CSR TODAY

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CSR THOUGHT

AS NEW SOURCES OF CLIMATE FINANCE GROW, THE POOREST ARE NEGLECTED

CSR NEED

WHAT MAKES MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES CONSERVE MANGROVES IN INDIA?

YOUNG INDIAN FARMERS USING AGRI-TECH COULD NARROW A GENERATIONAL GAP

India is pushing to use drones, satellite data and digital apps to help farmers cope with climate stress and more. But such agri-tech is no magic bullet

CSR TODAY

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INDIAN CENTRE FOR CSR
403, 3rd floor, Orchid Road Mall,
Wing B, Royal Palm, Aarey Milk Colony,
Goregaon East, Mumbai-400 065
Ph: 9930139352, Email: support @ iccsr.org

The Himalaya's Climate Warning: Why the West Needs Urgent Attention

Rajesh Tiwari
Publisher
rt@iccsr.org

Snow loss could be equally significant. By the end of the century, spring snow loss in the western Himalaya could reach 95.9 kg per square metre under the highest-emission pathway, compared with 32 kg under the lowest-emission pathway. Winter snow loss could range from 9.5 to 53.2 kg per square metre.

The Himalaya is more than a spectacular mountain range. It is a critical ecological and economic lifeline for South Asia, feeding the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra river systems and supporting the lives and livelihoods of nearly 1.5 billion people. A new study, however, offers a sobering warning: the western Himalaya is warming faster than its central and eastern counterparts and could lose the most snow in the decades ahead.

The study, *Vulnerability of the Himalayan Region under Climate Change*, published in the *Journal of Earth System Science*, analysed 120 years of temperature observations from 1901 to 2020 and projections from eight global climate models. It examined the western Himalaya covering Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, the central Himalaya, largely Uttarakhand, and the eastern Himalaya, including Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and the wider Northeast.

The findings underline the urgency of climate adaptation. Compared with the early decades of the 20th century, winter temperatures have already risen by around 1°C across the three regions. In the western Himalaya, winter warming has reached 1.06°C, while spring temperatures have increased by 1.08°C.

The more worrying signal is coming from the nights. In the western Himalaya, winter minimum temperatures have risen by 1.23°C, compared with a 0.87°C rise in daytime maximum temperatures. Warmer nights reduce the period during which snow and ice can refreeze, potentially altering the timing and volume of meltwater flowing downstream.

The projections are even more striking. Under a high-emission scenario, western Himalayan winters could be 7.18°C warmer by 2081–2100 compared with the early 1900s. Spring temperatures could rise by 6.91°C.

Snow loss could be equally significant. By the end of the century, spring snow loss in the western Himalaya could reach 95.9 kg per square metre under the highest-emission pathway, compared with 32 kg under the lowest-emission pathway. Winter snow loss could range from 9.5 to 53.2 kg per square metre.

For businesses and the CSR community, these findings have a larger message. Climate resilience cannot remain confined to carbon reduction. It must include water security, disaster preparedness, livelihood protection, community resilience and ecosystem restoration.

Companies operating in or sourcing from Himalayan states can play a meaningful role by supporting watershed restoration, spring rejuvenation, climate-smart agriculture, early-warning systems, disaster preparedness and community-based conservation. CSR investments can also help strengthen local monitoring and climate awareness.

The study's message is ultimately one of choice. While some warming is already locked in, the scale of future change depends significantly on emissions. The Himalaya may be remote from India's corporate boardrooms, but its changing snowfields will have consequences far beyond the mountains.

Protecting Himalayan ecosystems is therefore not merely an environmental responsibility. It is an investment in India's water security, economic resilience and future generations.

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EDITORIAL

Chief Consulting Editor: Kingshuk Nag
Consulting Editor: M Bose
Executive Editor: Devasia P. Devasia

PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION AND LOGISTICS

Harish Rathod

HEAD OFFICE

CSR Today
403, 3rd floor, Orchid Road Mall,
Wing B, Royal Palm, Aarey Milk Colony,
Goregaon East, Mumbai-400 065
Email: support @ iccsr.org,
Website: www.iccsr.org

REGIONAL OFFICES

NEW DELHI
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Editor: Rajesh Tiwari

Chola Foundation partners with Smile Foundation to support 1,250 flood affected families in Assam

The Chola Foundation, in collaboration with Smile Foundation, undertook a flood relief intervention to support communities affected by the recent floods in Assam. The initiative covered 10 flood-impacted regions across the state, benefitting over 1,250 families. It focused on addressing the daily essential and hygiene needs of affected families through the distribution of dry rations, hygiene kits, and essential supplies with particular attention to women, children, elderly people and people with disabilities.

The relief effort was planned in coordination with local authorities and community leaders to ensure that assistance reached the most affected communities. Chola employees from Assam actively volunteered on the ground, supporting the distribution of relief supplies while adhering to safety protocols and guidelines advised by district authorities.

Ravindra Kumar Kundu, MD & CEO, Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company said, “Assam has been severely affected by floods, disrupting the lives and livelihoods of thousands of families. At Chola, we remain committed to standing by communities in times of need. The flood relief intervention in Assam, in partnership with Smile Foundation, is an effort to provide timely and essential support to families affected by the floods and helping them navigate this difficult period. We are encouraged to see our employees actively contributing on the ground, reinforcing our commitment to meaningful community engagement and collective action”.

Through this initiative, Chola Foundation reaffirms its commitment to enabling timely, meaningful support to vulnerable communities during times of crisis. The initiative underscores Chola’s commitment to responsible corporate citizenship and its continued efforts to create a positive and sustainable social impact.

Pilibhit House - IHCL SeleQtions and Hari Ganga Niwas- IHCL SeleQtions, Haridwar Drive Cleanliness Efforts Across Haridwar's Ghats

Pilibhit House – IHCL SeleQtions and Hari Ganga Niwas – IHCL SeleQtions, Haridwar's distinguished heritage retreats, came together to undertake a cleaning drive at Vishnu Ghat and Bhagirathi/Alaknanda Ghat, collectively clearing approximately 600 kg of waste. For both hotels, the initiative is an extension of their year-round work in keeping Haridwar's sacred riverfront clean and supporting its community.

The initiative forms part of the wider cleanliness efforts across Haridwar, with the Haridwar Municipal Corporation deploying over 900 additional sanitation workers and 80 vehicles for a special clean-up drive across the city. By contributing to these efforts, the hotels are supporting the continued upkeep of Haridwar's ghats and riverfront, while encouraging greater collective responsibility towards the city's shared public spaces.

For Pilibhit House, Haridwar, this commitment is deeply rooted in its relationship with the Ganges and the community it serves. Beyond its daily ghat cleanliness and river preservation efforts, the hotel also supports the Rain Basera opposite the hotel by providing food to yatris and those in need, particularly during periods of heightened pilgrimage activity.

The effort reflects the hotels' commitment to responsible hospitality and community participation and draws on IHCL's ESG+ framework - Paathya. Anchored in Environmental Stewardship and Social Responsibility, Paathya guides the group's sustainability and heritage-preservation efforts across its portfolio. By supporting the city's post-Kanwar clean-up efforts, Pilibhit House and Hari Ganga Niwas aim to encourage greater awareness around responsible waste disposal and reinforce the importance of collective action in preserving the sanctity and cleanliness of the Ganga.

Pilibhit House, Haridwar - IHCL SeleQtions

Hari Ganga Niwas - IHCL SeleQtions

PwC India and SAP India launch Career Readiness Training Programme for engineering students

PwC India and SAP India announced an 18-month long immersive skill development programme for engineering students in the country. This initiative aims to equip students with industry-relevant skills and certifications to enhance their workforce readiness.

The launch was marked by the signing of an MoU with Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) Bhubaneswar, the first academic institution PwC India and SAP India are partnering with under the University Alliances initiative in India. This programme will subsequently be expanded to other universities in India.

"India has a unique opportunity to become the world's talent engine, but achieving that requires stronger collaboration between academia and industry. This programme is designed to equip students with future-ready skills and hands-on experience as they prepare to enter the workforce. We are pleased to partner with SAP India to help build a pipeline of skilled talent for India's digital economy," said Sanjeev Krishan, Chairperson, PwC in India.

Designed for Bachelor of Technology (B. Tech) students across Computer Science, Electronics & Communication, Information Technology, and AI/ML disciplines, the programme combines SAP-certified learning with practical industry experience and focused skill-building sessions to prepare students for technology-oriented careers. Students demonstrating strong performance will also be eligible for six-month internships with PwC India, with further opportunities for full-time employment.

"As AI reshapes the future of work, industry-academia collaboration is critical to building the talent of tomorrow. Our partnership with PwC India bridges the gap between academic learning and real-world application, giving students hands-on exposure to SAP technologies and future-ready skills via the SAP University Alliances Program in India. Together, we are helping build a workforce that can adapt, innovate, and lead, while strengthening India's position as a global technology and talent hub." said Manish Prasad, President & Managing Director, SAP India.

This initiative is aligned with PwC's Vision 2030, which aims to contribute to India's growth story by providing accessible and affordable learning opportunities to the youth, enabling seamless transitions into employment, and creating a skilled and future-ready workforce.

"As industries continue to evolve in the face of rapid technological changes, initiatives such as the Career Readiness Training Programme are natural building blocks towards our ambition of creating the workforce of tomorrow and our aspiration of 'Kal ka Bharat' — a resilient, equitable, and self-sufficient India," said Sanjeev Krishan, Chairperson, PwC in India.

PwC India remains committed to fostering industry-academia collaboration, enabling industry-ready talent for successful deployment, and creating a bridge between ambition and opportunity.

Tenon Group reinforces its commitment to community development through a purpose-led csr initiative

Tenon Group, the largest home-grown services provider of Integrated Security, Facility Management, and Remote Monitoring & Video Surveillance in India, organised a purpose-led Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative in collaboration with COHAS NGO, reaffirming its commitment to community development and environmental responsibility.

Led by Maj. Manjit Rajain, Global Chairman, Tenon Group, the initiative brought together over 40 children from COHAS NGO for an engaging programme centred on cleanliness, sustainability, and responsible citizenship. Organised as part of his birthday, the initiative reflected the Group's belief in celebrating milestones by creating a meaningful social impact.

The programme included an interactive awareness session on Cleanliness and Sustainable Development, conducted by experts from Tenon FM, followed by a drawing competition themed "A

Clean & Green Future Starts With Me." Through the activities, children learnt simple sustainable practices while creatively expressing their vision of a cleaner and greener future.

Maj. Manjit Rajain interacted with the children, felicitated the winners, and encouraged them to become ambassadors of positive environmental change within their communities. The event concluded with a birthday celebration, cake cutting, and refreshments with the children.

Commenting on the initiative, Maj. Manjit RajainMaj. Manjit Rajain, Global Chairman, Tenon Group, said, "At Tenon, we believe that true success lies not only in business growth but also in creating a positive impact on society. Children are the changemakers of tomorrow, and by encouraging them to embrace cleanliness, sustainability, and responsible citizenship, we hope to inspire a generation that contributes towards building a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future."

Rural Odisha children crack tough residential school entrance exams

While more than three in four Class 3 children in rural India struggle to read a Class 2-level text, students from two Gram Panchayats in Odisha's Bhadrak district have overcome foundational learning gaps to secure admission to some of the state's most competitive residential schools.

Children attending Community Learning Centres run by the Omkar Gadi Foundation and Klorofeel Foundation have won seats in Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya (OAV), Ekalavya Model Residential School (EMRS), Kalinga Model Residential School (KMRS) and SSD Residential Girls' High School.

The Omkar Gadi Foundation, a Basudevpur-based non-profit established by Best Power Equipments Group, works in education, healthcare and community development in Bhadrak district. In partnership with the Klorofeel Foundation since April 2025, it runs Community Learning Centres for government school students in Arandua and Binayakpur Gram Panchayats of Basudevpur block.

The centres provide structured after-school academic support aimed at addressing foundational learning gaps that continue to affect children across rural India.

The scale of the achievement becomes clearer against the national learning picture. A NITI Aayog policy report released in May 2026, drawing on government school data including UDISE Plus 2024-25 and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), found that improvements in school infrastructure over the past decade have not been matched by similar gains in learning outcomes.

According to the underlying data cited in the report, more than three in four Class 3 students in rural India cannot read a Class 2-level text, while around two-thirds struggle with basic arithmetic.

The report also noted that the share of students enrolled in government schools has fallen to just over 49 per cent, from 71 per cent two decades ago, as families increasingly opt for private schools.

Against this backdrop, the experience of children from the two Gram Panchayats in Bhadrak offers an example of how community-led interventions can work within the government school system to improve learning and help students compete for opportunities beyond their immediate surroundings.

Community Learning Centres run by Omkar Gadi and Klorofeel Foundations help government school students secure seats in OAV, EMRS, KMRS and SSD residential schools

Odisha has also recorded a significant post-pandemic recovery in foundational reading, with reading levels in government schools improving by around 10 percentage points between 2022 and 2024. However, rural classrooms continue to face challenges related to teacher availability and infrastructure.

The Community Learning Centres seek to address some of these gaps through supplementary instruction in foundational literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and critical thinking.

"I have sat in these Community Learning Centres and watched a child who once struggled to read her own textbook go on to clear an EMRS entrance exam. We didn't set out to build a coaching centre; we set out to build confidence. Once a child believes she belongs in that classroom, the results follow, and that is what we intend to keep investing in, village after village," said Suryasikha Satpathy, Director, Best Power Equipments, and Trustee, Omkar Gadi Foundation.

Since April 1, 2025, trained local facilitators have provided supplementary instruction outside regular school hours. The programme combines small-group and personalised coaching with activity-based, learner-centric teaching, using quizzes, projects and hands-on exercises instead of relying solely on rote learning.

Students preparing for OAV, EMRS, KMRS and SSD entrance examinations receive additional support through mock tests, practice papers and doubt-clearing sessions.

The programme also includes regular assessments, remedial support and continuous facilitator training. Parental engagement is another component, with the initiative seeking to extend the learning environment beyond the Community Learning Centres and into students' homes.

For the children who have secured places in residential schools, the achievement represents more than success in an entrance examination. It marks a transition from struggling with basic learning skills to competing for admission to institutions that attract students from across Odisha.

Bisleri International and Thane Municipal Corporation Launch Bottles for Change in 123 Thane Municipal Schools

Bisleri International and Thane Municipal Corporation Launch Bottles for Change in 123 Thane Municipal Schools

Dr. Angelo George, CEO, Bisleri, addresses government officials and 200 teachers from Thane Municipal Corporation schools

Bisleri International, in collaboration with the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) – Education Department, launched Bottles for Change across all 123 municipal schools in Thane. As Bisleri's flagship waste management initiative, Bottles for Change engages institutions, housing societies and communities to create awareness on responsible plastic waste management. The event was graced by Smt. Sharmila Pimpalolkar, Hon'ble Mayor, Thane; Shri. Krushna Patil, Deputy Mayor, Thane Municipal Corporation; Shri. Saurabh Rao (I.A.S), Municipal Commissioner, Thane, and Dr. Mitali Sancheti, Deputy Municipal Commissioner, Education Department, Thane Municipal Corporation.

A key feature of the launch was a Teachers' Training Workshop, where around 200 teachers, principals and government officials from the 123 participating schools were trained on plastic waste management, source segregation, and the recycling process. A structured school implementation plan was also introduced to the participants.

Commenting on the initiative, Dr. Angelo George, CEO, Bisleri International Pvt. Ltd., said, "The greatest environmental change begins with small everyday habits, and there is no better place to build those habits than in our schools. Through Bottles for Change, Bisleri has been working with schools, housing societies and communities since 2019 to promote responsible plastic waste management. Our partnership with the Thane Municipal Corporation marks an important step in taking this movement to every municipal school in the city. By empowering teachers and inspiring students, we are nurturing a generation that understands source segregation, recycling, and the value of a circular economy. Together, we can create environmentally responsible citizens who will lead India's journey towards a cleaner and more sustainable future."

Sharmila Pimpalolkar, Mayor, Thane Municipal Corporation said, "Partnerships with organisations like Bisleri are vital for moving the needle on plastic waste management. With the industry taking up awareness and training, it becomes easier for communities to better utilise the infrastructure available to them. We hope that this partnership will effectively initiate climate action by young students in Thane."

Saurabh Rao, Municipal Commissioner, Thane Municipal Corporation, said, "Our children are the custodians of tomorrow's environment, and it is our responsibility to prepare them for it today. By extending Bottles for Change to all 123 municipal schools, we are ensuring that every student in Thane learns the value of responsible plastic waste management from an early age. This partnership with Bisleri International, and the training our teachers have received, will help to build a cleaner and more sustainable place for generations to come."

To translate awareness into action, the collaboration will also facilitate regular plastic waste collection, ensuring that recyclable plastic waste generated on school premises is consistently channelised for recycling and supports the circular economy. Trained teachers will play a central role in sustaining this system, embedding source segregation and responsible disposal as part of students' everyday routines.

First implemented in Thane in 2019, Bisleri's Bottles for Change has been instrumental in engaging communities and institutions to raise awareness about and improve plastic waste management in the city. The initiative has sensitised 35,000 students and citizens, and collected and channelised 4980 MT of plastic waste for recycling. With its implementation across municipal schools, the initiative will foster environmental responsibility amongst students from an early age and ensure the participation of young citizens in creating a cleaner, greener future for all.

SUD Life's CSR Initiative Propels Jharkhand's Aspirational District to State Academic Milestones

Demonstrating how corporate social responsibility can support India's education and inclusive development agenda, Star Union Dai-ichi Life Insurance Company Limited (SUD Life) has reported significant improvements in academic outcomes and rural livelihoods in Jharkhand through its flagship Project Jeevandhara and Project Dharti.

Implemented in partnership with the Gumla District Administration and EdTech platform Filo, Project Jeevandhara has introduced 24x7 digital learning, AI-powered academic support and one-to-one live tutoring across 112 government schools in Gumla district, an Aspirational District identified by NITI Aayog. The initiative aims to bridge the rural-urban education gap by providing quality learning opportunities to students from underserved communities in rural and urban areas.

The intervention has delivered notable academic gains. The Gumla district has moved from 20th rank to securing rank 1st in class 10 (JAC Board) results through the support of 24 x 7 online classes initiative under SUD Life's CSR in collaboration with District Administration. In Class 12 Science, the district climbed from 21st to 2nd rank in Jharkhand, with the pass percentage rising sharply from 50.2% in 2024 to 91% in 2026. Students also completed over 19,300 online learning sessions during the year, reflecting strong adoption of digital education.

"Education is the most reliable multiplier a country has, and insurance and social development ultimately serve the same purpose, which is to secure the future of families. Gumla has shown what becomes possible when a district administration, a technology partner and a corporate align around a single measurable outcome. A district that stood 20th now stands first, and that result belongs to the students and teachers of Gumla. Our commitment is to sustain this model and take it to more Aspirational Districts in the years ahead," said Abhay Tewari, MD & CEO, SUD Life.

SUD Life has further strengthened school infrastructure by constructing new school building, establishing smart classrooms, improving sanitation, drinking water facilities and aimed to provide, solar installations and rainwater harvesting systems. Under Project Dharti, the Company has developed irrigation infrastructure benefiting farmers in six villages in Dumri block, enabling a shift towards multi-crop cultivation and improved incomes.

"Education is one of the strongest drivers of sustainable development. We remain committed to expanding access to quality education and creating long-term social impact through partnerships with government and local communities," said Rakesh Kumar, Managing Trustee, SUD Life Foundation.

The initiative highlights the growing role of outcome-driven CSR in supporting India's Aspirational Districts and advancing equitable access to education and sustainable livelihoods.

AISATS Pays Tribute to India's Bravehearts by Welcoming First Group of Veer Naris, Widows & Their Wards into Workforce

Air India SATS Airport Services Private Limited (AISATS) inducted its first batch of Veer Naris, widows and their wards under a dedicated employment initiative aimed at honouring the sacrifices of India's armed forces. This programme reflects AISATS' commitment to empowering the families of fallen soldiers by providing long-term career opportunities that foster financial independence and professional development.

The first batch of 10 candidates are set to begin their careers at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi, following the successful completion of a structured training programme at the AISATS Training Academy. They will be deployed across key airport functions, including Customer Service Executives, Load Control Agents, Cargo Service Agents, and Ramp Agents, marking the beginning of a new professional journey within India's aviation sector. Prior to joining the workforce, all selected candidates underwent a rigorous classroom and practical training at the AISATS Training Academy. This training has equipped them with the technical knowledge and operational skills required for airport ground handling and customer service roles.

Through the initiative, AISATS is enabling Veer Naris, widows and their wards to embark on meaningful professional careers in aviation. It's partnership with the Indian Army and the Army Welfare Placement Office (AWPO) on the Veer Naris, Widows & Their Wards initiative reflects a shared commitment to helping Indian Army families build sustainable livelihoods through skill development and structured career pathways. The AISATS Training Academy, one of India's leading aviation skill development institutions, offers specialised programmes in ground handling. The academy combines industry-led training with placement support, helping create a skilled workforce for India's rapidly expanding aviation sector while opening meaningful career opportunities for aspiring professionals across the country.

Speaking on the occasion Namit Baikar, Chief Human Resources Officer, AISATS said: "As a responsible organisation, it is our duty to go beyond the profits and engage in conversations that are driving meaningful change for the society at

large. Veer Naris, widows and their wards have made extraordinary sacrifices for the nation, and while those sacrifices can never truly be repaid, we hope this initiative helps create opportunities for financial independence, professional growth, and a brighter future. We are grateful to the Indian Army and the Army Welfare Placement Organisation for partnering with us on this journey and look forward to expanding this initiative in the years ahead."

Major General Ajay Singh Chauhan (Retd), Managing Director, Army Welfare Placement Organisation (AWPO), said: "Creating real employment opportunities for ex-servicemen, Veer Naris, widows and their dependents is core to what AWPO does, and partnerships like this one are exactly why that mission works. Too often, welfare initiatives stop at good intentions. What makes this collaboration with AISATS different is that it translates directly into offer letters, structured training and, eventually, a clear pathway towards meaningful future. As a new chapter, ten candidates are starting an aviation career with AISATS, and we look forward to building on this momentum and hope more organisations across industries recognise the value that Veer Naris and their wards bring to any workplace they join."

Committed to strengthening India's aviation talent pipeline, AISATS has continuously played a pivotal role in upskilling individuals and connecting them to meaningful careers in one of the country's fastest-growing industries. Through this kind of industry-led skilling and structured hiring, AISATS aims to bring more Indian Army families into the workforce, while supporting broader goals around women's empowerment, skill development and inclusive growth.

Maharashtra proposes Maha CSR Authority for better utilisation of CSR funds

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has directed officials to prepare a proposal for setting up a 'Maha CSR Authority' to ensure more effective, transparent and coordinated utilisation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds in the state.

The proposed authority will provide a common platform to coordinate CSR initiatives currently being implemented independently at different levels, Fadnavis said at a meeting held at Sahyadri Guest House in Mumbai.

The authority will coordinate and monitor CSR funds and create a project bank of quality projects aligned with the government's priorities, which can be made available to companies and NGOs.

It will also guide eligible micro and small enterprises on identifying suitable CSR projects and implementation partners, besides promoting outstanding CSR initiatives in the state.

Fadnavis stressed that maintenance and repair of CSR-funded projects should receive special attention, noting that several projects become defunct due to lack of funds for upkeep after completion.

The proposed authority will also examine a 'Diaspora Connect' initiative to mobilise CSR and social development funds from Maharashtrians living outside the state and abroad.

The Chief Minister will head the authority, while its governing council will include senior government officials and industry representatives. The Chief Executive Officer will serve as member-secretary of the governing council and head the executive council.

On World Cleft Awareness Day, Smile Train India Marks 800,000+ Free Surgeries and a Renewed Push for Early Diagnosis of Clefts

As India marks a major surgical milestone, the country's leading cleft-focused NGO, Smile Train India, says the next breakthrough isn't access to treatment, it's awareness

World Cleft Awareness Day (WCAD), observed globally on July 20, was introduced by Smile Train in 2025 to bring cleft lip and palate into mainstream public health conversations and ensure every child born with a cleft has access to timely, comprehensive treatment.

This year, Smile Train India, the country's leading cleft-focused NGO, celebrates a proud milestone: over 800,000 free cleft surgeries supported for children across the country since 2000. Building on this achievement, the organisation is now turning its attention to the next frontier of impact, raising awareness so that every child born with a cleft is identified early and given the chance to thrive.

Nearly 35,000 children are born with clefts in India every year, yet many miss the critical window for treatment due to myths, misinformation, and stigma. Delayed care can lead to feeding difficulties, malnutrition, speech and hearing impairment, and long-term social and emotional challenges. Early diagnosis and timely surgery are key to better outcomes and access to comprehensive care. World Cleft Awareness Day seeks to raise awareness, dispel misconceptions, and ensure every child born with a cleft receives timely treatment.

Smile Train India treats surgery as one part of a larger picture. Its holistic model includes nutritional support, speech therapy, and orthodontic treatment, helping children thrive fully in life. Underpinning this is a sustainability-first strategy: Smile Train India trains and empowers local surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses, and multidisciplinary cleft teams to deliver care locally. By strengthening partner hospitals, the organisation ensures children can access high-quality, free cleft care close to home, while building healthcare capacity that outlasts any single intervention.

This year's awareness push has drawn wide-ranging support, with partners, donors, ambassadors, cleft affected individuals and families, well-wishers, and the broader community coming together to mark WCAD, many taking to social media and other platforms to share their voices and extend the conversation beyond the medical community and into everyday households.

We've made real progress expanding access to treatment, but awareness remains our toughest battle," said Mamta Carroll, Senior Vice President and Regional Director – Asia, Smile Train. "Every day, children arrive at our doors months or even years later than they should have — not because treatment wasn't there, but because their families never knew cleft could be treated or feared the stigma that so often surrounds it. If we can close that awareness gap, we can reach these children in time and make sure not a single one is left waiting."

This World Cleft Awareness Day, Smile Train India urges parents, caregivers, healthcare professionals, policymakers, media, and communities to play an active role in raising awareness, encouraging early diagnosis, and challenging misconceptions surrounding clefts.

From 15 Years of Responsible Growth to 'Achhe Kal Ki Neev': Yara India Takes Sustainability to Schools

Yara India, world's leading fertilizer company and provider of environmental solutions, is taking its 'Achhe Kal Ki Neev' fruit tree plantation and awareness initiative to government schools across its areas of operation. The initiative builds on Yara India's 15-year journey in the country, bringing together environmental stewardship, nutrition awareness and community engagement to create meaningful, long-term impact for communities.

The two-day initiative, scheduled for 14–15 August, is being conducted in select government schools located in the rural belts of Yara's areas of operation across Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Bringing together students, school management, Yara representatives and local community stakeholders, including farmers, the programme aims to foster environmental awareness through the plantation of fruit-bearing trees and interactive learning sessions. It seeks to help students understand the connection between a healthy environment, nutrition and responsible environmental practices.

Speaking on the initiative, Sanjiv Kanwar, Managing Director, Yara South Asia, said, "Over the past 15 years, our engagement in India has reinforced our belief that meaningful progress is built through sustained action and strong community participation. 'Achhe Kal Ki Neev' reflects this philosophy by bringing together environmental responsibility, nutrition awareness and the participation of young minds. By creating greener school environments and encouraging students to engage with these themes, we hope to lay the foundation for healthier, more sustainable communities for generations to come."

The initiative is creating green spaces within participating school campuses through the plantation of fruit-bearing trees, including Mango, Guava, Ber, Jamun, and Pomegranate. The programme currently includes 1000+ saplings across confirmed locations. As part of Yara India's broader community engagement and responsible growth efforts, 'Achhe Kal Ki Neev' aims to bring sustainability and nutrition conversations closer to young people, encouraging them to become active participants in creating greener and healthier communities while fostering a lasting understanding of environmental stewardship and the importance of investing in future generations.

Siegwerk India Strengthens Rural Education Infrastructure with Two New Government School Buildings in Rajasthan

New campuses for UPS Huseengpur and UPS Banbeerpur will provide safer, modern learning spaces for nearly 300 students, reinforcing the company's long-standing commitment to education and community development

Siegwerk India, a global leader in printing inks and coatings for packaging applications, has inaugurated new school buildings for two Government Upper Primary Schools, U.P.S. Huseengpur and U.P.S. Banbeerpur, reinforcing its long-standing commitment to education in rural communities. Together, the new campuses will benefit nearly 300 students, providing safe, modern, and inclusive learning environments designed to support better educational outcomes.

The initiative builds on over a decade of sustained engagement with both schools. Siegwerk India first adopted UPS Huseengpur in 2009-10, well before corporate social responsibility became a statutory requirement in India, and UPS Banbeerpur in 2011-12. Since then, the company has consistently supported both schools through annual repair, maintenance, and infrastructure upgrades. As the ageing buildings became structurally unsafe and were no longer suitable for repair, Siegwerk India undertook the construction of entirely new school buildings to ensure uninterrupted access to quality education.

Located approximately 1.5 kilometres from the company's facility in Bhiwadi, UPS Huseengpur serves around 120 students from Classes 1 to 8. The school has a unique history, having originally operated from an

old village building donated by families who had migrated from Pakistan after Independence. In 2024, the Rajasthan Education Department declared the structure dilapidated, making a new campus essential.

Similarly, UPS Banbeerpur, located around 2.4 kilometres from the plant, caters to nearly 170 students from Classes 1 to 8 in a densely populated agrarian community. Having supported the school's upkeep for over a decade, Siegwerk India stepped in to construct a new building after the previous structure was deemed beyond repair.

Commenting on the initiative, Ashish Pradhan, President – Asia, Siegwerk, said, "Education has always been at the heart of Siegwerk India's community engagement. What began over a decade ago as repair and maintenance support for these two schools has now evolved into permanent infrastructure that will serve students for years to come. This initiative represents our continued commitment to the communities that have been part of our journey since the very beginning."

The new school buildings feature improved classrooms and infrastructure that will provide students and teachers with a safer, more conducive environment for learning. The project reflects Siegwerk India's broader focus on strengthening educational infrastructure, promoting digital learning, and supporting inclusive development in the communities surrounding its operations.

Over the years, Siegwerk India has invested significantly in education through initiatives ranging from school infrastructure development and digital classrooms to clean energy solutions and learning resources. The company has been recognized with the Bhamashah Award for its sustained contribution to strengthening government schools in Rajasthan, underscoring its long-term commitment to advancing education and community well-being.

Sarvodaya Hospital, Faridabad Launches CSR Initiative to Provide 100 Paediatric Cardiac Surgeries for Underprivileged Children

Reinforcing its commitment to making advanced healthcare accessible to every child, Sarvodaya Hospital, Sector 8, Faridabad has announced the launch of a major Corporate Social Responsibility initiative to provide 100 free paediatric cardiac surgeries for underprivileged children, suffering from congenital and other critical heart diseases. The initiative is aimed at ensuring that children from economically weaker families receive timely, lifesaving cardiac treatment without the burden of financial constraints.

The announcement comes on the back of the overwhelming success of Sarvodaya Hospital, Sector 8, Faridabad's previous CSR programme, under which the hospital successfully performed 100 free paediatric cardiac surgeries over the past year, giving children a new lease on life and helping families overcome one of the most challenging phases of their lives. Encouraged by the transformative impact of the initiative, Sarvodaya Sector 8, Faridabad has renewed its commitment by extending the programme for another 100 children. The initiative reflects the hospital's unwavering vision of delivering world-class healthcare with compassion and ensuring that no child is denied treatment because of an inability to pay.

Congenital heart disease is among the most common birth defects worldwide, affecting nearly 8-10 out of every 1,000 live births. While many of these conditions can be successfully treated through timely intervention, thousands of children in India continue to miss out on lifesaving surgeries due to financial limitations, delayed diagnosis, or lack of access to specialized paediatric cardiac care.

Under this CSR initiative, eligible children diagnosed with congenital or other critical heart diseases will receive comprehensive treatment, including surgery, at no cost. The surgeries will be performed by Sarvodaya Hospital, Sector 8, Faridabad's highly experienced paediatric cardiac team led by Dr. Jay Relan, Senior Consultant, Paediatric Cardiology & Congenital Heart Disease and Dr. Anupam Das, Senior Consultant & Head, Cardiothoracic & Vascular Surgery, and, supported by a multidisciplinary team of paediatric cardiac surgeons, cardiologists, cardiac anaesthetists, intensivists, nurses, and rehabilitation specialists.

Sarvodaya Hospital, Sector 8, Faridabad's Department of Paediatric Cardiac Sciences offers comprehensive care for children with congenital and acquired heart diseases, supporting them from diagnosis through treatment and recovery. With an experienced paediatric cardiologists and paediatric cardiac surgeons, the department has successfully performed over 1,000 cardiac surgeries in children of all ages. From treating conditions such as Atrial Septal Defect (ASD), Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD), Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA) and Tetralogy of Fallot (TOF) to managing other complex congenital heart conditions, the team is equipped to provide advanced, compassionate care for even the most challenging cases.

Commenting on the initiative, Anshu Gupta, Managing Director, Sarvodaya Healthcare said, “With this initiative, Sarvodaya Healthcare continues to strengthen its role as a socially responsible healthcare institution dedicated to delivering quality, compassionate, and equitable medical care. By offering free lifesaving paediatric cardiac surgeries, the hospital hopes to provide hundreds of children with a healthier future while supporting families during one of the most critical moments of their lives. Families seeking assistance under the programme can contact Sarvodaya Healthcare to determine eligibility and receive guidance regarding diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment. The hospital encourages early consultation, as timely intervention significantly improves outcomes in children with congenital and acquired heart diseases.”

Vertiv supports IIT Madras Pravartak’s collaboration with Ratan Tata Maharashtra State Skills University to nurture data center talent in India

Vertiv, a global leader in critical digital infrastructure, is supporting the expansion of IITM Pravartak Technologies Foundation’s data center skilling initiative into Maharashtra through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) program.

As part of this initiative, IIT Madras Pravartak Technologies Foundation also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ratan Tata Maharashtra State Skills University (RTMSSU) in the presence of Hon’ble Maharashtra Governor, Shri Jishnu Dev Varma, during ‘Start-up Frontier 1.0’ exhibition and conference held at the Y B Chavan Auditorium in Mumbai last July 10, 2026.

Vertiv has partnered with IIT Bombay, IIT Madras Pravartak Technologies Foundation and IIT (BHU) to help engineering students build practical skills in data center operations and AI-ready infrastructure. Through hands-on training and industry exposure, these initiatives prepare students for careers in the digital infrastructure industry. Leveraging its deep expertise in power, cooling, and IT infrastructure, Vertiv will provide free skill development training to 1,500 engineering students in data center operations and digital infrastructure management in 2026. This builds on the collaboration launched by Vertiv and IIT Madras Pravartak Technologies Foundation in 2025 to strengthen India's pipeline of skilled talent for the rapidly growing digital infrastructure sector.

RTMSSU will leverage its network of pre-incubation centers across 60 colleges in Maharashtra to extend the program's reach. Students will receive certified online training along with internship and mentorship opportunities designed to prepare them for careers in data center operations and digital infrastructure management.

Highlighting the initiative, Dr. A S Prasad, vice president product management and engineering, Vertiv India, said, “India's digital infrastructure growth is creating increasing demand for professionals with specialized skills in data center operations and management. At Vertiv, we believe that building this talent pipeline requires close collaboration between the academia and industry. Through this initiative, we provide engineering students with practical knowledge, industry exposure and the skills needed to contribute to India's evolving digital infrastructure ecosystem. We are pleased to support IIT Madras Pravartak Technologies Foundation and Ratan Tata Maharashtra State Skills University in expanding this program to Maharashtra and enabling more students to prepare for careers in this high-growth sector.”

Further, Dr. M.J. Shankar Raman, Chief Executive Officer, IIT Madras Pravartak Technologies Foundation, added, “As artificial intelligence continues to redefine industries and economies, data centers have become central to this digital transformation. This rapid growth has created an urgent need for skilled specialists who can operate and maintain these essential facilities. Through this program, we are dedicated to building a workforce that supports India's AI ambitions with the technical talent required to sustain them.”

CSR INDIA UNITED

Toyota Kirloskar Motor Strengthens Quality Of Education In Rural Parts Of Vijayapura Through Developing Infrastructure Across Nine Schools

More than 2,850 students will benefit from this initiative

Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) announced a comprehensive educational development initiative aimed at providing quality education through infrastructure support across 9 government educational institutions in rural parts of Vijayapura district, Karnataka.

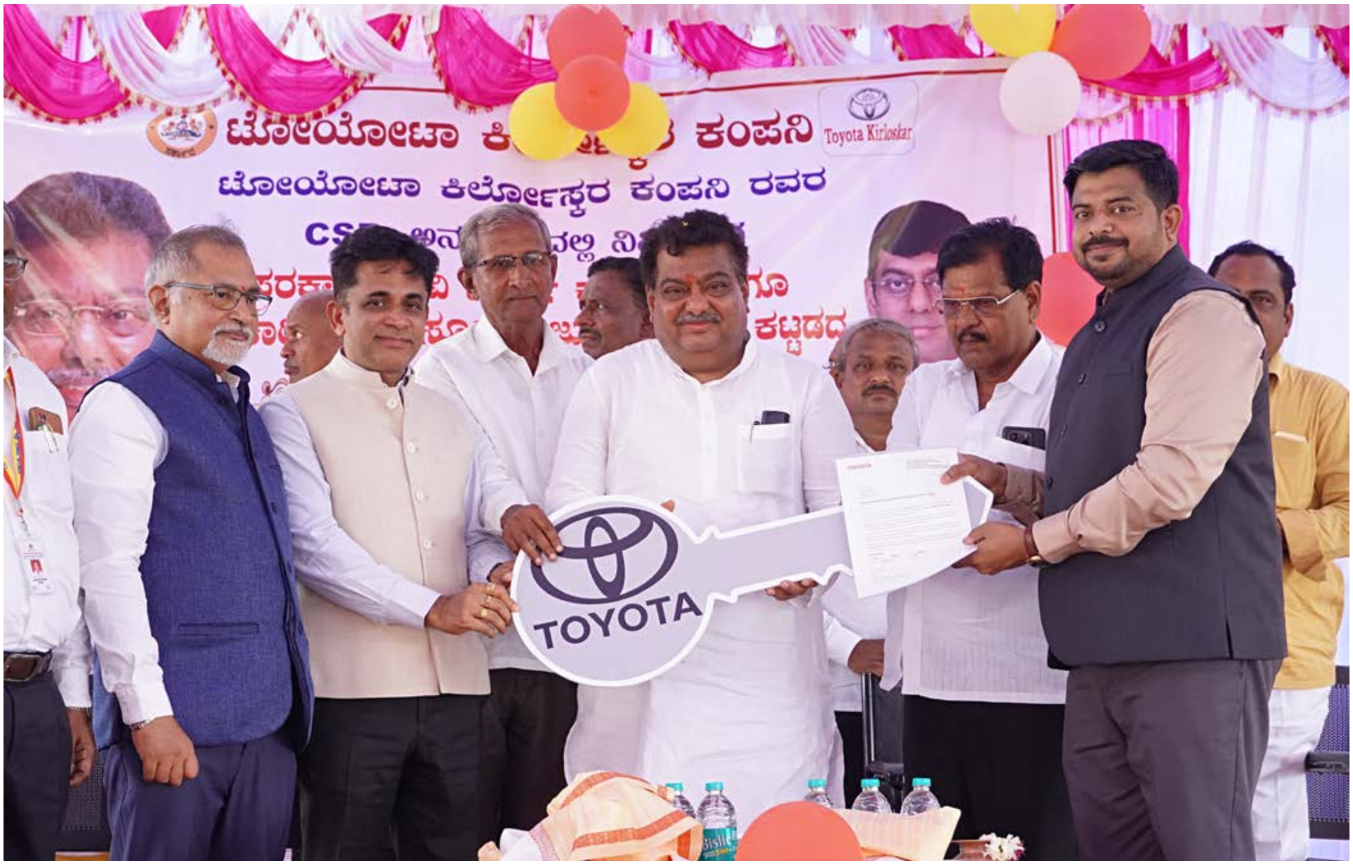
As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts and commitment to building a better future through education and community development, the project is expected to positively impact more than 2,850 students while creating improved learning environments for generations to come.

As part of the initiative, TKM conducted the groundbreaking ceremony for infrastructure development at five Government Higher Primary Schools (GHPS)- Agasanahalli, Jambagi, Somadevarhatti, Sutagundi and Nandyal. These schools serve students from over 15 neighbouring villages, offering education from Class 1 to 8 in both Kannada and English. The project includes the construction of additional classrooms, provision of classroom furniture, and development of sanitation facilities to address infrastructure gaps and improve access to essential amenities. The initiative is expected to benefit over 850 students annually. It is also expected to ensure adequate classroom capacity, significantly improve girl's attendance and increase student enrolment by 15%.

The company also inaugurated newly developed educational infrastructure at 4 government institutions in Babaleshwar, Vijayapura- Karnataka Public School, Mamadapura; Government High School, Hebbalahatti; Government High School, Bolchikalakki; and Government PU College, Arjunagi. The completed infrastructure includes new classrooms, upgraded sanitation facilities, improved kitchen infrastructure to support mid-day meal programmes and essential classroom furniture to create safer, more conducive and student-friendly learning environments. The initiative is expected to positively impact more than 2,000 students annually.

The ceremonies were held in the presence of Dr. M. B. Patil, Hon'ble Minister for Large and Medium Industries, Government of Karnataka, Mr. Ramesh Rao, Vice President and senior leadership from Toyota Kirloskar Motor.

Speaking on the occasion, M. B. Patil, Minister for Large and Medium Industries, Government of Karnataka, said, "The progress of our villages is closely linked to the



quality of education available to our children. Strengthening rural schools is an investment that benefits not only students but also families and communities for generations. I commend Toyota Kirloskar Motor for partnering with the government in enhancing educational infrastructure across Babaleshwar. Such initiatives help create an environment where children can learn with confidence, teachers can deliver quality education more effectively, and every student has the opportunity to build a brighter future."

Vikram Gulati, Country Head & Executive Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, said, "When educational infrastructure improves, the impact extends far beyond the classroom, by strengthening the entire region. At Toyota Kirloskar Motor, we believe meaningful development begins by understanding the needs of local communities and responding with long-term solutions. Our continued investment in rural education in Babaleshwar, Vijayapura will help inspire students today while contributing to stronger and more resilient communities tomorrow."

As India advances towards becoming a globally competitive economy, strengthening foundational education remains critical to developing future talent. Through its education-focused initiatives, Toyota Kirloskar Motor has benefited more than 28,000 students, TKM continues to support the creation of inclusive learning ecosystems that empower young minds, strengthen rural communities and contribute to the nation's long-term development.

Grown by the Sun: Lukson Builds India's Sustainability Benchmark for Lab Grown Diamonds with a Fully Solar Powered Manufacturing Facility

The lab grown diamond jewellery brand, backed by the 34-year-old JK Star Group, combines a solar powered CVD facility with 500 reactors, internationally certified stones and a group legacy of over 1 lakh trees planted across Gujarat

The front elevation of Lukson's Surat diamond-growing facility, equipped with more than 250 advanced CVD machines and forming the manufacturing backbone of the brand's lab-grown diamond operations.

As India's lab grown diamond market accelerates, most brands in the category lean on a single claim, that a diamond grown in a lab is kinder to the planet than one pulled out of it. Lukson, the vertically integrated lab grown diamond jewellery brand from the JK Star Group, is going several steps further, backing that claim at the infrastructure level with one of the few fully solar powered diamond growing operations in the country.

At the heart of this story is the Group's CVD diamond growing facility in Surat, Gujarat, operated under AVP Star, the JK Star Group's lab grown diamond manufacturing arm. The facility runs entirely on solar power drawn from the Group's dedicated solar plant in Navsari, Gujarat, and houses 500 CVD reactors, where every Lukson diamond begins its journey as a tiny seed. From growing and coring to slicing, laser processing, cutting, polishing and grading, every stage is handled

Solar energy infrastructure at the Group's manufacturing premises, reflecting its focus on building a more conscious and sustainability-led diamond ecosystem.

A view of Lukson's state-of-the-art CVD diamond-growing facility in Surat, part of the JK Star Group's vertically integrated diamond ecosystem.

in house, giving the brand an unbroken chain of quality control and traceability that few players in the category can match.

The commitment extends well beyond the factory. The Group has planted over 1 lakh trees across Gujarat as part of its environmental programme, while its philanthropic arm, the JK Star Charitable Trust, has contributed over 10 percent of net profits from all five group companies since 2019 towards education, healthcare, tree plantation, environmental sustainability and food distribution.

The stones themselves carry independent proof. Lukson's lab grown diamonds are certified by leading international laboratories including IGI, GIA and GCAL, with an inventory of around 40,000 certified stones held across the Group's New York and India offices.

"Lab grown does not automatically mean sustainable. A diamond grown in a lab still needs energy, and if that energy comes from fossil fuels, the sustainability story falls apart," said Vedant Lukhi, Co-Founder, Lukson, who leads the Group's CVD diamond growing technology and operations. "That is why we invested in making our facility solar powered. When the factory growing your diamond runs on the sun, sustainability stops being a marketing line and becomes something you can walk into, measure and verify. That is the standard we believe the entire industry should be held to."

"For us, sustainability was never an afterthought or a trend to ride, it is the inheritance we chose to build on," added Anand Lukhi, CEO and Co-Founder, Lukson. "We come from a family that has spent over three decades in diamonds, and when we imagined Lukson, we were clear that the next generation of Indian consumers deserves jewellery they can feel genuinely good about, in how it looks, how it is priced and how it is made. Our customers should never have to choose between beauty and responsibility. With Lukson, they get both, backed by proof at every step from the reactor to the retail shelf."

Launched in January 2025 by Anand Lukhi and Vedant Lukhi as the JK Star Group's first D2C venture, Lukson brings this manufacturing depth directly to the modern Indian consumer, offering certified lab grown diamond jewellery crafted in 9KT, 14KT and 18KT gold, backed by BIS hallmarking and a lifetime buyback policy. The brand retails across ten cities including Mumbai, Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Pune, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Jaipur and Guwahati, alongside Amazon, AJIO, Pernia's Pop Up Shop, Eternz and lukson.co, with try at home and video shopping convenience across key cities.

Behind Lukson stands the JK Star Group, founded in 1993 by Shailesh Lukhi and Nandesh Lukhi, a 34 year diamond conglomerate of five specialised companies and over 2,000 employees spanning natural diamond manufacturing, B2B domestic jewellery, international diamond exports, lab grown diamond growing and D2C consumer retail.

The Adie Broswon Group Scales Scientific Sugarcane Farming Across Punjab, Benefiting 1,500+ Farmers in 94 Villages

The farmer-first programme combines scientific expertise, field advisory and modern agricultural practices to improve productivity strengthen farmer livelihoods and build a sustainable farm-to-factory ecosystem.

The Adie Broswon Group is building a growing movement for scientific, sustainable and farmer-led sugarcane development across Punjab.

Through its ongoing Sugarcane Development Programme, the Group has already reached more than 1,500 sugarcane farmers across 94 villages, 13 cane societies and nearly 21,000 acres of cultivation. The initiative is designed not simply as an extension programme, but as a long-term movement to transform sugarcane cultivation by bringing scientific knowledge, modern agronomy and continuous field support closer to farmers.

The movement seeks to accelerate the adoption of better farming practices, improve productivity, strengthen farmer incomes and create a more resilient farm-to-factory ecosystem. In the coming months, the Group plans to expand its reach to 25,000 acres, with a long-term ambition of covering 35,000 acres and enabling sugarcane productivity of more than 600 quintals per acre.

A key pillar of this effort is sustained farmer engagement. As part of the initiative, a Farmers' Awareness Meeting (Kisan Goshti) was recently organised at Harchowal, creating a platform for farmers, agricultural scientists, government representatives and sugarcane experts to exchange practical knowledge and discuss ways to improve crop productivity, resource efficiency and long-term farm profitability.

The technical sessions focused on practical interventions that farmers can adopt in the field, including Monsoon and Autumn planting, Trench and Space Planting, intercropping, disease-free seed selection, soil health, balanced nutrient management, weed and disease control, mechanisation and sustainable cultivation practices. The emphasis remained on translating scientific research into simple, actionable practices that can improve yields, crop quality and cultivation efficiency.

The initiative extends well beyond awareness meetings. Farmers receive year-round field advisory, soil-testing support, access to quality seed cane, mechanisation assistance, digital tools and guidance from experienced agronomists, researchers and agricultural scientists. This continuous engagement is intended to build confidence among farmers, encourage adoption of proven practices and create visible demonstration effects across neighbouring farms and villages.

As the initiative is in its first season of implementation, the Group expects the impact to become increasingly measurable as adoption expands, through higher yields, improved cultivation efficiency, better crop quality and stronger farmer incomes.

The movement also promotes a broader vision of sustainable agriculture. Farmers are being encouraged to adopt practices that improve resource-use efficiency while recognising sugarcane's potential role in carbon sequestration. The initiative is also creating awareness around future opportunities that may emerge through government-supported carbon-credit mechanisms and other sustainability-linked interventions.

Capacity building is being undertaken not only among farmers but also within the Group's cane development teams, strengthening their ability to provide consistent, science-based field support.

Progressive farmers who have successfully adopted improved practices such as Space Planting are also being recognised and encouraged to become local champions, helping demonstrate results and inspire wider adoption within their communities.

At its core, the initiative is about creating a network of farmers who learn from science, from experts and, increasingly, from one another.

As it expands across Punjab, The Adie Broswon Group aims to build one of the region's most comprehensive farmer-development movements, bringing together scientific research, modern agricultural practices, field-level support and strong farmer partnerships.

The ambition is to create lasting change at the farm level: higher productivity, better resource efficiency, stronger livelihoods and a more sustainable sugarcane ecosystem for Punjab.

From individual farms to entire villages, the movement is centred on one idea: when farmers grow stronger, the entire sugarcane value chain grows stronger with them.

India's first Craft Village gets a cooperative boost as Bihar advances PM Modi's 'Sahkar Se Samriddhi' vision

In a significant step towards advancing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Sahkar Se Samriddhi' (Prosperity through Cooperation), Bihar on Friday launched the Mithila Handicrafts Cooperative Society, bringing together traditional artisans from the state's globally acclaimed Madhubani art ecosystem under the cooperative framework. The initiative follows the Government of India's recent recognition of Jitwarpur in Madhubani as India's first Craft Village, and seeks to strengthen market access, improve artisans' incomes and showcase Bihar's rich cultural heritage to national and international audiences.

The first meeting of the newly formed cooperative was held at the Mithila Art Centre in Madhubani in the presence of Shirsat Kapil Ashok, IAS, Secretary, Dairy, Fisheries and Animal Resources Department,

Government of Bihar, and Chairman-cum-Managing Director, COMFED, along with Anand Sharma, IAS, District Magistrate, Madhubani, senior officials from the Department of Tourism, Patna Museum, Mithila Chitrakala Sansthan and NABARD. Padma Shri awardees Dulari Devi and Baua Devi also participated in the programme.

Addressing the gathering, Shirsat Kapil Ashok said the formation of the cooperative demonstrates how the cooperative movement can become a powerful vehicle for preserving India's traditional arts while creating sustainable livelihoods. He noted that Jitwarpur's recognition as India's first Craft Village presents a unique opportunity to organise artisans, strengthen value chains and expand the reach of Mithila's celebrated handicrafts beyond domestic markets.

He pointed out that Madhubani is home to nearly 50,000 registered Artisan Card holders, many of whom have received state, national and Padma honours for their contribution to Mithila art. Through the cooperative, artisans would be better positioned to collectively market their creations, improve incomes and access larger national and international markets. Nearly 200 artisans, including Padma awardees, have already applied for membership in the first phase, reflecting strong confidence in the initiative.

The programme also received recorded messages from Ashish Bhutani, Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation, Government of India, and Dr Meenesh Shah, Chairman, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), who congratulated COMFED and the founding members for extending the cooperative model to the handicrafts sector.

Gautam Kumar Singh, Chief General Manager, NABARD, assured support for financing the initiative as required.

The occasion also witnessed the launch of Sudha Makhana Kheer by Mithila Milk Union, a new value-added dairy product that combines Bihar's globally renowned makhana with the trusted Sudha brand. Guests sampled the product, highlighting the state's continued focus on innovation and value addition in agriculture and allied sectors. Representatives from TechnoServe, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, along with officials from COMFED and Mithila Milk Union, were also present.

Flipkart Foundation and Akshaya Patra Bring Morning Nutrition to Over 1 Lakh Government School Children in Karnataka

Over 1 lakh government school children across Bengaluru and Hubli received nutritious morning snacks through a partnership between Flipkart Foundation and The Akshaya Patra Foundation, helping address classroom hunger and enabling children to begin their school day better prepared to learn. Implemented under Akshaya Patra's Morning Nutrition Programme, the initiative complemented the Government of India's PM POSHAN programme and supported improved learning readiness among participating students.

Flipkart Foundation and The Akshaya Patra Foundation representatives with students at PM SHRI Government Model Primary Kannada School, Amaragol, Hubbali, as part of the Morning Nutrition Programme.

The programme complemented the Government of India's PM POSHAN initiative by delivering over 21 lakh nutritious morning servings, helping children begin their school day with improved nutrition, energy and focus. Among those reached was Shreya Jeeragi, a Class 6 student from Hubli, whose family of seven depends on daily wage work. For many children like Shreya, the morning snack was often the first meal of the day. Teachers in participating schools observed improved classroom participation and attentiveness among children receiving the morning snacks.

The programme was delivered through The Akshaya Patra Foundation's established kitchen and distribution network, ensuring timely delivery of nutritious morning snacks across all supported schools. Beyond the children directly served, the initiative is estimated to have positively impacted over 4 lakh people, including their families and surrounding communities.

Rajneesh Kumar, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Flipkart Group and Board Member, Flipkart Foundation, said, "Every child deserves the opportunity to begin the school day ready to learn. Good nutrition is fundamental to making that possible. Through our partnership with The Akshaya Patra Foundation, we have been able to reach over one lakh government school children in Karnataka with nutritious morning snacks that help address classroom hunger. This collaboration reflects our belief that lasting social impact comes from working with organisations that bring deep community expertise and a shared commitment to improving children's lives."

Shridhar Venkat, CEO, The Akshaya Patra Foundation, said, "When a child comes to school hungry, learning becomes much harder. Through our partnership with Flipkart Foundation, we have been able to reach more children with nutritious morning meals that help them begin the school day with the energy and focus they need to learn. Partnerships like these enable us to extend our reach and move closer to our shared goal that no child's education should be compromised because of hunger."

This initiative is part of Flipkart Foundation's broader work across four focus areas: skill development, entrepreneurship and market access, environmental responsibility and community development. Since 2022, the Foundation has positively impacted over 4.14 million underserved and marginalised individuals, nearly half of whom are women. By partnering with organisations that have deep community expertise, the Foundation combines Flipkart's scale and capabilities with strong local execution to create lasting impact.

MakeMyTrip Foundation, Gulmarg Development Authority and The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa Unite to Support Waste Management Initiative in Gulmarg

MakeMyTrip Foundation, the social impact arm of MakeMyTrip, has signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today with the Gulmarg Development Authority (GDA) and The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa to launch 'Ruh-e-Gul', an initiative focused on waste management and responsible tourism awareness.

One of India's most treasured Himalayan destinations, Gulmarg draws tourists from across the country every year. Recognizing the pressure on the destination's ecosystem as footfall continues to grow, the Foundation will work with its partners to strengthen waste infrastructure and support in restoring Gulmarg's natural character.

On the ground, the initiative will aim at strengthening the operation of waste collection and processing infrastructure, while undertaking cleanup and restoration of identified waste dumping sites. This includes placing community waste bins and collection trolleys at high-footfall locations, along with deploying additional manpower for waste collection across major tourist areas. The initiative will also support the upgradation of infrastructure, including Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) and a bio-gas plant, for scientific waste management, and drive the enhancement of public spaces such as roadsides, roundabouts, pathways, and signage across prominent tourist touchpoints. Through sustained awareness and behavioural change campaigns, the project will engage tourists, local businesses, and communities in taking shared responsibility of the destination's cleanliness.

Yuvaraj Srivastava, Trustee, MakeMyTrip Foundation, and Group CHRO MakeMyTrip, said, "Gulmarg has always held a special place in the hearts of India's travellers, and protecting that charm requires conscious effort on all our parts. Through this initiative, we aim to contribute towards sustainable waste management infrastructure to help Gulmarg keep pace with its growing tourist footfall. It builds on our earlier waste management work at Dal Lake in Srinagar and several other destinations across the country, reflecting the Foundation's longstanding commitment to preserving India's landscapes and communities. We are grateful to Shri Omar Abdullah, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, for supporting us in bringing this project to life."

Tariq Hussain Naik, CEO, Gulmarg Development Authority, said, "Gulmarg draws visitors from across India and the world and it is our collective responsibility to safeguard it. As custodians of this destination, we are committed to ensuring that the infrastructure and systems keep pace with the growing footfall that Gulmarg receives and continue to position it as a global destination. Through this collaboration, we are putting in place what Gulmarg needs to continue to welcome everyone without compromising the natural beauty that makes it so special."

Umar Khurshid Tramboo, Managing Director, The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa, said, "The Khyber has always believed that a destination's health and its hospitality industry's success are deeply intertwined. Gulmarg is our home and its beauty is its greatest asset, and also its most fragile one. A destination is only as good as the experience it offers, and for us, that experience extends well beyond our property. We remain committed to preserving Gulmarg's natural environment, so that its charm endures for generations of travellers to come."

With an estimated 4 MT of waste being generated in Gulmarg daily, 'Ruh-e-Gul' marks a significant step toward building the infrastructure needed to manage it sustainably, ensuring that the destination remains as pristine for future generations of travellers. The Foundation's ongoing efforts include planting over 28 lakh saplings across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Odisha, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Kashmir, as well as the responsible collection and disposal of 990 metric tons of waste from destinations including Neil Island, Kempty Falls, and Dal Lake.

Yogi Government Prepares Master Trainers Across All 75 Districts

Ensuring that girls' education is not disrupted due to a biological process and that schools become safe, respectful, and sensitive spaces for them, the Yogi Government is implementing systemic measures at the grassroots level. In this direction, master trainers are being prepared in all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh to enhance teachers' understanding and sensitivity regarding menstrual health and hygiene.

Under a two-day state-level orientation programme, three participants from each district are being trained as master trainers. On the first day, August 13, orientation was completed for 111 participants from 37 districts, while the remaining 112 participants from other districts will undergo orientation on August 14. In total, 223 participants are being trained over the two days.

This initiative is an important step towards strengthening menstrual health-related arrangements and creating a sensitive educational environment in schools. The training aims to build understanding that menstrual health extends beyond the availability of sanitary pads and includes safe toilets, water, soap, proper disposal systems, privacy, awareness, and a supportive environment.

The programme draws from the broader principles highlighted in the Supreme Court's January 30, 2026 judgment in the Dr. Jaya Thakur vs Union of India and Others case, which linked menstrual health with dignity, education, privacy, and constitutional rights. The three master trainers trained at the state level will return to their respective districts and provide online training to male and female teachers in all schools. Through this cascading model, the knowledge and understanding developed at the state level will directly reach schools across Uttar Pradesh.

Teachers will be trained on menstrual health, girls' dignity and privacy, sensitive behaviour, essential facilities, and the creation of a supportive school environment. The training material also emphasizes the importance of eliminating myths, hesitation, and discrimination associated with menstruation while promoting scientific awareness and empathy.

The initiative focuses not only on training but also on strengthening school systems to ensure that girls receive the necessary support, safe facilities, and accurate information through teachers. Master trainers will serve as a crucial link in taking this state-level initiative to district and school levels.

"Any issue related to the education and dignity of girls should reach schools with sensitivity. Our effort is to ensure that every teacher receives the necessary information and training so that a safe, respectful, and supportive environment can be created for girls in schools. Through each master trainer, this training will be taken to all schools across the state," said Sandeep Singh, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Basic Education, Uttar Pradesh.

- **Separate clean and safe toilets and free sanitary pads to be made available for girls**
- **Greater awareness of menstrual health and hygiene to be promoted in schools**
- **A total of 223 participants from all 75 districts being trained as master trainers through a two-day orientation programme**
- **Three master trainers from each district will provide online training to male and female teachers in all schools of their respective districts**

YOUNG INDIAN FARMERS USING AGRI-TECH COULD NARROW A GENERATIONAL GAP

India is pushing to use drones, satellite data and digital apps to help farmers cope with climate stress and more. But such agri-tech is no magic bullet, writes **Almaas Masood**, Dialogue Earth

India's push to digitise agriculture is giving younger farmers new tools to boost efficiency and adapt to climate pressures, but high costs, data concerns and unequal access could limit their reach.
Image: Neil Palmer / CIAT / CCAFS, CC BY-SA 3.0, viaFlickr.

A group of young people gather in an open field in Telangana, southern India. They take turns trying out flying an agricultural drone meant to spray pesticides, in a session organised by a drone merchant.

These university students in Nalgonda district come from families who have been farming in the region for generations. They plan to pool their resources and buy a drone to offer local farmers a pesticide spraying service, charging them INR 400-500 (US$4-5) per acre. Depending on its size and features, a basic 10-16-litre drone can cost anywhere between INR 2.5 lakh and 6 lakh (US$2,600-6,300).

"We already use drones to spray pesticides on our crops. We can earn up to INR 10 lakh a year if we [offer] the drones [as a pesticide spraying service]," 21-year-old Shiva Reddy tells Dialogue Earth. His family owns 21 acres of farmland in Nalgonda.

For Reddy and his friends, the drone is both a business opportunity and a response to rising farming labour costs. Amidst mounting ecological pressures from climate change and erratic weather, younger farmers in the district told Dialogue Earth they are willing to experiment with drones. They are also open to trying digital advisory services – subscription apps which deliver real-time, location-specific farming tips and alerts – and precision agriculture, which uses data to manage crop variations.

Increasingly, India is moving towards adopting such technologies to increase efficiency in farming, while reducing environmental impacts. The use of agricultural drones to spray agrochemicals, for instance, can reduce wastage while saving time and money, some agricultural researchers note. "It also reduces human exposure to hazardous substances while seamlessly integrating with data analytics platforms for monitoring and analysis," they wrote.

Under the Indian government's Digital Agriculture Mission, set up in 2024, several digital platforms were launched to help farmers keep track of farming-related data. For instance, Agri Stack is a unified database of farmer, land and crop records that aims to simplify farmer access to subsidies, credit and advice.

The Krishi Decision Support System, meanwhile, analyses data such as soil health, satellite imagery and weather data to generate yield estimates as well as drought and flooding assessments. The government is also piloting a new mobile app in dozens of states to make it easier for farmers to apply for subsidised fertiliser.

India's broader goals are to make tried and tested agri-tech exportable, say researchers and entrepreneurs Dialogue Earth consulted. To achieve this, the country needs farmers to adopt the technologies. "If you want to export a technology, you first have to train it, test it and then deploy it," says Rajashekar Reddy, director of Delta Things, a Hyderabad-based agri-tech company that builds devices for soil analysis, pest control and weather stations.

Notably, this increasing integration of technology in the country's farming ecosystem has impacted older farmers. Those with a low-risk attitude can find it challenging to adapt. Younger farmers often support them in navigating these technologies, Dialogue Earth found.

ASSISTING OLDER FARMERS WHILE REDUCING EMISSIONS

Muthyala Sathaiya, 65, walks into the office of a farmer membership collective in Nalgonda holding a handwritten chit from his fertiliser input dealer. Sathaiya is here to collect bags of fertiliser that his input dealer ordered online on his behalf a few days ago. He's accompanied by his 35-year-old neighbour Vanam Jagan, who has come to assist him in case of any digital hiccups.

"I do not understand the process of booking fertilisers online. I had to go around for four days and request educated kids in my village to [help me] get a one-time password [to get registered on the fertiliser sale app]," Sathaiya tells Dialogue Earth.

As of 2016, the average farmer in India was 50. Many of them have lived through decades of evolution and upheaval of the country's agricultural policies – starting from the 1960s, when the green revolution pushed the country towards large-scale commercial monocropping, primarily of wheat and rice. It led to the mechanisation of farm tools, adoption of new irrigation techniques and increased use of agricultural chemicals to produce higher yields, all of which expanded the produce market by the 2000s.

The indiscriminate use of chemicals inadvertently created pressures on natural resources such as land, water and biodiversity. In recent decades, it has made pests resistant to pesticides and reduced beneficial insects.

Today, India continues to be a major emitter of methane from rice cultivation, as well as nitrous oxide, produced when soil bacteria break down nitrogen-based fertilisers like urea. However, the country lacks a mandatory emission reduction policy in its agricultural sector.

> **Large [farms] are already using robots, drones and agricultural sensors. Small and marginal farmers are not, because of the cost.**
>
> **JELLA SATYANARAYANA**
> Project Head, Agri-robotics Lab
> Professor Jayashankar Telangana Agricultural University

Increasingly, extreme and unpredictable weather events directly impact crop production and farmer income. This year, researchers at Australia's Monash University found that a 20 per cent reduction in rainfall would induce an 8 per cent reduction in all-crop national average yields in India, notably 11 per cent for rice and cotton. While a 1°C rise in temperature would lead to the biggest reductions for pearl millet and maize, at 19 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.

In Telangana, this year's agricultural sowing season was delayed due to a late monsoon. El Niño conditions have reportedly kept water levels low in the state's reservoirs, affecting cultivation of Kharif (monsoon) crops. Every year is more unpredictable than the last.

Agri-tech attempts to combat this problem. For instance, the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture promotes climate-resilient farming through soil health cards – biennial soil nutrient test reports provided to farmers to make farmland more climate adaptable. The scheme also champions water-use efficiency through micro-irrigation.

INCREASED EFFICIENCIES?

But recently, even more advanced technology is being employed in agriculture. Precision agriculture has increased and been promoted significantly worldwide, notes Kushang Mishra, a University of Auckland doctoral researcher studying the digitisation of agriculture in India. This type of farming uses real-time data and predictive algorithms to manage crops. The Indian government, research institutions and civil society organisations have been pushing for precision agriculture.

A press note released by the Indian government earlier this year highlighted an AI-enabled precision farming system developed by a Tamil Nadu-based startup. It noted how a government-backed coconut farm in the state used sensors to monitor real-time soil moisture, irrigation and fertiliser use through a mobile platform, resulting in yields doubling. This system has been adopted by over 3,500 farmers, it said.

With precision agriculture, "labour intervention is reduced, input costs come down, irrigation and fertilisation become timely, and only the required quantity is applied", says Jella Satyanarayana, project head of the Agri-robotics Lab at Professor Jayashankar Telangana Agricultural University in Hyderabad. "That reduces wastage and improves productivity." Mishra notes that farmers he interviewed during his research reported saving water, fertiliser and pesticides after adopting data-informed farming.

However, Mishra and other experts caution that precision agriculture is not necessarily synonymous with sustainable agriculture, and may not ultimately reduce use of agrochemicals. "Instead of providing a solution to chemical-based agriculture, which has sort of polluted our soil

[and] has had so much environmental impact, these technologies might actually legitimise these chemical-based farming practices," he says.

On Jagan's eight acres of agricultural land, he has used drones, mechanised machinery and got his soil tested, among other interventions. Despite all this, he says the results have been disappointing. He claims his soil has been degraded by years of using chemical plant growth stimulants recommended by agricultural input dealers, who he alleges were motivated by sales commissions.

Despite advancements in agri-tech, farmers in nearby villages still rely on migrant workers for farm labour, especially during a bad weather year, says Jagan.

Farmers remain focused on immediate concerns such as erratic weather, rising input and labour costs and securing better prices, says Mishra. "Things like farm data are not on their priority list," he says.

EXPORTING USE CASES

Data on soil quality, weather and crops are commercially valuable. Mishra worries that, were this data accessible to big businesses selling pesticides or fertilisers, they could do "targeted advertisements". He says the data could also be used by banks and insurers "who can understand, 'Okay, this particular area here has this chemical profile or this much soil moisture, so how should we target this particular area?'"

Businesses are expected to comply with India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act by May 2027. How the law will apply to agricultural data, much of which falls in a grey area between personal and non-personal information, remains uncertain. "We need to see how the policy evolves," says Reddy of Delta Things.

Even as questions over data governance remain unresolved, India is expanding the reach of its digital agriculture ecosystem beyond its borders. The recent India-Vietnam Joint Statement on Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is one such example. It emphasised co-operation and two-way investment in digital technologies for smart agriculture, water management and technology transfer.

While the statement did not identify specific technologies or companies, researchers and entrepreneurs Dialogue Earth spoke to noted that India's advantage lies in developing data-driven agricultural solutions.

The country's diverse soils, cropping systems and climatic conditions provide companies with a broad testing ground, experts say. Predictive algorithms can be refined across multiple crop cycles, weather patterns and irrigation practices, generating datasets and use cases that are difficult to replicate elsewhere, they note. "We don't need to compete with China in manufacturing," says Reddy of Delta Things. "What we can export is the use of those sensors, the use cases."

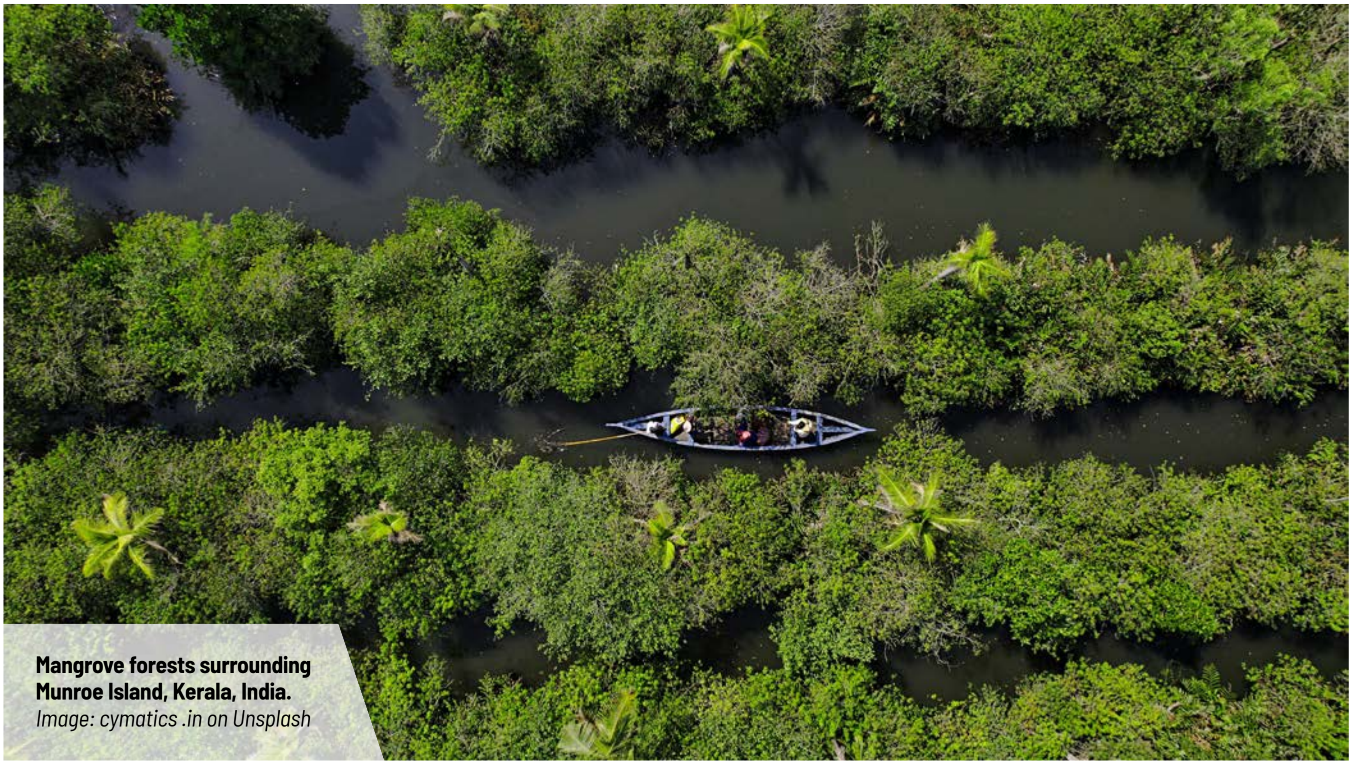
"If we develop good algorithms and improve their accuracy, that's what we can export," he says, adding that his company has exported agricultural sensors to Hungary and Malaysia. Customers there were looking to analyse their crops' nutrient absorption trends and determine which nutrients to add to the soil. But experts caution that Indian technologies will require adaptation to local soils, governance systems, infrastructure and farming practices before they can succeed elsewhere.

According to Satyanarayana, the upfront cost of the technology limits its uptake. Additionally, many digital agriculture tools are designed with larger farms in mind and are not particularly optimised to India's predominantly small and fragmented landholdings. "Large [farms] are already using robots, drones and agricultural sensors," he says. "Small and marginal farmers are not, because of the cost and because the technology is not yet fine-tuned for farms of their size."

> **Despite advancements in agri-tech, farmers in nearby villages still rely on migrant workers for farm labour, especially during a bad weather year.**

That's where young farmers' adaptability to technology could come in.

Back in Nalgonda, during a break in the drone testing session, Shiva Reddy shared that he remains on the fence about predictive algorithms. "They can't predict that easily," he says, adding that farmers in his village don't use them. But he expressed willingness to try them in the future.


Mangrove forests surrounding Munroe Island, Kerala, India.
Image: cymatics .in on Unsplash

WHAT MAKES MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES CONSERVE MANGROVES IN INDIA?

The country's biggest corporate mangrove projects are yet to generate carbon credits. But they could lay the foundation for a blue carbon market, writes **Shalinee Kumari**, Dialogue Earth

It's mid-July, and heavy monsoon rains lash the coast of Maharashtra. Kailas Gawand meets us in Mankule, four kilometres from his village of Hashiware. Here he points towards the submerged landscape around his village, much of which becomes difficult to reach during the rainy season. Gawand recalls how a coastal bund failed in 1990, allowing seawater to inundate what was once fertile agricultural land in the area.

But the intrusion of seawater has also transformed the landscape. Saltwater mangroves, which can buffer the coast from storms, began taking root on abandoned farmlands, including Gawand's two-hectare plot. Hashiware and its surrounding areas have since survived powerful cyclones making land on India's western coast, including Nisarga in 2020 and Tauktae in 2021.

"Mangroves have been a blessing for our village," the 50-year-old tells Dialogue Earth.

In 2021, Gawand was offered financial incentives to protect the mangroves on his land by a Pune-based NGO working in partnership with the Indian arm of US tech company Apple to aid mangrove conservation in Maharashtra.

He was the first in his village to sign a conservation agreement with them, under which land ownership remained unchanged. Since then, around 100 agreements have been signed by others in the village, according to Gawand and the NGO in question, the Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF).

Across India, a number of companies have been financing mangrove conservation, though there is no publicly available registry of corporate mangrove initiatives.

Apple deployed US$ 200 million to support nature-based carbon removal projects globally, including the Hashiware and Mankule mangrove conservation. Indian multinational conglomerate Godrej Enterprises Group invests between INR 8-10 million (US$ 84,000-105,000) annually in mangrove conservation, according to its head of environmental sustainability, Tejashree Joshi, and has been protecting mangroves around Vikhroli township in Mumbai for decades.

And in 2025, US e-commerce company Amazon allocated US$ 1.2 million towards mangrove protection and flamingo habitat restoration in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Despite differing approaches, these three projects share a striking feature: none currently generate carbon credits. This sets India apart from several mangrove conservation projects globally. Kenya's Mikoko Pamoja generates at least 3,000 carbon credits annually – each representing a metric tonne of CO_2 equivalent avoided.

It earns around US$ 130,000 a year for local community projects. In Colombia, Vida Manglar is expected to sequester nearly 1 million tonnes of carbon over 30 years through carbon credits. Ghana's Keta Lagoon mangrove project, meanwhile, could generate 2.3 million carbon credits over 40 years.

Dialogue Earth met with some multinational companies and their mangrove conservation partners in India. They said they are currently focused on conservation, biodiversity and improving community livelihoods rather than carbon credits.

Experts say there is room for these projects to evolve into structured "blue carbon" initiatives – referring to the carbon captured and stored by the world's ocean and coastal ecosystems. To do so, they will need to build scientific knowledge, improve monitoring systems and develop community partnerships needed for carbon markets.

The mangrove conservation projects are "a good stepping stone for companies entering into the carbon market", says carbon market lawyer Avadhi Jain. Through such projects, "they [get to] understand what the landscape is, what can be done and what cannot be done".

Across India, a number of companies have been financing mangrove conservation, though there is no publicly available registry of corporate mangrove initiatives.

CONSERVATION BEFORE ACCREDITATION MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

Mangroves are among the most carbon-efficient ecosystems, with studies estimating they can sequester 6-8 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per hectare, or about four times more than terrestrial forests. Mangrove forests also help buffer coastlines from storms, reduce flood risks, support biodiversity and sustain communities that depend on coastal ecosystems.

For Godrej Enterprises Group, mangrove conservation began long before carbon markets became part of the climate conversation.

The company's Vikhroli township mangrove conservation programme began in 1985. This area holds 23,000 tonnes of carbon as sequestered, according to Joshi. But despite measuring the carbon stored in its mangroves, it chose not to use those figures towards carbon neutrality claims. For the company, Joshi says, protecting mangroves is part of "a long-term survival, a long-term climate priority, and a long-term stewardship".

Godrej carried out its first carbon assessment of its mangrove forests in 2013, and another in 2025 using methodologies approved by the UN climate convention, says Joshi.

Carbon projects require a longer-term commitment than many traditional conservation initiatives. "These would be high-quality credits. [But they] need time to generate," Joshi says. "It's patient capital."

According to Jain, who is also a co-founder of the Climate and Law Initiative, carbon markets are designed to reward exactly this kind of long-term investment.

Jain says corporate social responsibility (CSR) is often treated as an annual corporate exercise, whereas carbon projects require companies to commit to much longer timeframes. While CSR-funded projects can continue for several years, their funding is often reviewed and allocated through annual budgeting cycles. Carbon projects, in contrast, require sustained investment over decades to establish baselines and monitor outcomes. "A carbon market brings longevity – you make sure the impact you're creating today lasts for a while."

She notes that conservation projects often become pilots helping companies understand ecological restoration before they consider larger or more formal carbon-market projects. "Many times, they learn from a conservation project as a case study and then build something similar somewhere else," Jain says.

THE LIMITS OF CONSERVATION FUNDING

Amazon's mangrove initiative represents another model of private investment in these ecosystems. The conglomerate is supporting a mangrove protection and flamingo habitat restoration project across Mumbai and Gujarat, through the non-profit Hasten Regeneration (soon to become Xylo Earth).

The project is a "philanthropic investment" with no carbon credits involved, Sheeba Sen, co-founder of Hasten Regeneration, confirmed to Dialogue Earth.

Sen believes philanthropy and CSR initiatives cannot deliver ecosystem restoration at the scale required across India. "Right now, it's very fragmented," she says. "It'll be a CSR grant for two, three years, and some other grant for two, three years."

Long-term private investment will be necessary to scale conservation efforts beyond individual projects, Sen says: "Private capital is a non-negotiable element of climate financing."

But she cautions against valuing ecosystems only through carbon. "Carbon is a very narrow lens to look at nature [with]," Sen notes, arguing that biodiversity, livelihoods and ecosystem resilience must remain central to future conservation finance.

Kailas Gawand's agreement with AERF, for instance, incentivises him to protect the mangrove ecosystem on his own land, offering him a source of income.

The Apple-supported AERF model focuses on conserving existing mangroves rather than restoring degraded areas through plantations. The organisation has co-signed more than 500 agreements across the coastal districts of Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and Raigad in Maharashtra, protecting over 1,100 hectares of privately owned mangroves, according to Apple.

PUTTING A PRICE ON NATURE

In March 2026, India launched its carbon market portal, taking it one step closer to implementing its carbon credit trading scheme. It signals a shift. Mangrove conservation efforts in India are gradually moving beyond CSR, even if they are not yet structured as carbon projects, notes Manish Dabkara, chairperson and managing director of EKI Energy Services, a carbon credit developer and supplier.

Over time, Dabkara tells Dialogue Earth, many of the mangrove initiatives that are "positioned primarily as CSR, sustainability-driven, biodiversity or coastal resilience programmes [are] likely to evolve into structured blue carbon projects".

For a project to generate carbon credits, experts Dialogue Earth spoke to say developers must establish scientific baselines, monitor ecosystems over time and verify carbon storage. They must also demonstrate that the climate benefits are additional, meaning they would not have happened without the intervention.

The existing blue carbon methodologies do not always fit AERF's approach, according to the foundation's joint director Jayant Sarnaik. "You have to prove that if you do not do this, they will be wiped out. We don't want anything to be destroyed," Sarnaik tells Dialogue Earth.

The key difference between CSR-funded conservation projects and carbon projects is that the latter include accountability to regulatory authorities and buyers, experts say. Conservation projects require monitoring and long-term engagement with communities to ensure agreements are upheld. Carbon projects, however, must meet additional verification and regulatory requirements before credits can be issued because they create a financial asset, Jain says. "Regulatory certainty is a very big aspect that an investor or financer for a carbon project would look into."

Companies are also cautious because of greenwashing concerns and reputational risks associated with flawed carbon credit programmes, Jain says. They may prefer the conservation route because carbon projects attract much greater scrutiny. “The minute you do something in a commercial sense, it gets way more nuanced,” she points out. “People look at various angles, like methodology, additionality and community-sharing agreements.”

A functioning blue carbon market, according to Jain, would require strong safeguards, including monitoring, validation and verification systems to ensure that carbon finance supports genuine conservation outcomes. “The minute you make companies liable in some way and incentivise them to conserve ecosystems, that’s when conservation starts making long-term economic sense,” she says.

Dialogue Earth asked Apple whether it saw a future for blue carbon projects in India and whether it had explored them elsewhere. It replied by email that its 2018 partnership with Conservation International to protect and restore a mangrove forest in Colombia quantified blue carbon credits in trees and soil.

INDIA’S BLUE CARBON FUTURE

The transition from conservation projects to carbon assets will depend on how India designs its blue carbon framework.

Experts say the goal is not simply to create another market commodity, but to ensure that climate finance strengthens ecosystems that already provide value beyond carbon.

“Unless communities understand and accept the need to conserve and become partners in the whole process, we are not going to do anything,” Archana Godbole, director of AERF, tells Dialogue Earth. The growing interest in financing mangrove conservation comes at a time when these ecosystems continue to face competing pressures from development and climate risks. The future of India’s mangroves may therefore depend on whether private finance can move beyond short-term sustainability commitments and support conservation as a long-term investment.

“We are far away from the reality where nature is protected simply on principle,” says Jain.

(This story was supported by the Earth Journalism Network. This article was originally published on Dialogue Earth under a Creative Commons licence.)

(Source: https://www.eco-business.com/news/what-makes-multinational-companies-conserve-mangroves-in-india/)

Global Reporting Initiative CEO Robin Hodess said while the market maybe pushing for more consolidation, "not everyone is moving in the same direction or at the same pace." *Image: GRI*

COMPANIES ARE NOT GOING TO BE REPORTING LESS

GRI CHIEF ON THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY DISCLOSURE

The boss of the world's most-widely used sustainability reporting framework talks about the impact of AI on reporting, disclosure fatigue, and why GRI remains relevant in a crowded market.

As governments increasingly require large companies to disclose their environmental and social impacts, standards developed by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) are emerging as the global baseline for corporate reporting. Jurisdictions including Singapore, Japan and Australia have already incorporated them into climate disclosure requirements.

The rise of ISSB as the leading global standard for investor-focused reporting has raised questions about the future role of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the oldest and still most widely used sustainability reporting framework.

Companies in more than 100 countries use GRI to report their impacts and respond to the expectations of stakeholders beyond investors. But as reporting-fatigued businesses push for greater harmonisation between standards, uncertainty has grown over the role of the 29-year-old, Amsterdam-based non-profit. Where does GRI fit now?

Robin Hodess took over as GRI's chief executive in 2024, after holding senior leadership roles at organisations including the anti-corruption group Transparency International, with a mandate to steer the organisation through this new era.

She says that GRI is as "relevant as ever", and points out that ISSB and GRI serve different purposes — and are complementary. ISSB is focused on an organisation's long term financial survival, whereas GRI examines how the organisation impacts the world.

"The space we helped build around sustainability reporting, with a focus on impacts, is complemented by the addition of financial materiality and reporting on the enterprise value implications of sustainability," Hodess told Eco-Business in an interview on the sidelines of the Ecosperity summit in May.

While she does not rule out further consolidation, Hodess believes the future of corporate reporting lies not in competition between frameworks, but in greater alignment and interoperability.

Even though some jurisdictions have delayed mandatory reporting regimes as sustainability has slipped down the priorities list, Hodess says GRI has not seen a decline in the number of companies that use the framework, adding that four out of five of the largest companies report using GRI globally.

In this interview with Robin Hicks, the Berlin-based chief executive also addresses questions about advances in artificial intelligence (AI) that are reshaping how sustainability data is produced and analysed, and argues that — despite ongoing pressure for market consolidation — companies are unlikely to be reporting less sustainability information any time soon.

In an era of consolidation of sustainability reporting frameworks, when ISSB has emerged as the predominant standard, is GRI still relevant?

GRI is as relevant as ever. GRI and ISSB are complementary. The space we helped build around sustainability reporting, with a focus on impacts, is complemented by the addition of financial materiality and reporting on the enterprise value implications of sustainability. Together, this creates a more holistic picture of impacts, risks and opportunities. That's how investors — particularly medium- to long-term investors — and companies planning for long-term growth need to think about business development and financing. Understanding impacts helps them anticipate the risks and opportunities that are likely to affect the enterprise.

The space we helped build around sustainability reporting, with a focus on impacts, is complemented by the addition of financial materiality and reporting on the enterprise value implications of sustainability.

Companies often complain about reporting fatigue and want to see consolidation in the market sooner — why hasn't this happened?

The market is pushing for greater consolidation, but not everyone is moving in the same direction or at the same pace. We hear the demand from our stakeholders, but we also serve a broad range of stakeholders, so we need to ensure their interests remain closely aligned with our mission.

GRI is a nonprofit developing standards in the public interest. That means every step we take has to be mission-driven and preserve the value and purpose of impact reporting. If, in the future, there are opportunities to advance that mission through different structures or deeper collaboration with others, and the right conditions and resources are in place, that could be a positive development.

In the meantime, GRI will continue to champion the role of impact reporting within the sustainability reporting ecosystem. Ultimately, the goal is to reduce reporting fatigue and create reporting that is effective, user-centric and useful for decision-making. But we're not going to go backwards on reporting. Companies are not going to be reporting less in the future — because there is a general shift towards more regulation and mandatory reporting.

Do you think we're likely to see more consolidation in the sustainability reporting landscape, whether through mergers or greater alignment among standards and frameworks?

I think the priority is less about organisational consolidation and more about consolidating the value proposition of the different parts of the system. We need to make sure the various standards and frameworks reinforce one another and have clearly defined roles.

Our mission remains impact reporting, which complements the growing focus on financial materiality. A key step has been our collaboration with the [financial reporting standard-setter] IFRS Foundation, but it's equally important to work closely with partners such as Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), Taskforce on Inequality and Social-related Financial Disclosures (TISFD) and others that are advancing ambition in specific areas.

Take nature, for example. Our biodiversity standard came into effect in January and is the first of its kind. We believe it is fully aligned with the TNFD framework. That's the kind of alignment the market needs. In that sense, we're already seeing partnerships create a degree of consolidation through greater coherence and interoperability.

One area where this is particularly important is sector standards. Companies and investors increasingly want to benchmark performance against peers in the same industry. As the IFRS Foundation and ISSB continue to enhance the SASB [Sustainability Accounting Standards Board] Standards [which focuses more on disclosing financial risks], it makes sense for us to coordinate closely on sector-specific work. Doing so will help demonstrate the coherence and complementarity between GRI's sector standards and the SASB framework, making the overall reporting landscape clearer and more useful for the market.

A red panda in a forest within Sichuan province in China, one of the most biologically diverse countries on the planet. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) have been working together for an interoperable framework for companies to report on their nature and biodiversity impacts. Image: OndrejProsicky via Deposit Photos.

We've seen delays to mandatory reporting regimes in some jurisdictions such as Singapore and the European Union as governments wobble over disclosure deadlines. Hasn't that slowed the growth in uptake of GRI standards?

No, actually we've seen reporting numbers continue to grow. It has been a go-to framework for many of the world's largest companies, including in Singapore. I believe all SGX-listed companies are reporting on sustainability, and globally around four out of five of the largest companies report using GRI.

So, we haven't seen reporting numbers fall at all. What we've probably seen instead is an adjustment following the build-up to new reporting requirements. We saw a similar effect in Europe when the decision was made to simplify the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS). That had knock-on effects for sustainability teams and the advisory services that support them.

What evidence is there that disclosure can change corporate behaviour?

I think it goes back to a theory of change and a very basic principle: what you commit to and what you're accountable for help drive behaviour. And, of course, what you don't measure, you can't manage.

We see a strong correlation across a number of studies showing that reporting on impacts is associated with better financial performance. We have to assume that this not only supports continued commitment to sustainability reporting, but also creates pressure to deliver on climate, nature and social targets.

We need to see that confluence between doing good and performing well, because that's what ultimately helps drive behaviour change. There is rightly a great deal of pressure today to green the economy, and the more we can link access to capital and business opportunities to strong sustainability performance — not just disclosure, but actual performance informed by good data — the more we will drive meaningful action.

Reporting alone is not the goal. The goal is better decision-making and better outcomes, and reporting provides the information needed to manage performance and deliver results.

Is AI good or bad for sustainability reporting? Could it increase greenwashing risk?

I think it raises the bar, frankly. It should help companies improve some of their reporting processes, but it also makes it clear that if you don't take control of producing high-quality data, someone else will probably generate an assessment of your performance — and then you'll have to explain it.

So I see AI as both an amplifier and an accelerator. It can make reporting more efficient, but it also increases scrutiny and expectations around the quality and credibility of the information companies disclose.

I also think we all need to be part of the conversation about what constitutes credible information. In some ways, the greenwashing era predates the current focus on AI, but it already pushed us back to first principles. It was a reminder that credibility matters above all else.

The credibility of data is essential — not only for companies to make better decisions and manage performance, but also for investors, policymakers and other stakeholders who rely on decision-useful information. AI doesn't change that fundamental requirement; if anything, it makes it even more important.

I see AI as both an amplifier and an accelerator. It can make reporting more efficient, but it also increases scrutiny...

But who really reads sustainability reports?

Well, I think we need to start with the value proposition of reporting. Reporting is a means to an end; it's not an end in itself. We need to think about the information infrastructure that reporting represents. It's about providing decision-useful data, and first and foremost, that's for the company itself.

Companies need to transform. They need to be part of the low carbon transition, have a transition plan and a pathway forward. They need to understand their social impacts, how resources are affected by their operations and supply chains. That information helps companies identify the actions they need to take, so management can make decisions that make the business more resilient, more attractive for financing and ultimately more future-fit.

Another important audience is investors. They may start with financial reports, but they will use any relevant data that is available. I've never met an investor who wants less information. They build their own models, rely on data providers, and ESG ratings and scores continue to matter. GRI data feeds into that ecosystem; without it, an important part of the picture is missing.

Finally, I think this is an area where we still have work to do, and where technology can help: translating sustainability data into insights that are useful for policymakers. As mandatory reporting expands in some parts of the world, we need to better understand how that information can be used to incentivise positive behaviour, and policy has an important role to play in that.

(Source: https://www.eco-business.com/news/companies-are-not-going-to-be-reporting-less-gri-chief-on-the-future-of-sustainability-disclosure/)

WHY WATER AND SANITATION ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS ISSUES

Access to clean water and sanitation is so vital to global progress that the United Nations declared it one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be achieved by 2030: SDG6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

How do you use water every day? You drink, bathe, cook, clean, flush, create, and grow with it. You may get it from a tap, bottle, bucket, river, or well. Water – unpolluted, adequate, and affordable – is essential to the full enjoyment of our lives.

It is a human right and it is fundamental, in obvious and not-so-obvious ways. Access to clean water, as well as sanitation, may influence whether a girl can go to school, if a pregnant woman can deliver a healthy baby, or if a family has enough food to eat. Water and sanitation – or the lack of them – impact the safety, agency, and time of women and girls all over the world.

IS WATER A HUMAN RIGHT? AND WHAT ABOUT SANITATION?

Yes and yes! The human right to water is core to the right to adequate standard of living guaranteed by the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) recognised the human right to safe drinking water in 2010 and safe and dignified sanitation, as a distinct right, in 2016.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of feminist advocates, we understand that water and sanitation are women's rights issues. They carry the burden of collecting clean water for their families, endure harassment on their journeys to gather water or use public latrines, and face economic and social limitations because of period poverty. These problems persist in both urban and rural settings.

WHAT IS SDG6? THE GLOBAL GOAL FOR CLEAN WATER – AND WHAT IT'S MISSING

Access to clean water and sanitation is so vital to global progress that the United Nations declared it one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be achieved by 2030: SDG6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. The international community and local communities further mark its importance with World Water Day (and World Water Week), World Toilet Day, and Menstrual Hygiene Day through conferences, ceremonies, and events.

But how we officially measure progress on SDG6 does not include gender-based benchmarks – part of a troubling absence of gender perspectives across WASH policies. Without explicitly addressing the rights and realities that women and girls face daily, access to water will remain deeply unequal. This is where the work of UN Women and our partners is critical: We ensure women and girls – their needs, rights, and leadership – are not an invisible part of the global water crisis or its solutions.

WHAT THE WATER CRISIS LOOKS LIKE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Intensifying climate change, environmental degradation, and growing demands from agriculture and industry have produced a global water crisis. This water crisis worsens under mismanagement and short-term planning. And it disproportionately impacts women and girls, harming their health, safety, and opportunities.

By improving access to water and sanitation – understanding how it goes hand-in-hand with gender equality – we can drastically improve the lived experiences of women and girls around the world.

CLEAN WATER CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH DURING CHILDBIRTH

Every year, around one million mothers and babies die because of unclean births. Mothers in low- and middle-income countries or in conflict zones, where healthcare facilities have fewer resources, are most at risk of infection. With clean and adequate water and sanitation, many of these deaths could be prevented.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF COLLECTING WATER STILL FALLS MOSTLY ON WOMEN, PARTICULARLY THOSE LIVING IN RURAL AREAS

In many families, most unpaid care and household responsibilities are carried by women and girls. Collecting water – to drink, cook, clean – is no exception. In seven out of 10 households with no running water, women and girls are responsible for collecting it. Based on 53 countries where data is available, the time spent by women and girls is three times as much as men and boys.

Those hours add up to less time for education, paid work, and rest. In some cases, the journey back and forth to water resources also exposes women and girls to harassment, assault, and exploitation. Investments in infrastructure are investments in the lives of women and girls. Achieving SDG6 by 2030 will require US$1 trillion in financing per year.

THE SAFETY RISKS WOMEN AND GIRLS FACE WITHOUT PROPER SANITATION

Adequate and dignified sanitation is about having access to facilities where humans can do the most natural things we do, safely and privately. That means working toilets or latrines at home, school, and work; doors that lock; and a way to clean our hands to prevent disease.

For women and girls, who typically need to urinate more often than men and boys, the differences aren't just anatomical. When they are forced to use inadequate, unsecured, or distant facilities, they risk being exposed to harassment or violence. When there are no public sanitation facilities, women and girls participate less in public life.

And for menstruating or pregnant people, safe facilities are even more critical. This is especially true in places where periods are wrongly stigmatised and menstruating women and girls are shunned by their families or societies. Lack of proper sanitation, lack of understanding, and unaffordable (or unavailable) period products mean that millions live in period poverty, especially in rural areas.

HOW WATER SCARCITY FUELS HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY

When water and food become scarce, gender inequalities often deepen. Scarcity means that the women – often responsible for gathering and managing water, food, and fuel for their families – must work harder and travel farther.

Worse still, failure to provide can lead to physical violence, perpetuated by intimate partners or relations.

Whether after a disaster, during a conflict, in the everyday lives of people living in poverty, or simply where tradition dictates it, women and girls often eat last, and least. So when water scarcity means food insecurity – during major droughts, for example – women and girls face greater rates of malnourishment.

Gender inequality exists from the very beginning of the food supply chain. Women farmers have less access to land, financing, and information. Care responsibilities may mean they have less time to farm. So even in countries where women represent the majority of agricultural workers, they produce 20 to 30 per cent less than male counterparts. Water scarcity depletes from those already-thin margins.

WATER CRISES CAN INCREASE VIOLENCE, CHILD MARRIAGE, AND DISPLACEMENT

Extreme events like flooding and drought – which are intensified by fossil-fuel-driven climate change and cycles like El Niño and La Niña – are harrowing experiences on their own. These crises deplete water supplies, disrupt services, damage infrastructure, and increase illness, hunger, displacement, and conflict.

Water-related disasters, which are growing more frequent and severe, account for 70 per cent of disaster-related deaths. And for women and girls, evidence shows that these events increase the risk of violence. Rates of child marriage and forced marriage also rise, as families desperately cope with water scarcity, food insecurity, and poverty.

During the 2022–2023 drought in the Horn of Africa, intimate partner violence and rape reportedly increased by 20 per cent in Somalia. In Ethiopia, child marriage increased nearly fourfold. In a study on drought in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Lesotho, researchers found drastic increases in sexual violence (46 per cent), with adolescent girls most at risk. According to the IPCC, already-scarce water supplies in Southern Africa are expected to decline 30 per cent by 2050.

THE GENDER DATA GAP LEAVES WATER SOLUTIONS HALF EMPTY

Data doesn't just show us the extent of the problems. It lights the path to solutions. Disaggregated data and gender statistics can show us, in hard numbers, the different impacts on women and men, girls and boys. Properly investing in it is the first step in ensuring no one is left behind in the race to meet SDG6.

The most effective WASH policies use gender analysis and sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data (SADDD) to reflect the diverse experiences of women and girls.

WOMEN ARE LEADING WATER SOLUTIONS, BUT OFTEN EXCLUDED FROM DECISION-MAKING

Despite the responsibilities that women and girls carry – sometimes literally – in managing water, their contributions are rarely recognised in the formal spaces where WASH policies are made. Women are largely excluded from community water governance, planning, and leadership roles. Women and women-led organisations, including human rights advocates and Indigenous water defenders, bring critical experience and perspectives to the management of water. Feminist water governance strengthens water access, sustainability, and equality.

WHAT REAL GENDER-RESPONSIVE WATER AND SANITATION POLICIES LOOK LIKE

UN Women advocates for WASH policies that:

- Uphold women's human rights, especially in conflict and disaster where resources are most scarce.
- Promote women's leadership and their full, equal, and meaningful participation – including in rural and underserved communities – through greater representation in decision-making, training, and financing.
- Are built on disaggregated data and gender statistics, so policies reflect the diverse needs of the people they serve.
- Recognise and redistribute women and girls' unpaid care, domestic responsibilities, and community work, including the collection of water.
- Invest in water and sanitation infrastructure closer to or within homes to reduce women and girls' time constraints and drudgery, while ensuring greater safety and privacy.
- Educate communities and reduce stigma, especially around menstruation and personal hygiene.
- Protect water and use resources sustainably, so that the next generations may inherit a world that is healthier, safer, and more equal.

(Source:https://www.eco-business.com/press-releases/why-water-and-sanitation-are-womens-rights-issues/)

EXTREME HEAT AND THE UNEQUAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The sweat, the stress, the smog. Extreme heat isn't just unpleasant. It's deadly.

Today, climate change, supercharged by the burning of fossil fuels, is contributing to rising temperatures and shattered records worldwide – just as this year's El Niño threatens dangerous shifts in regional weather patterns.

Extreme heat is one of the most unequal consequences of the climate crisis and its impacts are already playing out in women's daily lives. Gender plays an active role in heat exposure, as do factors like age, social and economic resources, and geography. Extreme temperatures affect women and girls differently than men and boys – not just because of biology, but because of gendered norms.

If extreme heat isn't gender-neutral, adaptation strategies and awareness campaigns can't be, either. Learn what rising temperatures mean for women's health, labour, and safety.

HOW EXTREME HEAT AFFECTS WOMEN'S HEALTH

Basic physiological factors can make it tougher for women to cool down.

- **Perspiration and heart capacity:** Sweat is the natural way in which the body cools itself. But women, beginning in adolescence, sweat less than Women's hearts, which tend to be smaller, experience greater strain under heat stress.
- **Hormones:** Women's menstrual cycles cause natural fluctuations in core body temperature – but they can also make hot days feel even more physically and mentally draining. For women experiencing menopause, hot flashes reach new levels of discomfort when ambient temperatures are also high.
- **Age:** While all aging bodies have less capacity to cool themselves, elderly women sweat half as muchas elderly men. (Many elderly women also have less financial security, and may not be able to afford cooling systems.) Children, too, rely on others to make sure they stay cool and hydrated, and to spot the signs of heat illness.
- **Pregnancy:** Being pregnant means the body has to work harder to regulate its temperature, so pregnant people are more prone to heat illness and dehydration. Studies on extreme heat exposure have found increases in pre-term birth, lower birth weights, birth defects, and tragic stillbirths, along with other risks to the pregnant mother, like hypertension.
- **Chronic health conditions:** Heat stress can worsen conditions like diabetes, asthma, and cardiovascular disease, increasing the risk of death. And certain conditions, such as dementia and anxiety – or their medications – can make it harder to recognise the signs of heat illness.

Heat exposure also takes a toll on mental health. Not only does it increase feelings of confusion and fatigue, but many people isolate themselves to avoid the heat outside, which may cut off the social interactions and support they rely on. Research suggests that greater community, like friends who check in on one another, can help mitigate both physical and mental heat risks.

Nearly half a million people die from heat illness every year, with large spikes during heatwaves. With awareness and intervention, many of these deaths could be prevented.

Heat exposure also takes a toll on mental health. Not only does it increase feelings of confusion and fatigue, but many people isolate themselves to avoid the heat outside, which may cut off the social interactions and support they rely on.

WHY EXTREME HEAT WORSENS GENDER INEQUALITY

What happens when these biological differences intersect with social norms, poverty, and conflict?

This is what extreme heat looks like in women's daily lives.

WHO IS THE MOST VULNERABLE TO EXTREME HEAT?

The women and girls most vulnerable live in conflict zones, disaster-affected areas, rural communities, or slums. There may be little to no electricity (or the money to pay for it) to power fans, refrigerators, or air conditioning; a lack of proper shelter and shade; fewer economic opportunities and jobs in harmful conditions; and inadequate local infrastructure means less healthcare facilities, care networks, green spaces, survivor support, and cooling centres.

Those who contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions and have the fewest resources to adapt are being hardest hit by extreme heat and other climate impacts.

Drinking water, sanitation, and heat risk for women and girls

Water can mean the difference between life and death as temperatures push the boundaries of our bodies' ability to function. Yet 1 in 4 women and girls lack access to safe drinking water.

In places that lack clean or affordable water – to drink, bathe, swim, or otherwise cool off – many women and girls shoulder the responsibility of collecting water for their households. That can mean long treks outside, which are made even more treacherous in extreme temperatures.

When women and girls know they don't have easy or safe access to toilets or latrines, they may avoid drinking as much water as they should. For someone menstruating, the discomfort brought on by the combination of heat and lack of sanitation can lead them to miss work, school, or other opportunities. Two in five women worldwide lack access to toilets right now.

WOMEN'S UNPAID CARE WORK AND DOUBLE EXPOSURE TO EXTREME HEAT

Men hold the majority of heavily exposed outdoor jobs, like construction and agriculture, and suffer higher rates of heat-related workplace fatalities. All workers benefit when there are adequate workplace heat protections, including hydration breaks and heat-appropriate uniforms.

But women often juggle their employment with more than their fair share of unpaid care responsibilities. That includes caring for children, the elderly, and neighbours and relatives – work that must be done by someone regardless of a heatwave or drought. A woman farmer, for example, may work a double shift, risking more heat exposure: farming in the field or manually irrigating crops under direct sun, then cooking for her family in a hot kitchen.

Women experience more health issues related to their time spent indoors, whether it's cooking family meals in uncooled homes or working in unventilated garment factories or crowded markets. Women in informal labour markets have even fewer workplace heat protections, like the right to take a break at the hottest part of the day. Dangerous heat conditions also lower productivity, which may mean less income for informal workers.

EXTREME HEAT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Heat is aggravating – especially for people who don't have access to green spaces or cooling or are already under physical and emotional stress.

That aggravation isn't just about discomfort and frustration. Unfortunately, studies show extreme heat leads to higher rates of violence, including domestic abuse.

These risks interact. During a heatwave, women and girls who are trapped in abusive families may be at greater risk of violence while also unable to escape their homes for cooler, safer locations.

Additional studies show increases in violent crimes, spikes in regional conflict, and widespread displacement – all of which are made worse when heat leads to drought and food insecurity. In many parts of the world, when families are left trying to cope with resource scarcity, their young daughters are more likely to be forced into child marriage.

THE WORLD NEEDS GENDER-RESPONSIVE SOLUTIONS TO TACKLE EXTREME HEAT

As temperatures continue to break records, we can see – and feel – that much more must be done to mitigate and adapt for climate change. Together with feminists and justice advocates, UN Women is working to ensure that these solutions account for the ways in which women and girls are deeply impacted.

(Source: https://www.eco-business.com/press-releases/extreme-heat-and-the-unequal-consequences-of-the-climate-crisis/)

As traditional climate finance comes under pressure, voluntary contributions from developing countries are playing a growing role in supporting climate action. *Image: Landscape Alliance, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Flickr.*

AS NEW SOURCES OF CLIMATE FINANCE GROW, THE POOREST ARE NEGLECTED

Developing countries are mobilising more and more climate finance but neglecting their lowest-income peers, finds out **Tom Baxter**, Dialogue Earth

Voluntary climate finance between developing countries tripled between 2013 and 2023, reveals a new working paper from the World Resources Institute (WRI).

Under the 2015 Paris climate agreement, developed countries are obliged to provide climate finance to developing ones in recognition of their historical contributions to global warming. The Paris Agreement also "encourages" developing nations to contribute financial support on a voluntary basis.

The WRI paper finds that in 2013-2023 such voluntary finance from 14 major countries exceeded US$102 billion, peaking at over US$17 billion in 2023 after a sharp and consistent increase from 2020. For comparison, traditional climate finance from developed nations reached US$132.8 billion in 2023.

The 14 countries fall outside Annex II, which contains those developed countries obligated to contribute to climate finance under the Paris Agreement. Annex II countries were members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1992 when the UN climate convention was signed. Since then, some countries, like China, have become upper-middle income, while others such as South Korea are advanced economies – though Annex II remains unchanged.

Excluding China, developing economies will require an estimated US$3.2 trillion annually by 2035 to meet their climate goals and adapt to the changing climate. But traditional channels have been coming under increasing pressure since 2024 when the US under Donald Trump abandoned the Paris Agreement and its climate finance obligations. European countries have been slashing their official development assistance budgets. The UK has announced an effective halving of its climate finance commitments. And the World Bank has scrapped its internal climate finance target. The year 2024 also saw a new global climate finance goal agreed at the COP29 climate summit in Baku, targeting US$300 billion per year by 2035. While the goal calls on developed countries to "lead the way" in meeting this tripled target, it reiterates the importance of Global South nations making voluntary contributions, known as South-South cooperation.

> **Market-driven and infrastructure-heavy finance models are leaving the most climate-vulnerable, least-developed countries behind.**
>
> –HARJEET SINGH
> Founding Director, Satat Sampada Climate Foundation

"There is a huge funding need from emerging markets and developing economies for the climate transition," Zhou Lihuan, an associate at WRI's Sustainable Finance Center and one of the authors of the working paper, tells Dialogue Earth. "The traditional contributor countries' climate finance cannot meet all those needs... Those from non-Annex II countries are quite important."

Harjeet Singh, founding director of the Satat Sampada Climate Foundation, says the growth in non-Annex II countries' climate finance "is a powerfully positive sign."

"But it must be interpreted through the lens of South-South solidarity, not a shifting of legal burdens," he adds. "What the WRI report illuminates is that emerging economies are stepping up as active solution-providers, despite facing massive domestic climate vulnerabilities and severe capital constraints of their own."

TOP FINANCIERS

By far the largest non-Annex II country financier is China, which provided and mobilised US$44.8 billion between 2013 and 2023, the report finds. Following behind China are South Korea and India, who provided and mobilised US$13.9 billion and US$8.3 billion, respectively.

Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Argentina and Russia come next, all providing between US$5 billion and nearly US$7 billion. Of these, Saudi Arabia's climate finance has been quickly and steadily growing, rising from seventh-largest provider among the 14 assessed countries to third between 2019 and 2023.

While most of these countries do not officially report or disclose their climate finance contribution, WRI's paper uses multiple sources to identify "climate-related finance" based on its intended purposes. These are consistent with the UN climate convention's definitions of climate finance and the OECD's framework for tracking climate finance from developed countries.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Interestingly, when excluding China, the climate finance provided by these non-traditional contributors skews towards projects designed to adapt to climate change impacts.

The paper finds that the 13 other non-Annex II countries studied allocated about 53 per cent of their bilateral public finance, export credits and mobilised private finance to adaptation and crosscutting projects since 2020. This contrasts sharply with traditional financiers. In 2016-21, just 25 per cent of climate finance from developed countries went to adaptation projects, according to the OECD.

China does not fit this pattern, however. Of its climate finance provisions, nearly 93 per cent address mitigation, says WRI's Zhou. This is because its climate finance is dominated by infrastructure projects, which tend to focus on mitigation rather than adaptation, Zhou explains. He cautions, however, that the paper's reliance on external rather than government databases may mean its data misses some small-scale adaptation projects.

The paper breaks down non-Annex II climate finance flows into multilateral finance, bilateral public finance and export credits, and mobilised private finance. Collectively, contributions to multilateral institutions make up the biggest proportion, growing from US$1.4 billion to US$13.4 billion between 2013 and 2023. The establishment of new multilateral banks led by emerging economies has added extra impetus to this climate finance route over the last decade, Zhou tells Dialogue Earth. He mentions the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, established in 2016 and led by China, and the New Development Bank, established by the BRICS countries in 2015, in particular.

Where non-Annex II climate finance closely resembles traditional climate finance, however, is its neglect of low-income countries, which are often the most vulnerable to climate change. Excluding contributions to multilateral finance, only 8 per cent of the climate finance from the 14 countries analysed in the paper went to low-income nations. This closely mirrors (9 per cent) contributions from Annex II countries. Additionally, of that 8 per cent, around half has gone to just one country, Ethiopia, driven by large-scale infrastructure projects financed by Chinese banks.

"[This] proves that market-driven and infrastructure-heavy finance models are leaving the most climate-vulnerable, least-developed countries behind," says Singh, who thinks that better mechanisms need to be created to ensure finance reaches the frontlines of the climate crisis.

CLIMATE FINANCE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES

The paper notes that climate finance from non-traditional contributors tends to emerge from broader foreign policy rather than standalone development bodies.

"[They] do not typically have dedicated foreign aid offices to give out foreign aid. Typically they're more like embedded within existing ministries, like the ministry of foreign affairs for example," says Zhou.

Such countries also have large climate finance needs of their own.

Institutional and policy arrangements can vary greatly across countries. South Korea, for example, has clearly integrated climate considerations into the official development assistance (ODA) it provides bilaterally, said Taewook Huh, climate finance specialist at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

In 2021, the country adopted its Green New Deal for ODA Promotion Strategy. The aim was to increase the share of green ODA to 28.1 per cent – the average for the world's traditional ODA providers – by 2025, from a pre-2020 baseline of 19.6 per cent, Huh says. These goals were far exceeded, with 63 per cent of bilateral ODA focused on climate by 2024, according to the OECD.

South Korea tends to deliver climate finance frequently and through smaller-scale projects, Huh says, via its international cooperation agencies and banks. China's, meanwhile, is fragmented across multiple ministries, shaped by various incentivising documents and can be erratic, given its focus on project finance.

India similarly has no standalone climate aid agency, Singh tells Dialogue Earth. Rather, international public finance is coordinated through the Ministry of External Affairs.

"India's approach reflects a highly pragmatic model tailored to South-South cooperation, where climate outcomes are integrated directly into development partnerships," he says. "[It is] demand-driven, reciprocal, and closely aligned with regional infrastructure demands and technology transfers." This raises questions of transparency and how the world should best understand the contributions of these climate financiers. Because it is voluntary and not mandated under the UN climate convention, such finance also does not have formalised reporting and disclosure requirements.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There is no doubt that financial contributions from non-Annex II countries will be vital to meeting global climate finance needs. What direction they take from here is uncertain, however. Shaping elements include non-traditional contributors' actions to coordinate their climate finance, and recipient countries' domestic policies which could improve investment environments.

It will also be shaped by multilateral negotiations and meetings – not only negotiations under the UN climate convention, but also in fora such as BRICS, and regional and international fora for coordination among export credit agencies, WRI's South-South finance director, Liu Shuang, tells Dialogue Earth. The role of private actors from non-Annex II countries will also be critical as the world stretches to reach the US$1.3 trillion target, she adds. Asked if he expects non-Annex II climate finance to continue its expansion, Harjeet Singh summarises: "Yes, but its growth trajectory will look vastly different from Western ODA models."

The challenge, then, is in tracking, assessing and better coordinating these important voluntary climate finance contributions.