughest challenges with deep local insight that have global relevance." They further added, "The world of business has much to learn from social entrepreneurs—their proximity to the problem, agility in response and purpose-driven approach. This platform is our commitment to fostering cross-sector collaboration that drives national good." They also mentioned



the formal launch of Bharat Impact - The Jubilant Bhartia Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, a collaborative initiative to provide mentorship, incubation support and networking

opportunities to social entrepreneurs across India. This will act as a ecosystem for social entrepreneurship in India helping in scaling up social innovations.

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Harrisons Malayalam installs Weather Monitoring Systems in Wayanad Estates to mitigate landslide risks

Harrisons Malayalam Ltd (HML), in partnership with Bengaluru-based AgriHawk Technologies has installed weather prediction systems in its Wayanad tea estates. The project is aimed at reducing the risk of future landslides.

In the first phase, 35 Fyllo weather systems are being deployed across 11 estates, including the severely affected Sentinel Rock Estate. The ₹55 lakh investment will help provide early warnings and real-time weather data to the Government Disaster Management Authority and estate managers. A second phase - planned in collaboration with government bodies - will add another 25 systems.

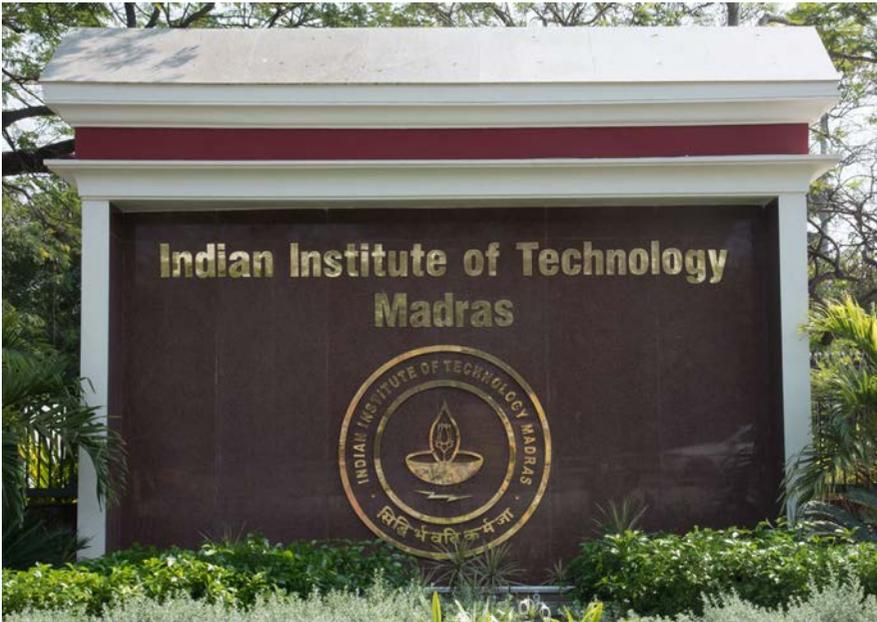
"Climate-related disruptions are a growing concern in plantation regions. This investment is a step towards better risk management and operational continuity," said Cherian M. George, CEO of Harrisons Malayalam Ltd.

HML has also worked with Rajagiri Transcend (Rajagiri School of Social Sciences) and NGOs to support affected workers and families. In May 2025, the company launched Karuthal Care with the District Disaster Management Authority to enhance monsoon preparedness across the region.

In August last year, landslides in the Chooralmala and Mundakai areas of the Sentinel Rock Estate led to damages estimated at ₹13 crore. This included destruction of plantation areas, labour lines, water systems, and tourism infrastructure. The estate is currently operating at just 40% capacity and under restricted hours.



IIT Madras Teaching Learning Centre launches Free STEM Training for College Faculty across India



It will focus on faculty development, covering fundamental and advanced topics in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Biology besides practical lab sessions and exposure to frontier research

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) Teaching Learning Centre (TLC) is launching a training program on STEM (Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics) and Biotechnology for college faculty.

Organised under Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP), this in-person, residential Capacity Building

Program is provided free of cost for faculty engaged in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate science courses.

IIT Madras TLC has partnered with BodhBridge Education for this initiative, which is targeted towards college faculty across India. Interested faculty can apply through the following registration link - <https://fundaspring.com/products/capacity-building-stem-faculty-iit-madras-malaviya-mission>

The training would be conducted over a period of nine days, with each batch comprising 50 participants. Shortlisted candidates will be notified by email. College faculty teaching Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Biotechnology (UG and PG) are eligible to apply. The program would be held at TLC Hall and Central Library in the IIT Madras Campus

Elaborating about this program, Prof. Edamana Prasad, Chairman,

Teaching Learning Center, IIT Madras, said, “The program is designed to elevate teaching effectiveness, enrich student learning experiences and cultivate an engaged and inspired academic environment. Its objectives include strengthening student performance, encouraging higher enrollment in STEM disciplines and advancing diversity and inclusion, all of which align with the Union Education Ministry’s commitment to ongoing enhancement and innovation within India’s education sector. Faculty members from both public and private colleges are eligible to participate, and assessment and certification will be conducted under the guidance of the MMTTP framework.”

The TLC at IIT Madras is dedicated to advancing teaching methodologies and building academic capacity among educators, thereby nurturing a culture of excellence and innovation in higher education.

The Capacity Building Programme will focus on holistic faculty development, covering fundamental and advanced topics in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Biology. The modules will offer practical lab sessions, innovative teaching methodologies, and exposure to frontier research, designed to refresh pedagogical skills and support the development of modern, inquiry-based STEM curricula.

Staying true to the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the program will focus on Interdisciplinary Approach, Skill Development, Research and Innovation, Global Competitiveness and Experiential Learning.



14 newly trained wildlife sniffer dogs to help curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India

Ranthambore Tiger Reserve gets its first wildlife sniffer dog squad

Adding teeth to India's wildlife law enforcement initiatives, 14 wildlife sniffer dogs and their 28 handlers completed their training on 8 August 2025 at the National Training Centre for Dogs, Basic Training Centre, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (NTCD, BTC-ITBP), Panchkula, under WWF-India's pioneering wildlife sniffer dog programme.

They have been deployed with the forest departments of eight states, of which Rajasthan is getting its first-ever wildlife sniffer dog squad.

The training of 14 young dogs and their 28 handlers started in January 2025. Their 7-month training

included learning skills to detect wildlife contraband, track poachers, and deter wildlife crime.

Dr Dipankar Ghose, Senior Director, Biodiversity Conservation, WWF-India, said, "Illegal wildlife trade is reported to be growing and is a highly organised criminal activity. There is a need to strengthen the wildlife law enforcement agencies, both at the central and state levels. The future of India's tigers, elephants, rhinos, pangolins, turtles, tortoises, birds, marine species and many others depends on collaborative efforts to mitigate the threat of illegal wildlife trade".

"India's wildlife sniffer dogs have been making a huge mark in curbing illegal wildlife trade as they play a crucial role in supporting state forest departments and other government agencies. From just two dogs that we provided in 2008, the programme

has grown to train and deploy 120 wildlife sniffer dogs nationwide" Dr. Ghose further added.

Inspector General, Shri Ashok Negi PMG, National Training Centre for Dogs, Basic Training Centre, Bhanu, Panchkula, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force said, "Illegal wildlife trade and wildlife crime are a serious threat to wildlife in India, and trained wildlife sniffer dogs are indispensable in the fight against these".

"We have decades of experience training sniffer dogs for crime detection and prevention including wildlife sniffer dogs. The current batch of WWF-India's wildlife sniffer dog training programme is the 5th to be trained at NTCD, BTC-ITBP, Panchkula, and we are happy to extend our full support for their training. We congratulate the wildlife sniffer dog squads and wish them the best" added Negi.

The trained wildlife sniffer dog squads are being deployed at Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla (GGTP) Tiger Reserve, Achanakmar Tiger Reserve, Indravati Tiger Reserve and Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh; Kuno National Park, Pench Tiger Reserve and Sanjay National Park in Madhya

Pradesh; Sahyadri Tiger Reserve and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra; Kawal Tiger Reserve in Telangana; Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar; Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan; and Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary in Jharkhand; Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh. The 14 wildlife sniffer dogs and

their 28 handlers passed out during a glittering ceremony organised to celebrate their training completion at NTC, BTC-ITBP, Panchkula today. WWF-India wishes them the very best for their new role and extends full support in their mission to curb wildlife crime and protect our forests and wildlife.

Global Hiramini Memorial Nursing Institution- A Vertical of Global Knowledge Campus Survey uncovers deeply held misconceptions about breastfeeding across Indian communities

A recent awareness survey conducted by Global Hiramini Memorial Nursing Institution - A Vertical Of Global Knowledge Campus uncovered an alarming knowledge gap about breastfeeding among general public and student respondents, raising concerns about the depth of societal understanding and support for this critical maternal practice.

The survey, timed to align with World Breastfeeding Week, aimed to evaluate common myths and awareness levels around breastfeeding. However, the results were stark: a majority of participants struggled to answer basic, medically-backed questions about breastfeeding, highlighting the societal failure in health education and cultural support for mothers.

“The inability of respondents to answer fundamental questions—such as when to initiate breastfeeding or the importance of colostrum—underscores the urgent need to move beyond mere awareness campaigns. We must foster deeper engagement, education, and empathy. This is not solely a women's

issue; it is a societal concern. When such critical knowledge is lacking, it is a clear indication that we are failing our mothers—and, by extension, the next generation,” said Dali Sarkar, Principal, Global Hiramini Memorial Nursing Institution.

Key Misconceptions Revealed:

Out of 10 core questions, the majority of participants showed uncertainty or incorrect understanding in areas like:

- Misconception that excessive crying signals low milk supply
- Delay in understanding the need to start breastfeeding within one hour of normal delivery
- Low understanding of nutrient content in breast milk (like antibodies)
- Confusion about exclusive breastfeeding duration and introduction of complementary feeding

Societal and Structural Challenges

The survey findings align with broader challenges highlighted in the study:

- Only 35% of mothers feel comfortable breastfeeding in public, reflecting stigma and lack of safe environments in workplaces, malls, and transport hubs.
- Urbanization has weakened traditional family support systems, pushing many mothers into isolation with limited guidance.
- Workplace and school policies often fail to accommodate lactating women with basic facilities like private lactation rooms or flexible schedules.
- Health workers and ASHA/Anganwadi networks need stronger reinforcement to combat taboos and misinformation.

Through this survey we believe that educational institutions, and media platforms to take action by launching community-driven education programs on breastfeeding, mandating lactation-friendly policies in workplaces and public infrastructure, strengthening training and outreach for community health workers, and promoting open dialogues and storytelling to break stigma and normalize breastfeeding.



New Partnership to Boost Regenerative Cotton and Sustainable Palm Oil in India

In a significant step towards transforming key agricultural commodity sectors in India, Solidaridad Network Asia Ltd — a global pioneer in creating sustainable supply chains — and WWF-India have signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote regenerative cotton farming and responsible palm oil production and consumption.

This collaboration aims to catalyse climate resilience, drive sustainable sourcing, and enhance transparency across two of India's most impactful commodity landscapes.

Cotton, known for its resource-intensive cultivation, and palm oil, historically linked to global deforestation, both present critical challenges and opportunities in the sustainability landscape. With the shared objective of advancing regenerative agriculture and enhancing sustainability across these

sectors, the partnership aims to foster deeper collaboration focused on promoting responsible supply chains, market transformation, sustainable trade, green finance, and enabling policy frameworks.

The partnership will focus on accelerating the adoption of

regenerative agriculture practices, building awareness among value chain actors and supporting broader efforts to drive systemic change in cotton and palm oil landscapes through pilot projects, joint research, and inclusive certification standards.



“For decades, we’ve asked our farmers to feed the nation, often at the cost of their own land and water. This partnership is about reversing that equation,” said Dr Shatadru Chattopadhyay, Managing Director of Solidaridad Asia “We are building a future where agriculture doesn’t just sustain, it actively heals our planet and secures the prosperity of our farmers. In partnership with WWF-India, we are moving beyond sustainability as a goal and establishing regeneration as the new, non-negotiable standard for Indian agriculture”, he further adds.

Key areas of collaboration include promoting regenerative agriculture models for key commodities such as cotton and palm oil. The partnership will work towards creating demand

for sustainable sourcing through market transformation, supply chain engagement, and active collaboration with businesses, industry stakeholders, policymakers, financial institutions, and consumers.

The joint effort aims to advocate for traceability, fair pricing, smallholder inclusion, and climate-aligned market systems. As part of this collaboration, both organisations will undertake joint studies and on-ground pilot initiatives to demonstrate scalable models of sustainable production and sourcing.

Dr Sejal Worah, Programme Director, WWF-India, said, “Our partnership with Solidaridad will strengthen national efforts to embed regenerative practices in cotton and catalyse a sustainability

transition in India’s palm oil sector—benefiting people, nature, and the climate. By ensuring broad-based, cross-sectoral and inclusive stakeholder engagement, this collaboration aims to work towards building resilient, transparent, and responsible supply chains grounded in a climate-smart approach and smallholder inclusion.”

Together, the partners aim to align India’s agricultural future with global climate goals, foster responsible consumption, and enhance the well-being of small-scale farmers across the supply chain. This collaboration marks a significant step forward in driving systemic change and building resilient, transparent, and equitable agricultural markets in India.

I Am Peacekeeper Movement Welcomes Nadir Burjorji Godrej as Esteemed Advisor

The ‘I Am Peacekeeper Movement’ is honoured to announce the appointment of Nadir Burjorji Godrej, Chairperson and Managing Director of Godrej Industries Ltd, as an official Advisor to the Movement.

A visionary leader with an unwavering commitment to both business excellence and societal progress, Godrej’s legacy is distinguished by his decades of dedicated service to social and environmental causes. In addition to his leadership roles at Godrej Industries Ltd. and Godrej Agrovet Ltd., Godrej has been the recipient of internationally renowned honors, including France’s Légion d’Honneur (2008) and Chevalier de l’Ordre national du Mérite (2002), recognizing his outstanding contribution to industry and society. Dr. Huzaifa Khorakiwala, Founder of the

‘I Am Peacekeeper Movement’ and Executive Director of ‘Wockhardt’, remarked: “Mr. Godrej’s profound wisdom and values deeply resonate with our initiative’s vision. His guidance will be invaluable as we build a global community committed to harmony and meaningful action.”

Godrej has formally accepted the advisory position, signing a letter of confirmation that underscores his belief in the Movement’s mission: the global spread of justice, love, and peace. His stewardship and experience will play a critical role in advancing initiatives that unite communities and inspire positive social change.

The inclusion of Godrej as Advisor marks a significant milestone in the Movement’s journey, reinforcing its commitment to transformative leadership and collective

well-being. With his support, the I Am Peacekeeper Movement is poised to expand its impact and further its mission of creating a more just, peaceful, and compassionate world.

About I Am Peacekeeper Movement

The I Am Peacekeeper Movement is a global initiative dedicated to fostering justice, love, and peace across communities and nations. Founded by Dr. Huzaifa Khorakiwala, the Movement brings together individuals and organizations united by a shared commitment to harmony, compassion, and collective well-being. Through impactful programs, advocacy, and partnerships, I Am Peacekeeper Movement inspires positive action, empowers change-makers, and strives to build a more just and peaceful world for all.



Kotak Education Foundation Partners with 300+ PM SHRI Schools for Teacher Capacity Building Program in Maharashtra

Kotak Education Foundation (KEF), the CSR implementing agency of Kotak Mahindra Group, has started its implementation of a large-scale capacity building program, spanning 13 districts and impacting over 300 PM Shri schools in Maharashtra. This program gears towards teachers with the skills, tools, and guidance needed to build stronger learning environments for students.

Designed as a teacher-centric program, the focus lies on enhancing the professional capacity of educators across four critical areas:

- Leadership Development
- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)
- Communicative English
- Pedagogical Technology (PedTech)

At the heart of the program lies a commitment to support teachers in helping students achieve the learning outcomes defined under NIPUN Bharat. By strengthening classroom pedagogy and ensuring effective implementation, the program aims to transform teaching practices and

student learning experiences. The initiative provides comprehensive on-ground support to educators through:

- Regular school visits for continuous guidance
- Assistance in daily teaching practices
- Interactive workshops that encourage innovation and outcome-oriented learning and hands on learning



Speaking on the Program, Sangita Dandapat, Project Head, FLN, Kotak Education Foundation, said, “Through the PM SHRI Capacity Building Program, we are investing in our greatest asset, our teachers.

By equipping them with leadership skills, innovative pedagogies, and foundational learning, we are not just enhancing classrooms learning, we are shaping futures. The program ensures that quality learning reaches every child, in every corner of our districts.”

This approach ensures that training translates effectively into practice, enabling educators to create engaging and impactful classrooms. By equipping teachers with leadership skills, foundational skills (FLN), innovative pedagogical methods, 21st century skills and technological know-how, the program is fostering a culture of excellence

that directly benefits students and strengthens the education ecosystem. With its sustained focus on capacity-building, the program is laying the foundation for long-term, scalable impact in the education sector.

Jitendra EV Signs MoU with MET's Institute of Engineering to Transform Classroom Knowledge into Real-World EV Innovations

Jitendra New EV Tech Pvt. Ltd. (JNEVTPL), operating under the brand Jitendra Electric Vehicles, has signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MET's Institute of Engineering (IOE), Bhujbal Knowledge City, Adgaon, Nashik. The collaboration, established with the Department of Mechanical Engineering, aims to foster academic-industry synergy in the rapidly evolving field of electric mobility.

The MoU was officially signed on 5 August 2025 in a ceremony held at MET's IOE.

From the institute, the agreement was signed by Dr. V.P. Wani,

Principal, MET's IOE, in the presence of Dr. S.D. Kalpande, Head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, Prof. Dr. Sachin Dahake, and other departmental heads.

Representing JNEVTPL, Tejas Merchant from the Research & Development (R&D) department signed the MoU, accompanied by Satish Kulkarni and Ganesh Jadhav.

This partnership is a significant step toward bridging academic learning with real-world industrial application in the electric vehicle (EV) domain. The collaboration will focus on joint initiatives in research, product development, industrial consultancy, and technical problem-solving.

Key highlights of the MoU include:

- Expert consultancy by IOE to support productivity enhancement, resolution of in-house and field issues, and implementation of advanced engineering practices.
- Technical support for EV-related product development, encompassing electric scooters, rickshaws, bikes, and other mobility solutions.
- Industrial exposure for IOE students through visits, internships, and live projects, offering practical experience in electric vehicle technologies and manufacturing.

"This MoU marks a vital step toward bridging classroom learning with real-world innovation. Collaborating with a forward-looking company like Jitendra EV will empower our students to engage with cutting-edge technologies, enhance their practical skills, and contribute meaningfully to the future of electric mobility," said Dr. V.P. Wani, Principal, MET's Institute of Engineering.

"This collaboration is more than just knowledge exchange — it's about nurturing future-ready engineers who can contribute to real-time problem-solving and innovation in the EV space. Through this MoU, we aim to build a strong foundation for joint research, product development, and talent development," said Tejas Merchant, R&D Representative, Jitendra New EV Tech Pvt. Ltd.





Embee Software's Transformative CSR Initiative Brings Tech-Driven Education to Rural Bengal

Embee Software, a leading IT solutions company, shared the sustained success of its transformative CSR initiative launched in 2018 in collaboration with Kolkata-based nonprofit, AHEAD Initiatives. What began as a pilot ICT training program for teachers in Kalchini, North Bengal, has now grown into a multi-district movement that is reshaping rural education through technology.

AHEAD's strategy and Embee Software's vision of "making IT easy, not simple" inspired the program. While it ensured compliance, the program was designed to demonstrate how IT could transform the impact of education of underprivileged rural students and empower their teachers in government schools. The idea was to train the teachers so they could, as part of a Training of Trainers program, train others in their schools as well as neighbouring schools, for a larger social impact. Embee Software chose to work and team up with the local Panchayat and the local school authorities in a remote area like Kalchini, in North Bengal. The idea was to garner local ownership and mainstream the intervention for its

sustenance after the project ended. Teachers who had never even touched a computer are now utilizing digital tools, developing audio-visual learning materials, and even starting YouTube channels. Someone even helped to stop a wild jungle fire by promptly shooting a video and sending it to the local administration. He got a mention in the newspapers. The success of Kalchini resulted in similar initiatives in backward district towns, Baghmundi in Purulia District and Balurghat town in South Dinajpur district.

Exposed to the pitiable state of education in rural schools, Embee Software then moved to address a greater, more critical and urgent need to help young, marginalised village students in the Sundarbans to boost their literacy and numeracy levels, as well as help them with cultural learning, contextual life skills and socio-environment awareness, especially since Sundarbans, the mangrove delta, is one of the most vulnerable zones among those threatened by climate change. Open Learning Centres supported by communities with Embee Software and

AHEAD's help opened in five villages in 2023.

This initiative is unique not just for its outcomes, but for its approach. Embee Software didn't just fund programs, it collaborated deeply with local NGOs, panchayats, and communities to co-create meaningful solutions. The result is an education model that reflects the realities of rural learners, not just urban-centric curricula.

"We believe that real transformation happens when you empower people with tools and trust," said Sudhir Kothari, Managing Director, Embee Software. "This initiative is not about ticking CSR boxes; it's about creating meaningful change where it's needed most."

Abeer Chakravarty, Managing Director of AHEAD Initiatives said, "Through the CSR programs, Embee Software has looked at the purity of purpose; they understood what was really needed and done in the true spirit of 'sewa', Embee Software decided to fund us and support programmes that we have initiated, which goes beyond the ordinary call and this is what is remarkable as this, I believe, is the core DNA of Embee Software."

The OLCs continue to function, and the successful model has been adopted by AHEAD in Mayurbhanj, Odisha as well as in Bankura in West Bengal with 10 more OLCs opening. Technology is now used to get village women, many adivasis, to make them rely on easily accessible Smartphones and the internet for training, curriculum development and video documentation. The use of computers will be introduced when more senior students engage with the OLCs. Embee Software remains committed to walking this harder, purpose-driven path, not for accolades, but for the future it helps reshape. Meanwhile trained teachers continue to make a significant difference with the use of the training and the hardware provided by Embee Software.



Ammann India instrumental in Transforming Mehsana's Villages

As of 2022–23, nearly 12.5% of rural households lacked access to toilets, and several still did not have electrification or often faced erratic supply. State government programs such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and rural electrification drives like the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana have narrowed these deficits, but budgetary constraints and scale mean progress remains uneven.

Ammann India, operating a major manufacturing facility in Mehsana, has been among those reshaping the district's sanitation, infrastructure, and livelihood ecosystem. Its interventions, executed in coordination with Panchayats and local authorities across Mehsana, Lanva, Visnagar, Ditasan, Jagudan, Kochvu, Linch and Unava provide a case study in how corporate social responsibility (CSR) can move from a compliance exercise to measurable impact on the ground.



- ▶ From Sanitation to Skills, creating a blueprint for responsible, grassroots-level change, benefiting over 20,000 residents
- ▶ Roads illuminated with solar-powered streetlights, and over 93 toilets built
- ▶ Hundreds of local youth trained in advanced road machinery operation, creating skilled jobs

Badshah Masala, Ennoble Unite to Revitalize Learning Environment for Over 200 Children

As India continues to focus on inclusive growth, purpose-led partnerships like are paving the way for a meaningful change. India's leading spices company Badshah Masala Pvt Ltd joined hands with Ennoble Social Innovation Foundation to completely overhaul the infrastructure of Jivan Shikshan Prathmik School, Dehari, and Oriental Anganwadi, Gandhiwada—both located in the Umargam block of Valsad district. The revamped school and Anganwadi centre were officially inaugurated today after undergoing comprehensive transformations.

The school and the Anganwadi that serve the children of Badshah Masala's factory employees and surrounding communities, underwent a 360-degree transformation aiming to address critical infrastructural gaps and provide nurturing and future-ready learning environment for over 200 children. This milestone was made possible through a strategic CSR partnership between Badshah and Ennoble, built on shared values of local empowerment, education, and sustainable development.

Addressing Educational Challenges in Gujarat

Despite high enrolment rates, rural areas in Gujarat have faced challenges in learning outcomes. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), only 53% of Class V students could read Class II text, and merely 13.3% of Class VIII students could read Class I text. The infrastructural and educational enhancements at Jivan Shikshan Prathmik School and Oriental Anganwadi directly address these issues, aligning



with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Holistic Interventions

At Jivan Shikshan Prathmik School, Dehari, the transformation touched every facet of the student's school-going experience. The ambience was uplifted with comprehensive repairs, fresh paint, new windows, roof and ramp improvements, and vibrant wall art that inspired learning. Essential infrastructure such as boys' toilet, hand wash stations, and sewer line were renovated for improved hygiene and accessibility.

Classrooms were made brighter and more comfortable with electrical upgrades, and the new green boards, lockers, and furniture enhanced the learning environment for the students. Every student also received uniforms, sweaters, and shoes. Both indoor and outdoor play areas were upgraded with safe, engaging equipment. New facilities such as a VR goggle station, Brain

Gym, Mini STEAM lab, library, and teaching-learning materials were introduced to promote 21st-century skills and self-learning.

At Oriental Anganwadi, Gandhiwada, the focus was on creating a nurturing space for early childhood care and development. The building was plastered and painted, with cheerful wall art adding warmth and character. A fully renovated toilet block, new kitchen space, purified drinking water, and improved electrification ensured a safe and hygienic setting for young learners.

Digital and inclusive tools like a smart TV, WiFi-enabled content delivery, braille kits, board games, and anthropometry equipment were introduced to promote holistic development. A vegetable garden, waste segregation system, and safety tools such as smoke detectors and fire extinguishers brought in green school principles and disaster-readiness.

Badshah Masala Pvt Ltd Chief Operating Officer Mr. Amit Bakde stated: "This project is deeply personal to us, as it directly supports

the children of our own employees and the local community. We believe that education is the most meaningful legacy a company can contribute to. Working with Ennoble allowed us to ensure this investment would have lasting impact, both

socially and structurally.” Chirag Bhandari, CEO, Ennoble Social Innovation Foundation, shared: “We’re proud to have partnered with Badshah Masala in not just upgrading infrastructure, but in reimagining the learning experience

for children in Umargam. These joyful, well-equipped spaces are a result of truly community-rooted CSR. This partnership proves that when intention meets innovation, transformation becomes both impactful and sustainable.”

SARA Transforms Lives in Rajasthan Through Water Access, Backed by Coca-Cola India Foundation

In the heart of India’s arid Thar Desert, where water scarcity has long stifled livelihoods, Social Action for Rural Advancement (SARA), a Rajasthan-based grassroots NGO with support from Anandana, The Coca-Cola India Foundation, is providing water accessibility by reviving traditional water harvesting structures such as ponds and building check dams. For almost a decade, the project has transformed lives of 18,000+ residents across six villages in Rajasthan: Rajpura, Balyawas, Karad, Khora, Dungri Khurd, and Chhota Narena.

With annual rainfall averaging just 550 mm and more than 70% of the region’s groundwater unfit for drinking, communities in Rajasthan’s desert belt have faced a daily battle for survival. SARA recognized that water needed to be addressed not just as a physical resource—but as a catalyst for dignity, self-reliance, and rural prosperity.

In Balyawas village, 75-year-old Chawli Devi recalls how her days once began before sunrise, not with hope, but with the weight of matkas (earthen pots) and miles of walking. “The water I fetched was often salty or unclear, but we had no choice. My cattle were always thirsty, my children fell sick, and I had no time to earn or even rest. Everything was about survival,” she said.

That changed when the village pond was revived through the initiative. “For the first time, I had clean water right in my courtyard,” she says. With time reclaimed from water collection, she began farming, rearing healthier cattle, and sewing for additional income. “My grandchildren now go to school, and we live in a ‘pucca’ (permanent) house. This water has given us a second life—not just physically, but emotionally and economically. We are no longer walking long distances for water.” Another transformation unfolded in Rajpura, where 70-year-old Suva Ram transitioned from hardship to innovation. “When I first moved here in 1995, the wells gave us more salt than water. Years would go by without a harvest. People were migrating from the village



just to survive.” The turning point was the construction of a check dam near his farm. “Suddenly, the water table rose, and the land responded. Now I grow high-value crops like cucumbers, sandalwood, even mangoes. My income jumped from ₹3–4 lakh to ₹24 lakh a year. But beyond that, I’ve seen neighbours return, and pride return to our fields. Water gave us back our identity,” he shares.

Lauding the initiative, Mota Ram, Director, Social Action for Rural Advancement (SARA), said, “What makes this project different is not just the structures we built—but the mindset we helped shift. We didn’t come in with machines and leave behind concrete. We worked with communities. Families contributed, some gave ₹100, some gave labour, others gave land. That ownership changed everything. We insisted on equal pay for women, trained them as barefoot engineers, and helped form Village Development Committees that now manage the water systems themselves. Even nine years after project completion, they’re still maintaining, adapting, and innovating. With the support from Anandana, The Coca-Cola India Foundation, we created more than just recharge structures, we created local stewards of sustainability.”

This initiative forms a key part of Coca-Cola India’s broader commitment to responsible water stewardship through its campaign, Refreshing Difference. The campaign highlights the company’s collaborative efforts with grassroots organizations like SARA to improve community water resilience operational water efficiency; and equitable access to clean, safe water. By supporting projects rooted in local knowledge, such as watershed restoration and infrastructure development, Refreshing Difference demonstrates how shared ownership and sustainable practices can yield measurable, lasting impact. Anchored in global principles of transparency and action, the campaign reflects Coca-Cola India’s belief that long-term change begins with empowered communities.



Innomotics India launches CSR program to support aspiring children

Innomotics India Pvt. Ltd., part of the German-based Innomotics GmbH, a globally leading supplier of electric motors and large drive systems, recently launched their CSR Program in India. The program was developed on the framework of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and focuses on the key pillars of Education and Sustainability. The goal is to support economically disadvantaged communities by enabling children to have access to quality education, health and care.

The core of the education program is the creation of the Innomotics INGenius Scholarship Program. This scholarship program serves as a gateway for exceptional students to embark on a journey of knowledge and skill development in the fields of engineering and technology. The INGenius program covers the tuition, accommodation, and essential academic expenses like books, internet as well as stationery items of selected students based on

their academic achievements in the 10th and 12th standards, their aspirations and social backgrounds.

With 12 children selected for this fiscal year, the scholarship program also includes internships, soft skills training and equipping students with the necessary tools to thrive in

their future careers. As part of its education initiative, Innomotics also provides support to government-funded schools, focusing on infrastructure development and vocational training.

The social pillar has partnered with two non-profit organisations



– Sangopita – A Shelter for Care and Desire Society – Caring for Special Children. Sangopita supports children who are physically, mentally and sensory impaired and many of them are autistic. The children need a lifetime of care. Desire Society supports children with an objective of health development and the well-being of children living with HIV/AIDS (CLHAs). Over 120 children are part of the NGO's programs. Apart from financial aid, Innomotics India's CSR initiative supports these children by career counselling, preparing for exams, teaching and hosting special events. One such special event was the visit to the Nehru Science Planetarium.

Satish Godbole, Executive Director, Innomotics APAC&ME, said, "True success of our business is reflected in the positive impact that we deliver in the world around us. All activities are driven by our employees who have volunteered to commit their time for the good of society. By engaging our employees in meaningful CSR activities like these, we not only contribute to the well-being of our communities but also nurture a sense of purpose and fulfilment among our team members. Our volunteering efforts are about building bridges between generations, developing connections, and creating a brighter future for all."

Alex Nazareth, CEO of Innomotics India, said, "Our aim is to ensure local communities are given opportunities to overcome the disadvantages and achieve their true potential. Innomotics India not only ensures basic essentials through such initiatives, but also looks at the holistic development of the children. Our entire team takes personal pride in the achievements of the children and as the program grows in the future, we hope to positively impact more and more children to become the best versions of themselves."

Ankur Jindal, CFO of Innomotics India added, "Our objective is to go beyond business requirements. We believe organisations have to be integrated into the society and bring positive changes to the communities around them to ensure progress is felt everywhere. We believe such support shows the children that they matter and there are people who want them to aspire to achieve great things and grow beyond their wildest dreams."

All programs are driven through the employees of Innomotics India to foster a culture of purpose-driven involvement, encouraging young changemakers to engage actively in the causes they care about. By doing so, Innomotics India is not only addressing today's pressing issues but also laying the groundwork for a more equitable and sustainable future.

Innomotics comes with a trusted legacy of over 150 years of engineering expertise. In India, the company is based in Mumbai and has over 500 employees, supporting their customers in traditional industries and new energy markets with the company's efficient portfolio and proven expertise.

SAEL commissions 50 MW Solar Power Plant in Beed, Maharashtra

SAEL Solar RE Power Private Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of SAEL Industries Ltd., has commissioned a 50 MW (AC) solar power plant in Beed district, Maharashtra. The ground-mounted solar project features TOPCon bifacial modules, designed for high energy yield and performance reliability. The plant is expected to generate over 100 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of clean electricity annually, adding to India's renewable energy capacity. Aligned with the Government's vision for a sustainable energy future, this initiative reinforces the nation's commitment to accelerating the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The project is backed by a 25-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL), offering long-term revenue and tariff stability in accordance with industry best practices.

Speaking about the new plant, Laxit Awla, Director, SAEL Industries Limited, said, "The commissioning of the solar power plant in Beed marks our contribution to Maharashtra's renewable energy ambition. The project also reflects our commitment to creating local employment, supporting rural livelihood and community development. By closely working with the communities and state authorities, we are ensuring that clean energy becomes more accessible to the households across the region. As we expand our renewable energy footprint in India, we want to provide sustainable infrastructure that benefits both people and environment."

SAEL's renewable energy portfolio continues to scale new milestones, with over 6.7 GW (DC) of solar IPP assets deployed across India, encompassing both operational and under-construction projects. This robust capacity is underpinned by SAEL's backward-integrated solar module manufacturing capabilities of 3.7 GW, leveraging advanced TOPCon technology to drive efficiency and innovation. In addition to its solar initiatives, SAEL is supporting the growth of sustainable energy through its agricultural waste-to-energy model, operating 11 power plants across three states with a combined capacity of 165 MW. Together, these efforts reflect SAEL's commitment to building a cleaner, greener energy ecosystem for the nation.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS CREATING 'NEW VULNERABILITIES' FOR DISEASE PANDEMICS

CLIMATE CHANGE IS CREATING "NEW VULNERABILITIES" FOR PANDEMICS, ACCORDING TO NEW RESEARCH, ACCORDING TO **AYESHA TANDON & USHIKA KIDD**, CARBON BRIEF



New research maps global risk from deadly animal-borne diseases, linking outbreaks to climate shifts and human encroachment – but experts remain divided over its conclusions. Image: Bagoes Ilhamy, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Unsplash.

The study, published in *Science Advances*, investigates nine zoonotic diseases – infections transmitted from animals to people – with high potential to cause severe public-health emergencies. These diseases include the Zika virus, Ebola and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Overall, the research finds that 9 per cent of the planet's land area is currently at “high” or “very high” risk of an outbreak of these diseases.

The study authors find that higher temperatures, increased rainfall and water scarcity are “key drivers” of disease outbreaks. However, the paper has received a mixed reception from other scientists.

While one expert not involved in the study praises it for its novelty and rigour, another tells *Carbon Brief* that the research fails to capture some of the key drivers of zoonotic disease.

They tell *Carbon Brief* that “this idea that you can do a one-size-fits-all global risk assessment is just untrue”.

ZOO NOTIC DISEASE

There are more than 200 known “zoonotic diseases” – infections or diseases that are transmitted to humans from pets, livestock or wild animals. Zoonotic diseases are spread when the pathogen that causes the disease – such as a virus, bacterium, fungus or parasite – moves from animals to humans. This can be through a bite, blood, saliva or faeces.

Lyme disease, rabies and bird flu are examples of well-known zoonotic diseases. One of the most well-known, Covid-19, is thought to have killed hundreds of thousands of people since the SARS-CoV-2 virus was first recorded in humans in 2019.

Pathogens are typically carried by animals, called hosts. For example, dogs are the main hosts of rabies.

The World Health Organization (WHO) keeps a list of “priority diseases” for research and development. These are zoonotic diseases that have the potential to cause severe public health emergencies, such as epidemics – in which there is a sharp rise in cases in a specific region – and pandemics, where a disease occurs over a very wide area and crosses borders.

The WHO updates its list regularly. It currently features the following zoonoses:

- Zika virus
- Ebola virus and Marburg virus disease
- SARS and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

- Covid-19
- Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever
- Lassa fever
- Nipah disease and henipaviral diseases
- Rift Valley fever
- “Disease X” (a label created by the WHO in 2018 to represent a hypothetical, unknown pathogen that could cause a future epidemic)

The number of new zoonotic diseases is increasing rapidly.

Many different factors can influence the spread of zoonotic diseases. One of the most important is climate. Pathogens and the animals that carry them typically thrive in a warm and wet climate, so many zoonotic diseases are found in tropical regions.

The frequency of contact between humans and animals is another important factor. This means that when people live close to areas of high biodiversity, such as forests, there is a higher risk of zoonotic disease transmission.

MAPPING RISK

The authors of the new study col-

lected data on “outbreaks” of the WHO priority zoonotic diseases over 1975-2020 from the Global Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology Network.

They exclude Covid-19 from their analysis, although it is a WHO priority disease, because its “overwhelming prevalence” resulted in worldwide coverage, making it difficult to identify spatial patterns.

The database defines an outbreak as two or more linked cases of the same illness, a number of cases that exceeds the expected number, or a single case of disease “caused by a pathogen that poses a significant threat to public health”, the study explains.

The authors identified 131 outbreaks of infectious diseases with epidemic and pandemic potential over 1975-2020

The authors then used satellite data to identify nine “risk factors” that can affect the transmission of zoonotic diseases:

- Annual maximum temperature
- Annual minimum temperature
- Water deficit
- Annual total rainfall
- Livestock density
- Frequency of land-use change
- Change in proximity between humans and forests
- Biodiversity loss
- Human population density

The authors used a “predictive model”, which makes use of machine-learning techniques, to combine these variables. This allows them to determine the risk of climate outbreaks from the WHO priority diseases in different regions.

Finally, the authors adjusted their results to account for a bias in how data on disease outbreaks is recorded. In developed countries and regions, diseases are more likely to be detected and recorded, while this is less likely in developing regions.

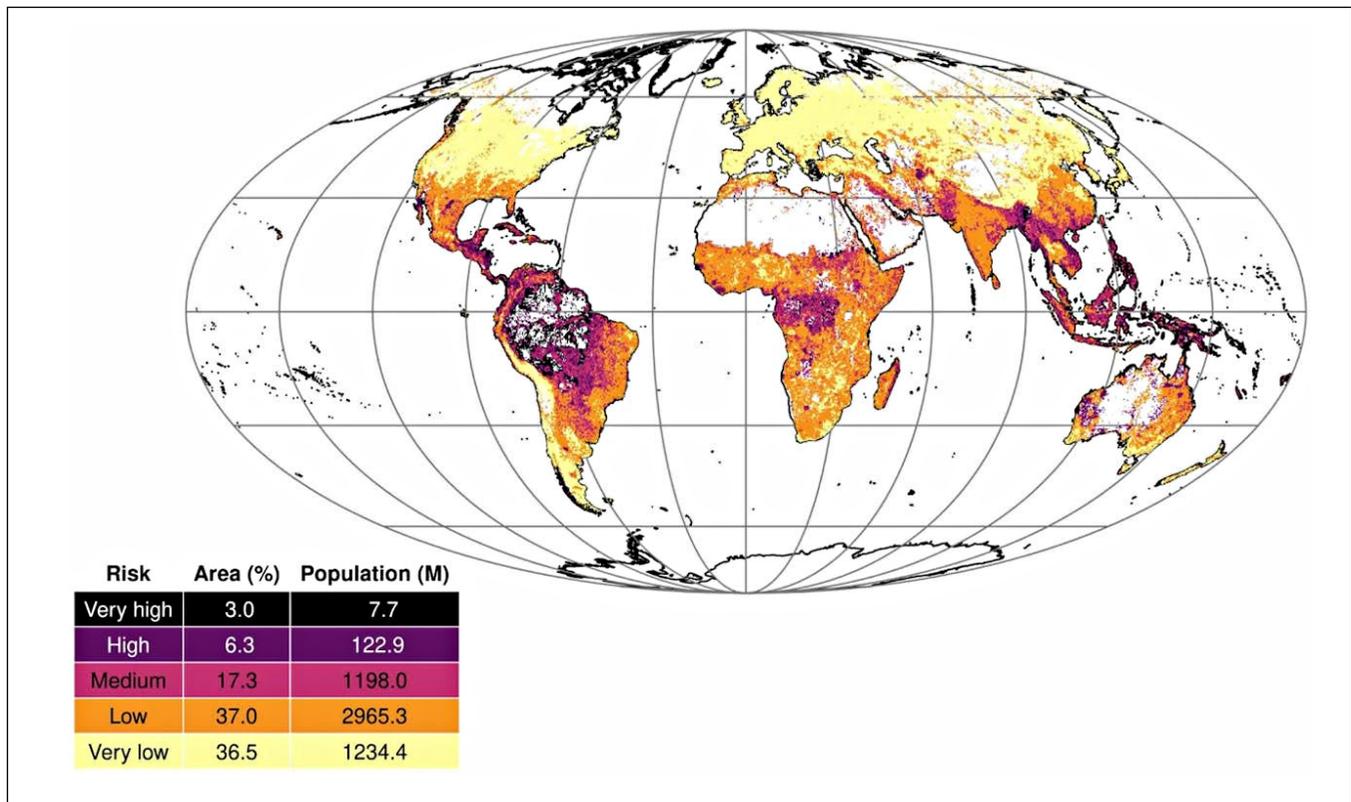
The map below shows the risk of a disease breakout across the

world from the nine WHO priority zoonotic diseases. Darker colours indicate greater risk, while white indicates regions where not enough data was available.

The map shows that the southern hemisphere of the planet has a higher risk of pandemic breakout than the northern hemisphere, “with the majority of those areas located in Latin America and Oceania”. Meanwhile, very little risk is seen in Europe and North America.

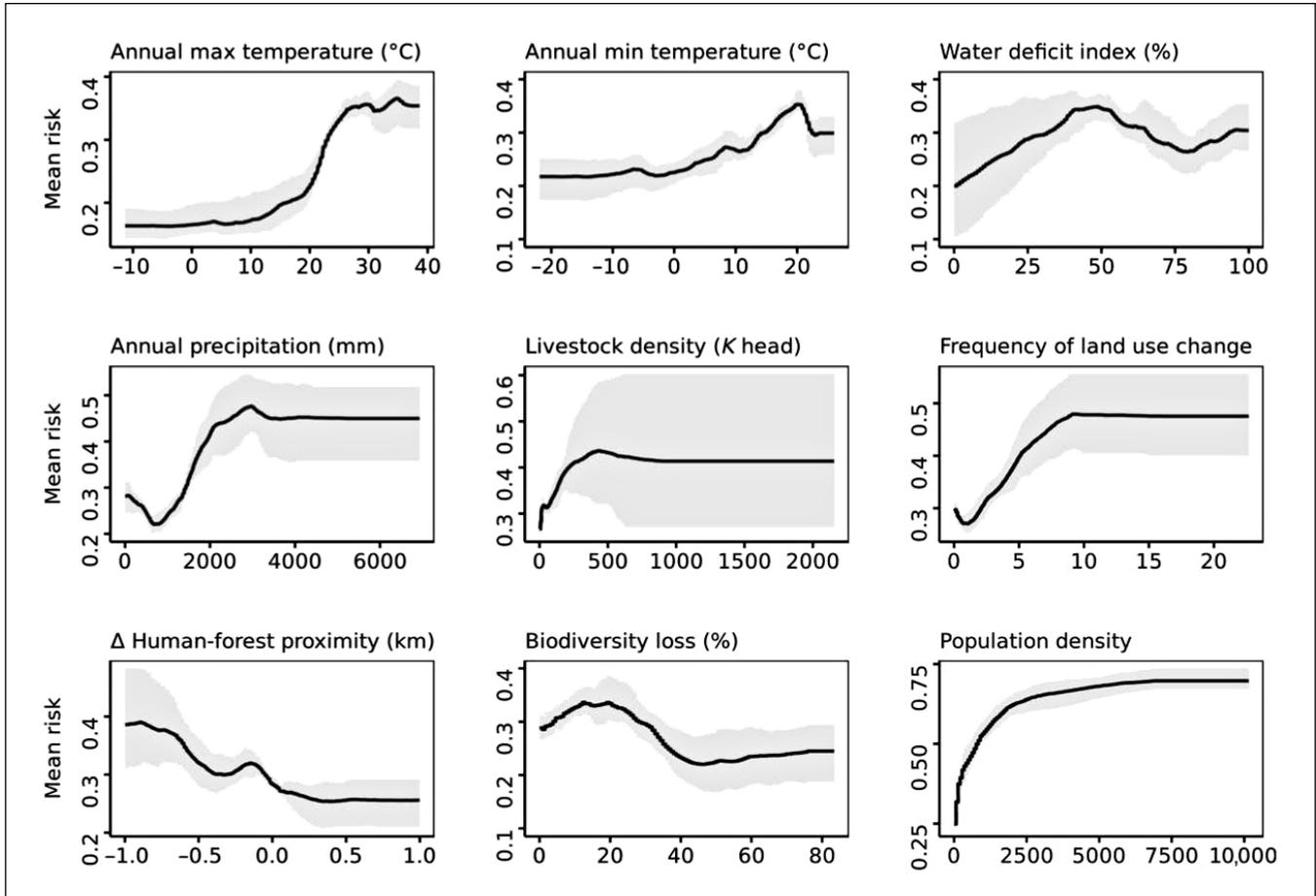
The authors find that 9 per cent of the world’s land surface, home to around 130 million people, is at “very high” or “high” risk of outbreaks of the diseases.

Lead author Dr Angela Fanelli is a researcher at the European Commission’s Joint Research Council. She tells Carbon Brief that “this study is the first to comprehensively examine the shared drivers of zoonotic diseases with epidemic and pandemic potential on a global scale”.



Risk of a disease breakout across the world from the nine WHO priority zoonotic diseases. Darker colours indicate greater risk.

Source: Fanelli et al (2025).



Risk of zoonotic disease outbreak for annual maximum temperature, annual minimum temperature, water deficit, annual precipitation, livestock density, frequency of land use change, change in the proximity of humans to forests, biodiversity loss and human population density.

Source: Fanelli et al (2025).

The authors also use data from the International Health Regulations to score countries based on their capacity to respond to zoonotic events at the animal-wildlife interface.

By integrating this data into their analysis, the authors developed an “epidemic risk index” which shows each country’s risk and capacity to respond to “zoonotic threats”. In this index, Papua New Guinea is ranked as the lowest – indicating the greatest risk of epidemics.

‘NEW VULNERABILITIES’

The authors went on to analyse the different factors that influence the risk of zoonotic breakout.

The charts below illustrate how, for most risk factors explored in the report, a higher value results

The paper notes that higher temperature and annual rainfall levels “elevate the risk of disease outbreaks”. It suggests that this is because host species are better adapted to hotter

in a greater risk score for zoonotic disease outbreak.

For example, the plot on the top left shows how higher maximum temperatures lead to a higher risk of disease outbreak.

The paper notes that higher temperature and annual rainfall levels “elevate the risk of disease outbreaks”. It suggests that this is because host species are better adapted to hotter, wetter conditions.

The paper also assesses water deficit, a measure that can capture the monthly differences between rainfall and potential evapotranspiration – the transfer of water from the ground into the air through a combination of evaporation and transpiration. The authors find that “moderate water scarcity” is

associated with the highest risk of outbreaks. This could be because moderate water scarcity can cause animals to group together around remaining water sources, allowing the pathogen to be transferred more easily, they suggest.

Meanwhile, they say that “excessively arid conditions” can cause the host population to die out, meaning the pathogen is unable to spread.

Fanelli tells Carbon Brief that the study highlights “several key mechanisms by which climate change could increase the risk of disease outbreaks”.

Climate change, she says, can make host populations “more susceptible to disease outbreaks”

to a higher risk of zoonotic diseases, because the pathogens are able to spread more easily.

MIXED RECEPTION

The study has received mixed responses from scientists not involved in the work.

Dr Ibrahima Diouf, a postdoctoral researcher on climate and health at Senegal’s Cheikh Anta Diop University, tells Carbon Brief that the research “offers a more holistic perspective” than studies that focus on a single disease and has a “sound, innovative and transparent” methodology.

He also praises the study for “bridg[ing] environmental model-

outbreaks and then use machine learning – an approach that will almost always find some kind of signal – to confirm their hypothesis that environmental degradation drives disease outbreaks.”

Carlson also criticises the study’s methodology, arguing that the variables the authors chose focus on “intact tropical rainforests and other tropical ecosystems” that are “hot, wet, biodiverse [and] populated”. He continues:

“That’s where a lot of disease outbreaks are, but that’s true as much because of poverty as because of the environment, if not more.”

Carlson tells Carbon Brief that “this idea that you can do a one-

Climate change can make host populations “more susceptible to disease outbreaks” and result in water shortages that “compromise water quality, hygiene and sanitation, further increasing the risk of disease outbreaks.”

and result in water shortages that “compromise water quality, hygiene and sanitation, further increasing the risk of disease outbreaks.”

The authors warn that the changing climate is “creating new vulnerabilities” for zoonotic disease transmission as it “reshapes the geographic distribution of risk”.

The paper also finds that changes in land use can increase disease risk. When people cut down trees in areas of high biodiversity, they can suddenly come into contact with species that they do not usually interact with, providing an opportunity for pathogens to jump from humans to animals, the authors find.

Higher population densities of people or livestock are also linked

ling and public health planning”, and for capturing both hazard exposure and “national response capacity”. He says:

“This dual lens enables practical prioritisation of interventions. Countries like the Republic of Congo and Madagascar, which face both high risk and limited response capacity, emerge as key candidates for targeted support through regional or multilateral adaptation programmes.”

Dr Colin Carlson, an assistant professor of epidemiology at Yale School of Public Health, tells Carbon Brief that this type of work “has been done before”:

“We’ve seen a lot of these studies that look at a hundred or so

size-fits-all global risk assessment is just untrue”.

He adds that the work contributes to a “narrative that spillover [of pathogens from animals to humans] is a problem of the global south – and that pandemics happen because the people living in these countries are somehow unengaged in outbreak prevention or unwilling to leave nature alone”.

In Carlson’s view, this narrative is “wrong”. 

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(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/climate-change-is-creating-new-vulnerabilities-for-disease-pandemics/>)

NEC AND UNFPA COLLABORATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BENEFICIARY INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

NEC Corporation announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which promotes activities to protect the health and rights of women and girls, to collaborate on the development of a beneficiary information management system.

Both parties will promote digitization in the management of beneficiary information supported by the UNFPA and implement privacy-conscious operations, thereby contributing to the provision of rapid, safe, and secure support. This system will be implemented in Nigeria and Madagascar by the end of 2025, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan and aiming to build on this partnership in other parts of the world.

The UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. The UNFPA's mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. The agency began operating in 1969 and currently works with partners in more than 150 countries to provide access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services.

In recent years, an increase in international conflicts, and natural disasters caused by climate change have led to ongoing social and economic unrest around the world. Amidst this situation, it is imperative to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including addressing gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls.



To address these challenges more rapidly and safely, the UNFPA and NEC will establish a beneficiary information management system based on an e-Voucher system, which is NEC's solution for the registration and management of beneficiary information, that digitizes and centrally manages information such as names, addresses, and details of the support provided for beneficiaries, which was previously managed on paper. This will enable the UNFPA to accurately identify the needs of beneficiaries, such as the kinds of support required for each region, and to develop support plans accordingly, thereby achieving swift and effective support delivery.

Additionally, to appropriately handle beneficiary information containing sensitive content, the system will be designed to ensure the privacy of beneficiaries, and the UNFPA will receive NEC training on data literacy, ensuring safe and secure operations that prioritize privacy protection. Moreover, NEC will participate in the

9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9) (*2) at Pacifico Yokohama in Yokohama, Japan, from August 20 (Wed.) to 22 (Fri.), 2025. At this event, NEC will introduce its initiatives at the TICAD Business Expo and Conference exhibition hall (*3) and at the UNFPA-planned event stage (*4).

"This is a great partnership opportunity that leverages resources from both public and private sectors for a greater impact on the ground, especially for women and girls to enjoy their 'rights and choices'." Ian McFarlane, Director, Division for External Relations, UNFPA

"We are pleased to contribute to the UNFPA's acceleration of its activities around the world by leveraging NEC's digital technology. We are confident that this collaboration will bring about digital transformation in the fields of humanitarian aid and global health." Mayuko Tatewaki, Chief of Staff for the CDO and Head of the Marketing & Alliance Promotion Department, NEC. 

NEW STUDY UNCOVERS CSR BLACK HOLES

TOO MUCH FUNDING GIVEN ON THE BASIS OF CONVENIENCE NOT ON THE BASIS OF NEED

The Development Intelligence Unit's 'Investing in Tomorrow: Need for realigning CSR spends with district development' reveals that only 30% of eligible rural districts get CSR support matching their development needs

Though Indian corporates spent a record Rs 34,909 crore on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in 2024 (a 13 per cent rise from the previous year, according to Fulcrum's Bharat CSR Performance Report), it is not clear if these funds are being distributed fairly across states and districts. Underlining these concerns, a new study sheds light on the problem that most CSR spending is directed to six of the most industrialised and high-GDP states. India's most underdeveloped districts, on the other hand, are receiving only a small fraction.

According to Development Intelligence Unit's 'report titled 'Investing in Tomorrow: Need for realigning CSR spends with district develop-

ment,' released during the Fifth Edition of the India Rural Colloquy, there is a major misalignment between CSR fund distribution and the actual development needs of rural districts. While states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Delhi collectively account for over 60 per cent of CSR funds, the remaining states are not getting an adequate share. One major reason for this situation, according to the report, is that companies are focusing their spending in areas close to their operations, often due to a misunderstanding that the law mandates such local investments.

"Invest money where it's needed not necessarily where your factory sits," said Sandeep Ghosh, Director of DIU, a joint enterprise

of Transform Rural India (TRI) and Sambodhi Research and Communications, speaking on the sidelines of the 5th Edition of the India Rural Colloquy. "We have found that too often too much CSR funding is given on the basis of convenience and not on the basis of need. This needs to change for those in need to be actually impacted by CSR funds," added Sandeep Ghosh.

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of CSR fund-distribution and the development needs of rural districts. The findings are based on a data-driven methodology that contrasts district-level CSR allocations over five years (2018-2023) with the quality of life in rural areas, measured through a Rural Quality of Life (RQOL) Index. The index, developed by the Devel-

opment Intelligence Unit (DIU), uses 69 indicators from 13 official datasets across nine key development areas such as health, education, infrastructure, employment, gender and sustainability.

During a discussion after releasing the report at the India International Centre (IIC) in New Delhi, where the India Rural Colloquy is being held, Dr. Monica Banerjee, InterGlobal Foundation said, “CSR is still a very recent phenomenon - it’s only about a decade old. What is ten years, really? Until around 2018 or 2019, the intent wasn’t even fully there. It was only after the amendments around 2018–19 that organisations had to start looking at CSR more seriously. That’s when people like us, who traditionally came from the voluntary and civil society sector, began to find space within the CSR ecosystem. Today, the intent and willingness to engage meaningfully is very much there. People like those of us on this panel, and many of our colleagues entering the CSR space, are now actively thinking about how to make development truly sustainable.”

Arnab Mandal, Tata Trusts added, “There has to be a transfer of best practices. Long before CSR was invented, we had already been doing some credible work - some experiences, some best practices, we anyway have. But Corporate India has not come to us and asked for this information. We are ready to give that knowledge for free. Instead of following what foreign aid is saying from their perspective, corporates should actually learn from some of the examples within India itself.”

The analysis also shows that only 30 percent of eligible rural districts receive CSR support that aligns with their development needs. About 23 per cent show a complete mismatch, while 47 per cent are only partially aligned. This indicates that companies are guided more by convenience or compliance than by

data, evidence-based approaches, or development priorities.

Other major findings:

- CSR spending remains concentrated in three broad sectors: education, healthcare, and rural poverty alleviation. (Accounting for over 60 per cent of total CSR funds)
- Critical sectors like environmental sustainability and livelihood enhancement receive inadequate attention.
- Many CSR initiatives lack impact assessments, duplicate government schemes, and show weak community participation, limited innovation, and poor strategic planning.

companies direct CSR funds to the regions and sectors that need them most.

- State governments must use tools like the Rural Quality of Life (RQOL) Index to guide CSR spending toward underserved areas.

About the Fifth Edition of the India Rural Colloquy:

The India Rural Colloquy, the flagship event of Transform Rural India (TRI), celebrates its fifth anniversary this year. What began as a virtual series five years ago has now grown into a dynamic, multi-state event that shapes narratives and catalyses change. This year, the Colloquy returns with deeper regional

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- Often, projects are implemented in a top-down manner, driven more by corporate discretion than actual deprivation or community needs.

Key Recommendations:

- Companies should move away from treating CSR as merely a legal requirement and instead focus on an impact-driven approach.
- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs must create clear policies to help

engagement, stronger institutional partnerships, and a renewed commitment to amplify rural India’s voice on the national stage. Multifaceted conversations and events will be held through the August Kranti week in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Delhi. The key insights and big ideas from the regional and national events will be converted into actionable steps, leading to a roadmap turning dialogue into impact for India’s rural renaissance. 



As Bangladesh plans to shutter polluting brick kilns to clean its air, workers fear being left behind – with few alternatives and no safety net in sight. *Image: Mohammad Samir, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Unsplash.*

BANGLADESH REBUILDS BRICK SECTOR BUT REFORMS BYPASS WORKERS

Bangladesh's drive to phase out clay bricks may clean the air but offers little help to vulnerable seasonal workers.

It's back-breaking work - dusty, dangerous and poorly paid - but the million Bangladeshis who make, bake and stack clay bricks fear their jobs will soon go in the name of saving the planet.

And they don't expect that any 'green' change forced upon them will be easy to weather, fearing they will be sent back to their far-flung fields to eke out a thin living.

"It's hard, back-breaking work and the pay is not great - but we are poor people and we need this income," said Mansur Miya, a 35-year-old who has worked in the kilns for eight years.

Bangladesh is home to more than 8,000 brick kilns - sprawling sites that are staffed by migrants during the dry season, which runs from December to June.

The World Bank estimates the workforce at about a million: men, women and children - some as young as 10 - who come from across the country to mold clay, then bake and stack the bricks.

Many now fear their brick-making days are numbered as the Bangladesh government plans to close many of the sites in the next few years in a bid to reduce air pollution.

"We have been coming to these kilns during the dry season to earn some extra cash because life is not easy as farm workers back home," said Nasima, a 35-year-old brick-worker, who only provided her first name for anonymity.

Making clay pollutes the air and uses topsoil that is vital for agriculture, so the government is actively pushing alternatives such as concrete blocks.

It plans to close about 3,500 brick kilns lacking legal approval in the near future, under a phase-out of all clay brick production.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, who heads the government's ministry of environment, forests and climate change, denied that closing the kilns would be a serious jolt to its low-

earning workers. They can go back to the farming they anyhow do in the off-season or some might even enter the new concrete market, she told Context.

"It will not be an unjust transition," Hasan said.

But workers said while the pay and working conditions at the brick kilns were exploitative, they still need the extra cash.

Moogdho Mahzab, an economist at the International Food Policy Research Institute, said the brick-workers risk being swept aside under the reform initiative. "As the government and development organisations promote better technology and techniques in the sector, there has to be some kind of support system for the workers," he said.

Bonded, landless, abused

Brick work is not easy. Every year, Bangladeshis of all ages descend from the climate-ravaged south and poor pockets of the north to become bonded workers for contractors who are engaged by kiln owners.

Abdur Rouf, who runs a brick kiln in the outskirts of Narayanganj, central Bangladesh, said owners pay advances to the contractors, who in turn issue loans to the workers on condition they labour right through the dry season and pay it back.

The work day can stretch from 3 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Nasima is a bonded worker who came from Mymensingh, north of the capital, to work in a Baktabali kiln a few years ago along with her husband, a landless peasant, and 10-year-old son Ramzan.

The couple's two adolescent daughters stayed home, waiting to be married off as their parents cannot afford schooling.

Nasima gets 400 taka (\$3.30) for every 1,000 bricks she moves with her bare hands - not much for a hard day's work.

There is no trade union to bargain for the workers and pay is decided

by the kiln owners' association, said Mohammad Dulal, a 55-year-old labourer from the southern district of Barguna.

Since workers are taken on by contractors and given high-interest loans, or 'dadon', they cannot claim the minimum wage - let alone expect any pension or retirement benefits, Dulal said. "Some of the owners are good with us - but we don't get much attention from the government," he said.

Many workers suffer serious respiratory problems as coal burning emits hazardous gasses and particulates, with little in the way of protective equipment in use, according to a 2017 study in the *Journal of Public Health and Epidemiology*.

Inspectors also make scant effort to monitor the brick fields that sprawl across the city outskirts and rural outposts, with labour abuses routinely reported in local media.

Every year, police launch sporadic drives to rescue tens of workers who are shackled or kept without pay in brick kilns.

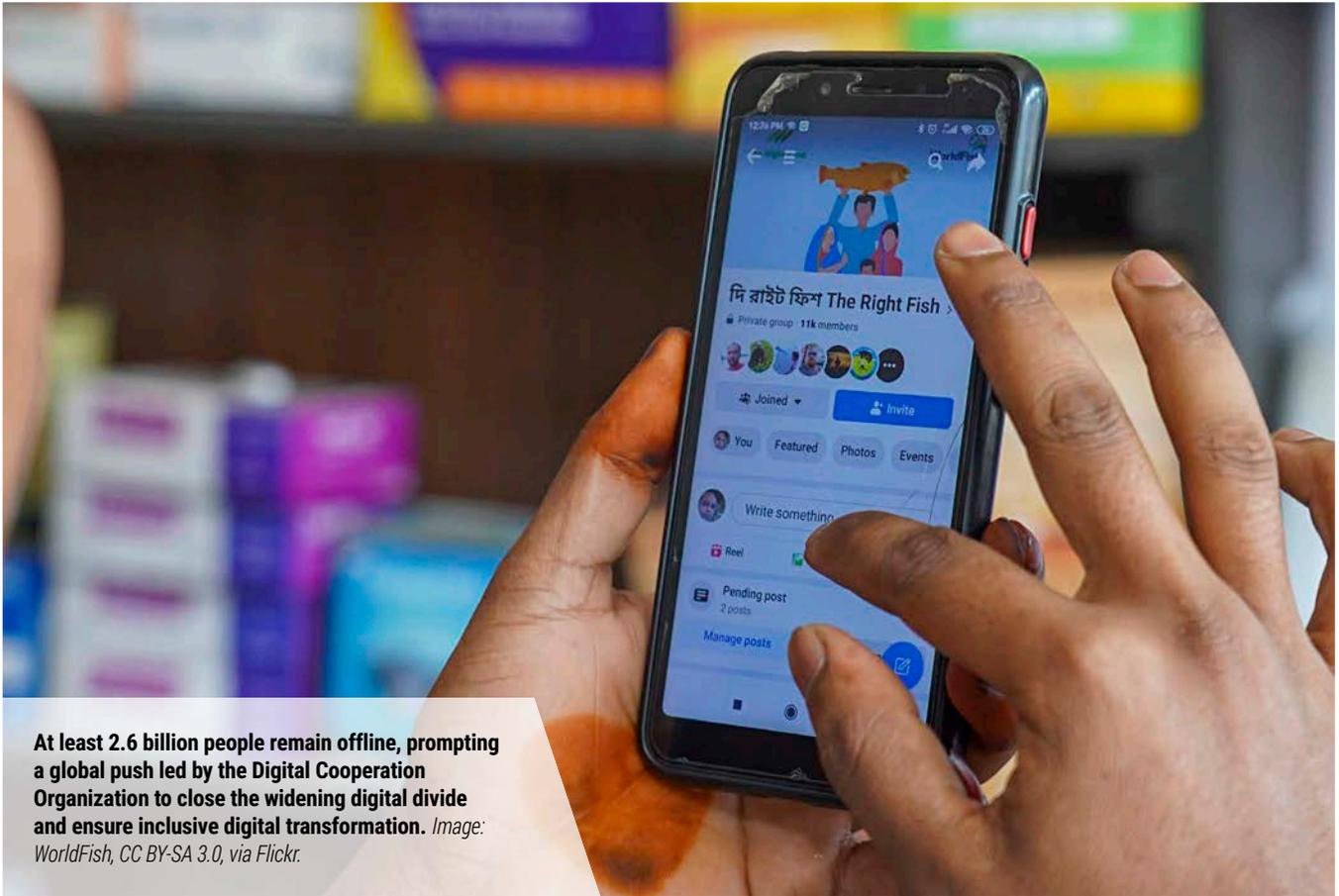
The sectoral reforms initiated by government and development organisations have mostly focused on technological upgrades to cut pollution and reduce energy use - not to protect workers.

Switching from clay to concrete may create permanent jobs with better safety standards and more automation - but the number of jobs may be fewer, said Shafiqul Alam, energy analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

"While cleaner kilns and block factories could offer decent, high-quality jobs to a section of the workers - the rest should get the training and support to move to other sectors," said Alam. 

(Thomson Reuters Foundation)

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/bangladesh-rebuilds-brick-sector-but-reforms-bypass-workers/>)



At least 2.6 billion people remain offline, prompting a global push led by the Digital Cooperation Organization to close the widening digital divide and ensure inclusive digital transformation. Image: WorldFish, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

OFFLINE AND LEFT OUT

DIGITAL DIVIDE EXCLUDES BILLIONS

Digital Cooperation Organization says online access and inclusion are vital to ensure no country is left behind.

At least 2.6 billion people are excluded from the internet under a yawning digital divide that must be closed if the poorest are ever to prosper, says the world's digital inclusion advocate. Deemah AlYahya, head of the Digital Coop-

eration Organization, told Context about her plans to bridge the global connectivity gap: an uphill task when only 27 per cent of people in low-income countries currently have access to the internet.

“Global digital transformation won't be truly transformative unless it's inclusive. That's the role we

play, making sure no country is left behind in shaping our digital future,” AlYahya told Context via email.

Founded in 2020, the Riyadh-based DCO is a multinational organisation with 16 members, representing 800 million people.

Its stated aim is digital prosperity for all - so we put a series of questions to the Saudi tech envoy about how she plans to fulfil her mandate.

How does the DCO plan to address the digital divide?

Digital inclusion is the foundation of a truly equitable digital economy. We focus on removing the barriers that prevent people — especially women, youth, and underserved communities — from accessing technology and participating meaningfully in the digital world.

One example is WE-Elevate, our initiative supporting women-led micro and small businesses in countries like Rwanda, Gambia, and Nigeria.

It provides digital skills training, tailored business advice, and even a ready-to-use e-commerce platform with integrated logistics and payments. It’s not just about getting online — it’s about thriving in the digital economy.

What are your long-term goals?

Our goal is to help member states build resilient, future-ready digital economies, where opportunities are shared and growth is inclusive.



By 2030, AI and automation are expected to transform 86 per cent of businesses globally, bringing both opportunity and upheaval.

— DEEMAH ALYAHYA
Head, Digital Cooperation
Organization

We measure success through both data and impact: tools like our Digital Economy Navigator, with over 100 indicators, help track digital maturity and guide investment decisions — but we also look at how lives are changing.

Are women entrepreneurs scaling their businesses online?

Are small states attracting tech investors?

Are young people gaining digital skills and meaningful jobs?

What challenges do you face?

Every country is at a different stage of digital development. This

stark digital divide means some nations have mature digital infrastructure and governance, while others are only beginning their digital journeys.

Aligning priorities across that spectrum - while keeping the conversation inclusive - takes time, trust and sustained dialogue.

There are also differences in regulatory approaches, particularly around issues like data flows, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital trade. It’s not about imposing a single standard - it’s about finding common ground so we can grow together in a way that is fair, safe and sustainable.

How might AI impact your work?

By 2030, AI and automation are expected to transform 86 per cent of businesses globally, bringing both opportunity and upheaval.

At the same time, AI will create new opportunities, with forecasts indicating that 170 million new roles could emerge by 2030, even as 92 million existing jobs become redundant.

But what makes our mission essential is this: the benefits of AI are not flowing equally, and without intentional cooperation, the divide will only deepen.

That is why the DCO exists to ensure that the tools, computing (capabilities), data and talent required for AI development and adoption are accessible to all, not just a few.

As AI becomes the engine of future growth, multilateral cooperation is not optional. It is indispensable. 

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.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/qa-offline-and-left-out-digital-divide-excludes-billions/>)

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Tougher visa rules and rising anti-immigrant sentiment in the Global North are shutting out youth from climate-vulnerable nations – silencing the voices of those most affected by the crisis.
 Image: UNclimatechange, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

TIGHTER BORDERS BAR POOR NATIONS FROM SUMMITS – ON POOR NATIONS

As borders tighten, Global South citizens say they are being locked out of high-level talks that impact them the most.

Sudanese climate activist Roaa should have been leading meetings with other youth advocates at a United Nations climate conference in Germany in June.

Instead, the 24-year-old was at home, having wasted hundreds of dollars and nearly two months

preparing for a visa that was denied in less than 48 hours. Many of her peers, mostly from the Global North, flew into the city of Bonn without a hitch.

“I was the one who was leading the whole process, but I wasn’t on the ground. I cried a lot, like literally every night,” Roaa, who asked that

her surname and location not be published, told Context.

“Knowing everyone is there (at Bonn), but you are not there maybe because of your nationality gives you a very bad feeling, like I’m less than those people,” she said from her home in the Middle East after leaving Sudan in 2023 when civil war began.

Stricter border and visa rules are increasingly limiting the participation of nationals from the Global South in high-level talks that tackle climate, global health, economic systems, conflicts and other pressing issues, policy researchers say.

“We are the ones who are affected the most, but we are not in the room,” said Roaa, a medical student. “Most of the conferences happen in Europe and in the US They are talking on behalf of us.”

The rejections also have an economic cost. In 2024, Africans paid some 60 million euros (US\$70.10 million) for rejected Schengen visa applications, up from nearly 54 million euros in 2023, according to analysis by Britain-based research group LAGO Collective.

Despite its lower volume of visa applications compared to other continents, Africa had some of the highest rejection rates from the European Commission, which issues Schengen visas for short visits to the European Union, the data showed.

In recent years, far-right and populist parties have made gains in places like Italy, Sweden, Germany and the US, fuelling anti-immigrant policies across Western countries, where most global conferences are held.

Underrepresented

Nations most vulnerable to climate impacts, from flooding to droughts and rising seas, are often among the poorest, the least polluting and underrepresented at global talks, according to UN climate body, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC, which hosts the Bonn

summit and November’s COP30 climate conference in Brazil, said it had no sway on visa processes, but had taken steps to diversify participation at its events by boosting the quota for Global South delegates.

“The major international conferences are the places where big decisions are being made with respect to global commitments,” said Kathryn Nwajiaku-Dahou, director of politics and governance at Britain-based think-tank ODI Global.

If those who are expected to implement global policies “are not at the table”, it compounds the inequalities they have been campaigning to change, said Nwajiaku-Dahou.

Despite providing details of her job, university studies, financial accounts and letters of support to attend the UNFCCC summit, Roaa was told she did not submit sufficient evidence to prove she would return home from Germany.

Roaa said she was denied the visa even after an appeal.

The European Commission said in emailed comments that cases are assessed according to the “purpose of stay, sufficient means of subsistence, and the applicants’ will to return to their country of residence”.

“Not fair”

Ugandan HIV/AIDS youth advocate Joseph Robert Linda said he secured around US\$4,000 from sponsors to pay for flights, visa and hotel fees to attend last year’s International AIDS Conference in Munich, Germany, only for his visa to be rejected.

Linda said he was told there were “reasonable doubts” about the authenticity of his documents and his intention to leave Germany, leading to his visa refusal.

“That was not fair at all to me because they gave me feedback just three to four days before the conference, so there is no way I could appeal,” the 28-year-old said in a phone call. Although the majority of global diseases occur in poorer

countries, where around 80 per cent of the world’s population live, only 4 per cent of health summits were held in these regions, according to a 2021 paper by Harvard Medical School researchers that reviewed more than 100 conferences spanning three decades.

Between 1997 to 2019, just 39 per cent of health conferences analysed had attendees from developing countries, the study published in *BMJ Global Health* journal added.

While Linda was able to attend the conference virtually, he said that option required stable and affordable internet, something not available to people in many parts of the world. He said conference organisers should work more closely with authorities to get visas approved so more people can have their voices heard.

Geneva-based group International AIDS Society (IAS), which runs the International AIDS Conference, said it has been switching its host city since 2023 after many delegates were unable to attend the year prior in Canada due to visa issues.

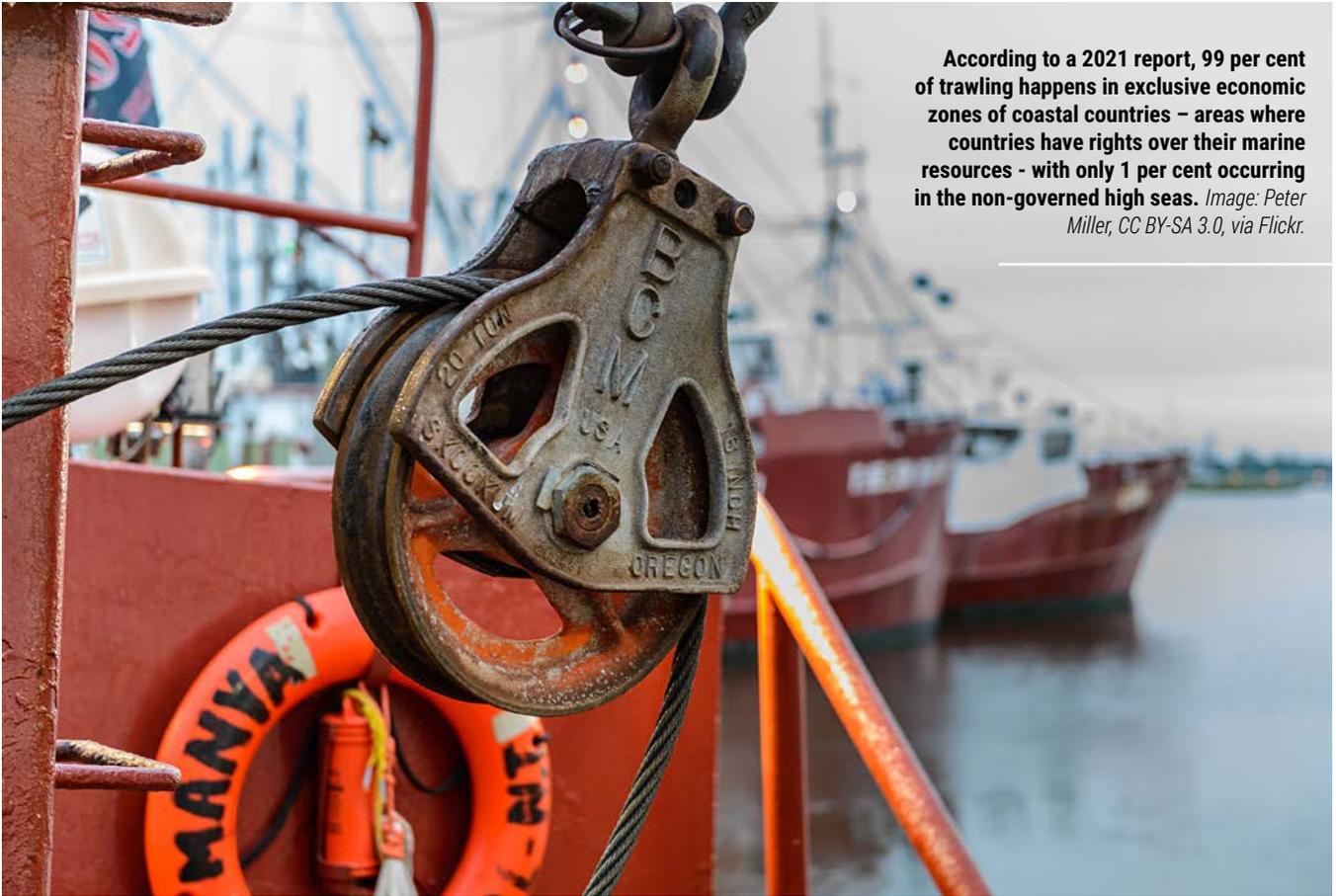
Large conferences have to prioritise finding safe and welcoming spaces for “the most marginalised among us,” an IAS spokesperson said.

Sudanese medical student Saida, who was refused a visa to attend a medical workshop in Italy this month, said it was ultimately up to Global South citizens to keep demanding change.

“You have to speak up ... This is a pattern that we see happening and that’s something that needs to be changed,” said Saida, who also asked that her surname not be published. 

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(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/tighter-borders-bar-poor-nations-from-summits-on-poor-nations/>)



According to a 2021 report, 99 per cent of trawling happens in exclusive economic zones of coastal countries – areas where countries have rights over their marine resources - with only 1 per cent occurring in the non-governed high seas. *Image: Peter Miller, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.*

WHAT IS BOTTOM TRAWLING AND HOW DOES IT HARM OCEANS?

Governments are meeting in France to discuss how to protect oceans from harmful fishing practices, like bottom trawling.

A new film, “Ocean,” by naturalist David Attenborough features never-before-seen footage of bottom trawling - a fishing practice criticised as destructive and wasteful in which heavy nets are dragged across the seabed.

The film was released ahead of the United Nations Ocean Conference starting on June 9 in Nice, France, where scientists and conservationists warn that governments must accelerate efforts to fulfil their marine protection promises.

Countries have committed to protecting 30 per cent of seas by 2030, but currently only 8 per cent of the ocean is in designated protected areas, according to a database called the Marine Protection Atlas.

Some marine-protected areas (MPAs) still allow fishing practices like bottom trawling.

What is bottom trawling?

Bottom trawling involves dragging weighted nets along the sea floor to catch large quantities of commonly eaten fish such as cod, hake, haddock, halibut and sole as well as shrimp.

According to a 2021 report, 99 per cent of trawling happens in exclusive economic zones of coastal countries – areas where countries have rights over their marine resources - with only 1 per cent occurring in the non-governed high seas.

China, Vietnam and Indonesia are the three biggest producers of trawled catch, according to the report published by conservation organisation Flora and Fauna.

Trawling accounts for 26 per cent of the global catch and, while it is declining in much of the world, it is growing rapidly in Asia, according to the report.

Why is trawling bad for the ocean?

Conservationists say trawling threatens marine biodiversity by

destroying habitats on the ocean floor and indiscriminately catching sea life.

Bigger fish as well as dolphins, seals and seabirds are often caught and killed in trawling nets. They are discarded as by-catch.

Marine wildlife and natural water cycles are responsible for transferring carbon particles from the sea’s surface to the ocean floor.

As these cycles are disrupted by bottom trawling, scientists warn that the amount of carbon stored in the sea will drop.

The ocean and seabed together act as the world’s biggest store of planet-heating emissions, known as a carbon sink. But dragging heavy nets across the sea floor disturbs the carbon-containing sediment and releases gas into the ocean, increasing the water’s acidity and impeding development of sea creatures like oysters and coral.

Additionally, the Marine Stewardship Council, a global non-profit, advocates for avoiding vulnerable habitats and adjusting equipment to reduce by-catch or minimise contact with the ocean floor.

Environmental and conservation organisations are calling for a trawling ban to help meet United Nations members’ global climate goals to protect 30 per cent of oceans by 2030.

Are there plans to ban trawling?

In places where the practice is banned, studies show ecosystems have recovered and marine resilience to extreme weather is improved.

Environmental law organisation Client Earth has been launching challenges across Europe over the authorisation of trawling in marine-protected areas, filing lawsuits

According to a 2021 report, 99 per cent of trawling happens in exclusive economic zones of coastal countries – areas where countries have rights over their marine resources - with only 1 per cent occurring in the non-governed high seas.

Can trawling be done sustainably?

With several studies revealing the direct and indirect impacts of trawling on marine habitats, many scientists are calling for a complete ban of the practice in order to help protect and replenish ecosystems and fish populations.

Some say, however, that trawling can be improved, such as a 2023 study that said the impacts could be mitigated by greater regulation and better technical gear.

against countries and the EU itself over trawling.

The EU has called for member states to phase out bottom trawling by 2030 in all MPAs.

Last year Greece became the first European country to commit to the phase out, pledging 780 million euros (US\$895 million) to protect marine biodiversity. 

SOURCE: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/what-is-bottom-trawling-and-how-does-it-harm-oceans/>



Drought episodes today cost twice as much as they did in 2000, with costs expected to rise by another 35 to 110 per cent by 2035. Image: World Bank Photo Collection, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.

DROUGHTS EMERGING AS SILENT GLOBAL CATASTROPHE: REPORT

A new report documents some of the most widespread and damaging droughts in recorded history, between 2023 and 2025, affecting millions across Africa, the Mediterranean, Latin America and Southeast Asia, writes **Liz Kimbrough**

“Drought is a silent killer. It creeps in, drains resources and devastates lives in slow motion,”

said Ibrahim Thiaw, executive secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. “Its scars run deep.”

A comprehensive new report released this week documents what experts call some of the most widespread and damaging droughts in recorded history, affecting millions of people across Africa, the Mediterranean, Latin America and Southeast Asia between 2023 and 2025.

The report prepared by the US National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification describes how severe droughts have led to poverty, hunger, energy insecurity and ecosystem collapse worldwide. The report draws on more than 250 peer-reviewed studies, official data sources and news reports across more than a dozen countries and regions.

“This is not a dry spell,” Mark Svoboda, report co-author and NDMC director said in a statement. “This is a slow-moving global catastrophe, the worst I’ve ever seen. This report underscores the need for systematic monitoring of how drought affects lives, livelihoods, and the health of the ecosystems that we all depend on.”

More than 90 million people across Eastern and Southern Africa face acute food insecurity or need food assistance, according to the report. In Somalia alone, the government estimated 43,000 people may have died in 2022 due to drought. As of early 2025, 4.4 million Somalis, a quarter of the population, face crisis-level food insecurity.

Zimbabwe’s 2024 corn crop was down 70 per cent compared with the previous year, while maize prices doubled and 9,000 cattle died of thirst and starvation. In Zambia, one of the world’s worst energy crises unfolded as the Zambezi River plummeted to

20 per cent of its long-term average, causing the Kariba Dam to drop to just 7 per cent of its generation capacity and triggering power outages of up to 21 hours per day.

“Drought is no longer a distant threat. It is here, escalating, and demands urgent global cooperation,” Thiaw said. “When energy, food and water all go at once, societies start to unravel. That’s the new normal we need to be ready for.”

According to the report, a combination of climate change and the 2023-24 El Niño event has made the global drought crisis worse, amplifying already harsh conditions across the world.

“This was a perfect storm,” said Kelly Helm Smith, NDMC assistant director and report co-author. “El Niño added fuel to the fire of climate change, compounding the effects for many vulnerable societies and ecosystems past their limits.”

The Mediterranean region, identified as a climate change hotspot, experienced severe water shortages and agricultural failures. Spain’s olive crop dropped 50 per cent due to two years of drought and record heat, causing olive oil prices to double. Morocco’s sheep population declined by 38 per cent compared with 2016, prompting a royal plea to cancel traditional Eid sacrifices.

“The struggles experienced by Spain, Morocco and Türkiye to secure water, food, and energy under persistent drought offer a preview of water futures under unchecked global warming. No country, regardless of wealth or capacity, can afford to be complacent,” Svoboda said.

In the Amazon Basin, record-low river levels led to mass deaths of fish and endangered dolphins, while disrupting drinking water and transport for hundreds of thousands of people. More than 200 endangered river dolphins died in September 2023 due to excessively warm water temperatures. The drought risks are pushing the Amazon from a carbon sink to a



Every dollar invested in nature-based solutions not only reduces drought impacts, but can generate benefits of up to US\$27 – including higher farmer incomes, value chain resilience and reduced long-term economic costs.

– NIELS ANNEN

Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany

carbon source, with potentially global consequences for climate change.

In Zimbabwe’s Hwange National Park, at least 100 elephants died from starvation and limited access to water between August and December 2023. Entire herds of hippos became stranded in dried-up riverbeds in Botswana, while some countries resorted to culling wild animals (including 200 elephants in Zimbabwe and Namibia) to feed rural communities facing starvation.

The report also highlights the disproportionate impacts on vulnerable human populations. In Zimbabwe, entire school districts saw mass dropouts due to hunger, costs and sanitation issues for girls. In Eastern Africa, forced child marriages more than doubled as families sought dowries to survive.

“The coping mechanisms we saw during this drought grew increasingly desperate,” said lead author Paula Guastello, NDMC drought impacts researcher. “Girls pulled from school and forced into marriage, hospitals going dark and fami-

lies digging holes in dry riverbeds just to find contaminated water — these are signs of severe crisis.”

According to the International Labour Organization women carry out more than 75 per cent of unpaid care work globally, which is 3.2 times more than men, and this burden increases during climate disasters.

Recent estimates from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) show that a drought episode today costs at least twice as much economically as it did in 2000, with costs expected to rise by another 35 per cent to 110 per cent by 2035.

Drought costs are rising because climate change is making droughts more frequent and severe, while our economy has become more vulnerable to water shortages. The report calls for urgent investments in drought preparedness, including stronger early warning systems, watershed restoration, better infrastructure including off-grid energy and an emphasis on gender equality.

“Proactive drought management is an ecological and societal imperative. It is also a significant economic opportunity,” German parliamentary secretary for the ministry for economic cooperation and development, Niels Annen said in a statement. He added that preventing droughts has a high return on investment. “Every dollar invested in nature-based solutions not only reduces drought impacts, but can generate benefits of up to US\$27 – including higher farmer incomes, value chain resilience, and reduced long-term economic costs.” “The nations of the world have the resources and the knowledge to prevent a lot of suffering,” Smith said. “The question is, do we have the will?” 

This story was published with permission from Mongabay.com.

(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/droughts-emerging-as-silent-global-catastrophe-report/>)



Electricity transmission towers
More cross-border interconnectors can help Southeast Asian nations leverage renewable energy sources available across different countries, said experts. *Image: Fré Sonneveld/ Unsplash*

ASEAN CENTRE FOR ENERGY MUST STUDY LOW-CARBON OPTIONS FOR REGIONAL POWER GRID: EXPERTS

The Southeast Asian bloc should give its energy think tank the mandate to analyse decarbonisation pathways for the Asean Power Grid, said experts, emphasising the importance of interconnections, writes **Samantha Ho**

The idea for an interconnected Asean Power Grid (APG) may be more than two decades old, but the time is ripe for an in-depth study to be conducted on its decarbonisation pathways, say experts.

“Asean has to give the mandate to the Asean Centre for Energy (ACE) to undertake such a study,” said Professor Woo Wing Thye, head of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network’s Kuala Lumpur office.

“After having such a study, then (the countries) can choose among the different ways of achieving decarbonisation,” he told Eco-Business on the sidelines of a conference in May to discuss the decarbonisation and digitalisation of Asean’s energy sector.

ACE is an intergovernmental organisation that serves as an energy think tank to the group of Southeast Asian group of countries. Under Malaysia’s Asean chairmanship this year, ACE is focused on advancing Asean’s Renewable Energy Long-term Roadmap, with work being executed by the organisation’s Renewable Energy Sub Sector Network.

ACE executive director Abdul Razib Dawood said at the same event that the centre has been “tasked to achieve a breakthrough on the APG” this year. He added that while the organisation is well equipped to run optimisation studies for decarbonisation of the region’s power grid, it needs the mandate of Asean leaders to complete the scenario planning.

Eco-Business has reached out to ACE on the suggestions highlighted by experts. At the time of writing, ACE has yet to confirm on whether it has a mandate to conduct the suggested study.

John Thwaites, chair of the Monash Sustainable Development Institute and Climateworks Australia, said that there are “real opportunities for economic growth

and for emission reduction through interconnections” in Asean.

“(An) interconnection means that where there is a surplus of power, it can be transferred to where there is a deficit of power,” he said. “It also provides (energy) security and it ensures that we can meet our climate targets.”

“I don’t think we are going to meet our climate targets unless there is a boost to interconnection both within countries and across countries. It’s much more efficient, it will provide more affordable energy and cleaner energy,” added Thwaites.

Most Asean countries currently aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Indonesia has said that it plans to achieve net zero by 2065, while Thailand is mulling a faster pathway for decarbonisation by bringing forward its deadline to 2050, compared to a previous 2065 target.

Asean countries must consider how they can achieve their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement in a way that is affordable and fair, said Woo.

The cheapest way to go about decarbonising the region’s energy sector would be for Asean to work together as a group, said Woo. This

would ensure that countries with abundant supply of renewable energy can produce electricity at a lower cost and trade with neighbouring countries which have higher energy demand.

“For instance, to produce solar energy in Singapore would cost a lot more than producing green energy on the other side of the Causeway, (in Malaysia),” Woo said, as he highlighted the city-state’s land scarcity as a limitation.

Fortunately, efforts to decarbonise the APG align with the region’s goals of economic growth and increased energy supply, said Lisa Sachs, director of the Columbia Center on Sustainable Development.

“The main project that Asean needs to realise is the interconnected grid as the backbone of an integrated energy system which will include industrial hubs, low carbon corridors, the production of electric vehicle batteries (and) the production of the core components of the energy system,” she said.

“All of this will lead to an incredibly large competitive industrial strategy for the region, and it should be based on an integrated low carbon grid,” said Sachs.

Alongside the physical interconnectors, Woo also noted the importance of regional agreements allowing the trade in electricity across Southeast Asian countries.

Among the more prominent recent examples of established interconnections in the region is the Lao PDR-Thailand-Malaysia-Singapore Power Integration Project, which carries renewable hydropower from Lao PDR to Singapore. However, financiers have said that at least US\$100 billion will be needed to build more transmission lines for the Asean Power Grid. 

(SOURCE: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/asean-centre-for-energy-must-study-low-carbon-options-for-regional-power-grid-experts/>)

Asean countries must consider how they can achieve their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement in a way that is affordable and fair.

After a tense and technical Bonn summit marked by heatwaves and agenda disputes, all eyes now turn to Brazil's COP30 presidency to drive ambition, bridge divides and deliver real climate action in Belém.

Image: UNclimatechange, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.



BONN CLIMATE TALKS EXPOSE DIVISIONS OVER CLIMATE FINANCE AND TARIFFS

UN climate negotiations can stay on course without the US, but the multilateral process faces deeper challenges, writes **Yao Zhe**, Dialogue Earth

Each June, international climate negotiators descend on Bonn in west Germany for a two-week conference at the secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Bonn is a mid-year checkpoint for the UN climate governance process. It precedes the much larger Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC, which this year is due to take place in the Brazilian Ama-

zon's city of Belém, in November. The Bonn conference features only a few side events and media activities alongside the negotiations, which tend to focus more on technical details and do not involve major political decisions. Its main objective is to lay the textual groundwork for the decisions to be made at the COP.

Dialogue Earth attended this year's conference, which marked the first gathering of all the UNFCCC parties since the US announced its second withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The 16-26 June meeting took on further symbolic weight due to an unusually intense heatwave. Temperatures had already soared to 35C in Bonn by late June – extremely unusual for northern Europe.

The first two days of the conference were spent bogged down in debate over which items should be on the negotiation agenda. Climate finance and trade measures proved to be the biggest sticking points. Ultimately, progress was made across multiple negotiation themes.

However, observers and participants left Bonn hoping the Brazilian presidency will do more to encourage nations to submit genuinely ambitious climate action plans ahead of the Belém COP.

Negotiations move forward without US

Despite pulling out of Paris, the US remains a party to the UNFCCC. During Donald Trump's previous term, the US delegation continued to take part in the climate talks. This time, however, the Trump administration chose not to send any representatives. This marked the country's first absence since the UNFCCC launched over 30 years ago.

At Bonn, the multilateral climate action process continued anyway, with no sets of talks dropped or suspended.

In a departure from the previous two years, June's negotiations did not centre around a single high-profile

agenda item, such as a new global finance goal, or the Global Stocktake, which evaluates the action taken by parties to the Paris Agreement every eight years. Such a single-issue focus has the power to define the perceived success or failure of a COP. Instead, at Bonn, progress was made across multiple tracks in parallel.

Ahead of Bonn, the Brazilian presidency highlighted three priority areas for progress following stalemates at last year's COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan: "just transition", or managing the shift to a low-carbon economy in a fair way; working out how to implement the findings of last year's Global Stocktake; and reaching agreement on the Global Goal on Adaptation. Having been highlighted by the presidency, these issues attracted particular attention in Bonn, just as they will at COP30 in Belém.

On top of the presidency's priorities, two emerging topics have attracted considerable attention.

Firstly, given that COP30 is set to take place in an Amazonian city, discussions around forest protection intensified. Can forest conservation secure a meaningful place in the eventual negotiation outcomes? In the end, the Bonn talks did not bring clarity here.

Secondly, the compromise on climate finance achieved at COP29 included a commitment to a so-called "Baku-to-Belém Roadmap". This year, countries are expected to continue negotiations on concrete mechanisms to scale up climate finance and meet the US\$1.3 trillion target agreed in Baku. The outcomes on both fronts will ultimately be decided in Belém, but the Bonn meeting was expected to lay the groundwork for those negotiations to move forward.

If the above already feels complex and perhaps even a little tedious, then you've caught a glimpse of the atmosphere in Bonn: a setting steeped in technical jargon and protracted speeches by negotiators,

where even the smallest step forward demands significant time and effort.

The unavoidable battle over the agenda

Of course, the absence of the US was not the only challenge facing the UNFCCC. As international climate governance continues to inch forward, the global political and economic landscape has undergone significant shifts, while the impacts of climate change have become increasingly pronounced. A tangle of old and emerging issues is now testing the effectiveness and adaptability of multilateral mechanisms.

The opening days in Bonn offered a vivid illustration of this tension, as negotiations became bogged down in a two-day standoff over the agenda.

Just before the talks began, Bolivia formally requested the addition of two new topics for negotiation. It did so on behalf of the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) group, a key coalition that includes China, India, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and 18 others.

Bolivia's first proposal concerned the implementation of Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement, which reaffirms the obligation of developed countries to provide climate finance to those still developing. This contentious issue, centred around what many see as a persistent shortfall in support from wealthier nations, has repeatedly resurfaced in recent climate-finance negotiations.

Although a new finance target (US\$1.3 trillion per year by 2035) was agreed last year through compromise, it failed to clearly define the scale or legal nature of developed countries' contributions, leaving many developing countries dissatisfied. The second issue focused on unilateral trade measures related to climate change, with specific attention on the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). While such measures claim to advance climate

goals, the LMDC argues they will “increase the cost of global climate action” and run counter to the spirit of multilateralism. Similar concerns were raised last year by China on behalf of the Basic countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China). It reflects broader anxieties over the growing intersection between trade and climate policy.

Both highly charged issues are increasingly apparent in international climate governance. It is eroding trust between developing and developed countries and intensifying divisions in negotiations. Officially adding such topics to the agenda would open the door to structured discussions and the potential for binding outcomes. Not surprisingly, the LMDC proposals drew wide support from developing nations, while striking a nerve among major developed countries. The European Union, for example, opposed a “unilateral measures” agenda item.

Clearly, even a mid-year technical meeting such as Bonn is steeped in politics. The compromise reached by delegates after two full days held that the presidency would facilitate informal consultations on Article 9.1, while discussions on unilateral measures would be housed under the existing “just transition” agenda. Consultations were held in Bonn, but no clear conclusion was reached. The debate is likely to resurface in Belém.

The main negotiations could not begin until the agenda dispute had been ironed out. Critics argued that valuable time had been lost and suspected some countries of deliberately stalling the talks. Others defended the LMDC’s stance, stressing the importance of discussing these matters openly and systematically, even if doing so takes time.

Battles over the agenda are sure to recur in future meetings. Every move in the negotiating arena is underpinned by multiple strategic and political calculations. While such disputes may indeed be used

as leverage and prolong the negotiations, it could be argued that they also reveal deeper concerns about equity and justice in global climate action. With or without the US, these are the deeper issues that the multilateral process must grapple with if it is to retain legitimacy and public support.

The road to Belém

Looking ahead to COP30, the Brazilian presidency has high expectations but also faces significant pressure. The team held numerous events in Bonn, both to present its vision for the conference and to listen to the expectations of various stakeholders.

A core presidency message emerged: the climate negotiation process has already produced a multitude of political declarations and commitments, and what is urgently needed now is the implementation of action to address climate change. The presidency hopes to steer COP30 into what it calls a “post-negotiation phase” under the UNFCCC. This concept has been broadly welcomed in principle, yet in Bonn the presidency did not offer a clear roadmap for translating this into concrete action.

Another key task in this year’s climate-governance process is the submission of a new round of climate action plans, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The delivery by all parties of a new, more ambitious NDCs every five years is a fundamental obligation under the Paris Agreement. But as the name suggests, they are not the product of multilateral negotiation. They are determined by each country individually.

The UNFCCC secretariat will conduct a global stocktake of the new NDCs, analysing the gaps between countries’ pledges and the overarching Paris goals, publishing a report before COP30. NDC diplomacy is an unavoidable and delicate task for the presidency. Beyond the formal negotiation agenda, how can

the Brazilian team encourage a wide range of countries to submit ambitious NDCs on time?

The Belém team has already taken some initiative. In late April, Brazil’s President Lula co-hosted a virtual summit with the UN secretary-general, António Guterres, to elevate the political importance of the next round of NDCs. It was attended by 17 heads of government, including leaders from China and the European Union.

However, only about 20 countries have so far submitted their updated NDCs, and the quality of these submissions varies. Many government representatives and observers therefore expect the presidency to invest more energy and political capital into NDC diplomacy.

In addition to advancing the negotiations and climate diplomacy, the presidency must deal with more practical issues: Belém’s capacity to host a major UN conference, and the price of accommodation. The presidency organised a special briefing in response to many complaints. A total of 29,000 rooms and 55,000 beds had been arranged so far, it was announced, including nearly 4,000 rooms on board two cruise ships dispatched by the government.

So far, these numbers are more aspirational than concrete. Many people have not been able to secure rooms, or are discouraged by high prices. At several internal meetings of observer organisations, people repeatedly lobbied the presidency via Brazilian agencies. “Please make sure the presidency team knows that we are really, really worried about accommodation,” said one.

Currently, the road to Belém is not smooth. 

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(Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/bonn-climate-talks-expose-divisions-over-climate-finance-and-tariffs/>)

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