climate RISE alliance

INTERWOVEN FUTURES

HOW CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS CAN ACCELERATE INDIA'S JOURNEY TOWARDS CLIMATE RESILIENCE

ABOUT CLIMATERISE

ClimateRISE Alliance is a collaborative platform that aims to accelerate India's journey towards climate resilience for the most vulnerable communities. By leveraging collective insights and expertise of 100+ civil society organisations working at the intersections of climate & building resilience for the most vulnerable communities, the alliance is working to shape an India view, a common vocabulary, and enable a multi-stakeholder engagement approach to intersectional climate action in India. With a mission to build a Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable and Equitable India by placing people, nature and the climate first, the Alliance works across the areas of: Sustainable Cities and Service Delivery, Resilient Agriculture and Livelihoods, Conservation and Restoration, Health Systems and Services, and Gender, Equity, and Social Inclusion. For more information, visit www.climaterise.in

ABOUT OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Set up in 1990, ORF seeks to lead and aid policy thinking towards building a strong and prosperous India in a fair and equitable world. It helps discover and inform India's choices, and carries Indian voices and ideas to forums shaping global debates. ORF provides non-partisan, independent analyses and inputs on matters of security, strategy, economy, development, energy, resources and global governance to diverse decision-makers (governments, business communities, academia, civil society). ORF's mandate is to conduct in-depth research, provide inclusive platforms and invest in tomorrow's thought leaders today. For more information, visit www.orfonline.org

ABOUT DASRA

Dasra meaning 'enlightened giving' in Sanskrit, is a pioneering strategic philanthropic organization that aims to transform India where a billion thrive with dignity and equity. Since its inception in 1999, Dasra has accelerated social change by driving collaborative action through powerful partnerships among a trust-based network of stakeholders (corporates, foundations, families, NGOs, social businesses, government and media). Over the years, Dasra has deepened social impact in focused fields that include climate, adolescents, urban sanitation and governance and has built social capital by leading a strategic philanthropy movement in the country. For more information, visit www.dasra.org

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- JANAAGRAHA
- MAHILA HOUSING TRUST
- PRAGATI ABHIYAN
- PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT ACTION (PRADAN)
- REAP BENEFIT
- RYTHU SADHIKARA SAMSTHA
- SELCO FOUNDATION
- SWAYAM SHIKSHAN PRAYOG
- TECHNOLOGY FOR WILDLIFE FOUNDATION
- WASTE WARRIORS SOCIETY

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Climate change, the defining crisis of our age, poses an immediate threat to the sustainable development of nations across the globe. The escalating impacts of climate change are not only environmental but also infringe upon social and developmental objectives. **India ranks as the fifth most vulnerable nation among 181 countries,** exposed to the devastating effects of climate change including floods, droughts, heatwaves, wildfires, and air pollution – threatening to exacerbate food security, biodiversity loss, and triggering mass migration.

The effects of climate change are intricately linked with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in nations like India, where these goals are a critical roadmap toward progress. Climate change, acting as a threat multiplier, stands as a formidable barrier to achieving these SDGs, making it not just an environmental challenge but a developmental crisis. Among the hardest hit are the marginalized and vulnerable communities that bear the disproportionate brunt of a crisis to which they have contributed the least. In the context of climate change and sustainable development, this signifies that environmental challenges and their solutions are deeply interwoven with other social and economic issues, thereby demanding an interconnected and interdependent approach to problem-solving.

Dasra and Observer Research Foundation's (ORF) comprehensive report **- 'Our Uncommon Future: Intersectionality of Climate Change and SDGs in the Global South'** underscores the importance of an intersectional approach to climate action and presents detailed evidence on the interlinkages between critical SDGs (2, 3, 5, 11, and 15) and climate change.

OVERVIEW

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

Dasra & **ORF's** Research on climate intersectionality reveals how the climate crisis is actively impeding the progress made across all SDGs in India

Shifts in soil quality, land degration and reduction in biodiversity have impacted agricultural food production systems and can lead to decline in rice yields by 10-12% by 2050.

According to a 2020 report by the Indian government, 62% of assessed species in India are threatened with extinction, with climate change identified as one of the major drivers of this trend.

Climate crisis exacerbates challenges around access to food and shelter, disrupts access to water and sanitation, and increases the risk of disease and malnutrition - all of **which leads to an in increased burden of care on women and girls.** Almost 80% of the people displaced by climate change are women.

By 2035, India's urban population is estimated to be 675 million. According to a 2019 Study by the World Bank, 36 million people in India are at risk of coastal flooding.

Access to clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food, and secure shelter is being unmet. **According to WHO, climate change is already causing an estimated 150,000 deaths anually, and this number is expected to rise, over this year.**

The report highlights that given India's vulnerability to climate change and its considerable impact on the SDGs, there is an immediate need for stakeholders to converge and build consensus on the way forward. Governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), philanthropies, and communities all possess immense potential to drive inclusive and equitable climate action. CSOs, in particular, have proven their mettle in times of crisis – demonstrating agility, resilience, and a deep connection with the communities they serve. These organisations, due to their on-ground presence and contextual understanding, are key allies in mainstreaming climate action, engaging in advocacy, and bridging the policy-implementation gap.

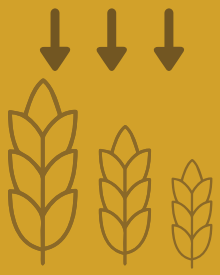
This compendium serves as an addendum to Dasra and ORF's comprehensive climate report and spotlights civil society organisations championing intersectional climate action at the grassroots. For each of the critical SDGs identified in the detailed report, the compendium summarizes the evidence and pathways of the climate interlinkages with respect to their impacts on the most underserved communities and further discusses the role CSOs play in driving change at the intersections of climate and these development goals . Through these case studies, the compendium advocates for scaling similar innovative climate solutions through a collaborative and multi-stakeholder approach, while concluding with actionable insights for governments, CSOs, and philanthropy.

1. Nilanjan Ghosh and Aparna Roy, Eds., Our Uncommon Future: Intersectionality of Climate Change and SDGs in the Global South - Lighthouse Cases and Learnings from India, July 2023, Observer Research Foundation. https://www.orfonline.org/research/our-uncommon-future/
2. The evidence on climate - SDG interlinkages presented here has been based on the findings of the comprehensive report - 'Our Uncommon Future: Intersectionality of Climate Change and SDGs in the Global South' (see footnote 1).
3. All case studies are based on interviews conducted with the personnel of the respective organisation.

CLIMATE AND

2 ZERO HUNGER

Changing climatic conditions impact factors such as soil quality, plant health, and pests leading to reduced crop productivity and exacerbating food insecurity, particularly in vulnerable regions.



Increasing food demand to meet global hunger is forcing farmers and cultivators to adopt practices that are detrimental to the environment and natural ecosystems.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), between 702 and 828 million people are undernourished, with about 150 million added since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) of the South Asian region remains one of the worst affected globally, second only to sub-Saharan Africa.

South Asian region

828 million

The impacts of climate change on food security are also more pronounced for vulnerable groups like women. As per the World Health Organization, about 828 million people went hungry in 2021; of these, 150 million more women than men suffered food insecurity.

To address these issues and ensure sustainable and resilient food systems, widespread adoption of climate-smart agriculture is crucial, especially in the global south. The transition to more holistic approaches such as natural farming and agro-ecology that emphasizes the integration of ecological principles into farming practices needs to be mainstreamed.

Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)

Impact: Andhra Pradesh Community-Managed Natural Farming is presently being implemented in 3,009 Rythu Bharosa Kendrams (3,730 Gram Panchayats). 8,50,000+ farmers are practicing Natural Farming on 9,40,000+ acres of land through the program

Established in 2014 by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) is dedicated to enhancing farmer and consumer welfare while simultaneously conserving the environment. Considering the looming threat of the climate crisis, RySS is working with farmer groups to promote their transition to community-managed natural farming (CNF) practices, which have the potential to reduce cultivation costs, increase crop yields, preserve ecological health, and create sustainable sources of income for farmers during prolonged dry spells or incessant rains.

A Closer Look: Andhra Pradesh Community-Managed Natural Farming

Implemented by RySS, Andhra Pradesh Community-Managed Natural Farming (AP-CNF) aims to support participating farmers in Andhra Pradesh, helping them achieve sustainable, remunerative livelihoods and building the human and social capital necessary for sustainable agricultural production.

Farmers use four treatments to enhance productivity at low cost: Bijamrita (Seed treatments using local cow dung and urine); Jiwamrita (soil inoculant made of cow dung and urine); Mulching (ensure favourable microclimate soil); and Waaphasa (soil aeration). These practices have a positive impact on soil fertility and its water retention capacity. They also reduce input costs and farmers' exposure to credit risks; improve the cash flow of vulnerable farmers and enhance their ability to deal with climate-related shocks. To encourage farmers to shift to CNF, RySS conducts training and awareness programmes for Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Village Organisations, and Farmer Producer organisations (FPOs). Master Farmers are selected from among promising APCNF farmers to act as agents of change and help other farmers transition to natural farming practices. RySS also leverages the existing institutional platform of Women's Self-Help Groups (WSHGs), for scaling, sustaining, and deepening the program.

A study conducted to assess the effectiveness of APCNF noted a 25-43% increase in crop yields for paddy, groundnut, Bengal gram, and red gram; 8.26% increase in gross revenue; and 19.89% increase in income per household (for CNF over non-CNF). The Andhra Pradesh Government plans to cover 6 million farmers in 12,924 Gram Panchayats by 2024 and cover the entire cultivable area of 8 million hectares by 2026.

"Natural farming practices are climate resilient and are being promoted by governments, consumers and also practitioners. The economic benefit of transforming to natural farming, taking even extremely conservative calculations, is around 40 times."

MURALIDHAR G.
Senior Advisor, RySS

Professional Assistance for Developmental Action (PRADAN)

Impact: 2,00,000+ families supported through the promotion of the Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) approach.

Professional Assistance for Developmental Action (PRADAN) is dedicated to enhancing agricultural productivity and food security in India, particularly in regions plagued by pervasive poverty. Rooted in the ethos of "pradan", signifying a commitment to giving back to society, PRADAN focuses on capacity development through skill-building and knowledge-sharing, eschewing one-off service delivery. Additionally, PRADAN supports vulnerable communities, especially women, in forming collectives. These collectives are then empowered to secure dignified livelihoods for all by facilitating access to knowledge, technology and government entitlements.

A Closer Look: Integrated Natural Resources Management (INRM) Approach

Initiated during the 1990s, the INRM approach is designed to achieve a harmonious integration of diverse aspects of natural resource utilization within a sustainable management framework, aligning with the production objectives of farmers and other key stakeholders.

This holistic INRM approach deploys advanced technical solutions to enhance the productivity of land, water, forests and biological resources, particularly in undulating, hilly and mountainous regions. By doing so, it endeavors to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for underprivileged communities. It establishes "bioregions," natural delineations of resource distribution, as the fundamental underpinning for planning and management strategies. Notably, the program places significant emphasis on the comprehensive capacity development of economically disadvantaged families. This includes facilitating the adoption of advanced technologies and best practices, ultimately driving rapid growth within the agricultural and allied sectors. By doing so, the program empowers rural inhabitants to gain access to mainstream markets, fostering economic progress.

Subsequent to the implementation of the INRM, the hamlet-level collectives (tola sabhas), possess a more profound and comprehensive understanding of the landscape. They are equipped with a holistic approach to manage their natural resources and enhance the sustainability, productivity and resilience of their agricultural activities. PRADAN has extended support to more than 2,00,944 smallholder farmers, so far, in the effective implementation of integrated natural resource management strategies. This support has been instrumental in strengthening their resilience against the challenges posed by water variability induced by climate change.

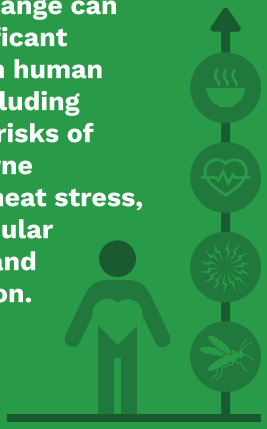
"Instead of applying a handful of successful solutions everywhere, let us acknowledge the strategies that have proven effective in different areas and team up with stakeholders who share a common vision to bring benefits to diverse regions."

MANAS SATHPATY
Director, PRADAN

CLIMATE AND

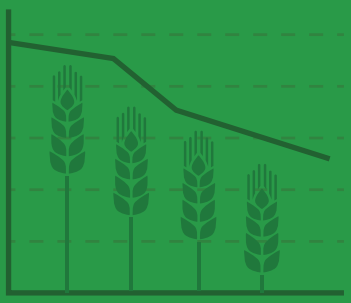
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Climate change can have significant impacts on human health, including increased risks of vector-borne diseases, heat stress, cardiovascular diseases, and malnutrition.



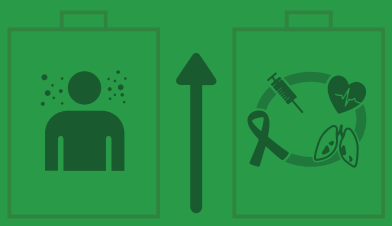
Populations lacking a sufficiently robust health infrastructure, chiefly in developing countries of the Global South, are expected to be the most vulnerable to climate-induced health risks.

Changing climate and the consequent natural calamities are driving down crop production as well as the nutritional value of crops, leading to food insecurity and malnutrition on an unprecedented scale.



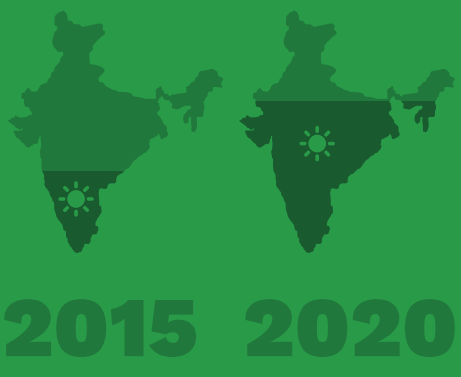
WHO has designated climate change as the 'single biggest health threat facing humanity'. It has observed that climate change directly affects the environmental and social determinants of health and is likely to cause 2,50,000 additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050 from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, and heat stress.

IPCC REPORT OF 2022



An IPCC report (2022) noted that in Asia, climate hazards are contributing to a broad spectrum of negative health outcomes and a higher incidence of communicable and non-communicable diseases

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the number of Indian states hit by heat waves since 2015 doubled to 23 by 2020



It is crucial for India to make its healthcare framework more robustly climate-responsive. This can be achieved by building effective policy-praxis interfaces and strengthening the resilience of India's healthcare infrastructure to deal with the burgeoning health impacts of the climate crisis.

SELCO Foundation

Impact: 9,00,000+ livelihoods improved; 48,00,000+ people provided access to reliable health services; 1,000+ health facilities improved

SELCO Foundation works with diverse stakeholders–local health officers, innovators and entrepreneurs to solve the issue of unreliable access to energy and the lack of appropriate appliances in rural India to help improve the timely delivery and impact of healthcare services. In the past four years, SELCO has implemented over 1,000 sustainable energy-driven healthcare interventions partnering with NGOs, enterprises and local government officials including Panchayat Secretaries, District Commissioners and District Health Officers. Currently, SELCO is spearheading the largest solar electrification of public health centres in India, involving 25,000 health facilities across 12 states. Apart from this, SELCO Foundation also works on demonstrating and catalysing the role of renewable energy and its productive use appliances in alleviating poverty across verticals of livelihoods in agriculture and allied sectors, traditional and micro businesses, built environment and overall well-being.

A Closer Look: Sustainable Energy Led Climate Action Program (SELCAP)

Initiated in 2020, the Sustainable Energy Led Climate Action Program (SELCAP) advocates for a bottoms-up approach to developing an array of solutions that address the needs of the people most vulnerable to climate change. As part of the overarching goal to strengthen public healthcare institutions, the organisation has been working to create an enabling ecosystem for decentralized energy solutions and implementing these in Sub-Centres, PHCs and CHCs in 12 states in India.

Through its interventions, SELCO found that a health centre with inefficient appliances consumes three times more electricity than one with efficient appliances. In Meghalaya, which faces unreliable electricity due to its hilly terrain, SELCO observed high maternal mortality and infant deaths in lieu of the absence of well-functioning labor rooms. The organization then partnered with the National Health Mission in Meghalaya to co-create a plan to improve energy access across health sub-centres, starting with 100 centres with dire needs. Their solutions included the use of efficient appliances and solar energy systems for basic energy needs, vaccine storage, labour room and staff quarter energy needs.

It is predicted that for each centre, these solutions could portend savings of more than INR. 11 lakhs over a 20-year period. Additionally, many emergencies like deliveries that are now being taken care of at local health facilities have decreased the number of unnecessary referrals to larger hospitals, thereby decreasing their burden.

“Affordable and equitable access to healthcare is a function of two aspects–one, resources required to deliver health services, and two, the cost of accessing it. Renewable energy has the ability to address both these aspects-focusing on making communities healthy through sustainable means and fostering more inclusive development.”

HARISH HANDE

Founder and CEO, SELCO Foundation

Pragati Abhiyan

Impact: 2,000+ farmers empowered in 83 villages across 7 blocks and 3 districts in Maharashtra

Pragati Abhiyan works towards developing solutions that create an enabling environment for the poor to break out of the poverty trap. These solutions are in the form of ensuring the effective delivery of existing government programs as well as devising new programs to address communities needs through articulating specific changes in policies, training, skill building and community awareness. In the context of climate change, the organization is working with small and marginal farmers to alleviate their vulnerabilities to the crisis. Over the last few years, Pragati Abhiyan has been actively working to address nutritional poverty in rural Maharashtra through the re-introduction of millets in the Indian diet.

A Closer Look: Millet Revival Programme

Nutritional poverty is a vicious cycle that begins during childhood and perpetuates the circle of poverty and ill health, reduces productivity, and slows economic growth. In the face of a worsening climate crisis and its implications on the nutritional composition of food, Millets, a traditional but forgotten grain, have emerged as a promising solution to addressing malnutrition and improving the nutritional and health outcomes of populations.

Finger Millets, locally known as Nagali/Ragi, are a nutrition-rich staple food of tribal populations in Nashik district. However, the lack of demand, change in diet patterns, and the lack of research and evidence on cultivation practices, seeds, and primary processing machinery has led to a steady decline in the production of millets. This realization paved the way for Pragati Abhiyan's **Nagali revival program**. To address supply-side constraints, the program aimed to scale improved agronomic practices for Nagali cultivation through awareness, training and hand-holding farmers throughout cultivation, harvesting and processing stages. The biggest challenge faced by farmers was the skill to run and service the machinery for millet processing. This was resolved by introducing Ragi threshers at the cluster level and training Aanganwadi workers in the use of the threshers. To encourage consumption and generate demand, the organization is actively trying to introduce Ragi based products at least two times a week as part of implementation of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in schools. Women Self Help Groups, Aanganwadi workers, and school teachers are also trained in preparing ragi-based sweet and savoury snacks which the children can enjoy.

The improved agronomic practices for Ragi cultivation have been adopted by over 2,000 farmers in 83 villages across 7 blocks and 3 districts in Maharashtra. The program has resulted in a four-fold increase in yield of Ragi without a significant increase in input costs or labour days for farmers.

"Through our various programmes we want to enable the poor to break out of the poverty trap and provide them with the skills and awareness to encourage social and economic mobility."

ASHWINI KULKARNI
Founder Trustee, Pragati Abhiyan

CLIMATE AND

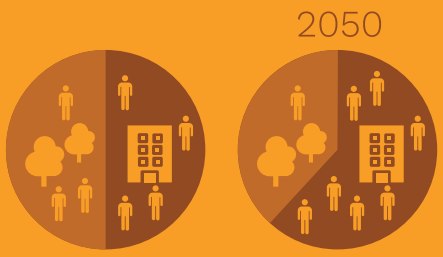
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Cities are experiencing increasing multi-dimensional climate risks including floods, heatwaves, air pollution, etc. which are often exacerbated by underinvestment in resilient infrastructure and sustainable human settlements.

Cities in developing countries, which will accommodate the majority of new urban residents, face greater climate risks and higher economic losses.

A report by the World Bank states that the average annual urban losses from disasters were estimated at about $314 billion globally in 2015 and may rise to $415 billion by 2030.

According to the 2011 population census of India, India's coastline comprises over 486 urban centres, with a combined population of roughly 41.7 million people. Key infrastructure in many cities along India's coastline is likely to get submerged by 2050 due to significant sea level rise and inundation.



According to the OECD, over 50% of the global population lives in cities, projected to reach 70% by 2050, contributing to over 80% of the world's GDP and more than 70% of greenhouse gas emissions.

The path to sustainable urban futures will be determined by inclusive and transformative policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change; frameworks for responsive city planning; and collaborative and integrated systems of urban governance that enable cities to respond to and withstand a wide range of climate shocks.

Waste Warriors Society

Impact: 2,00,000+ people engaged; ~6,000 tonnes waste pre-processed

The Indian Himalayan Region is a hotbed for tourism-related activities, generating 8.4+ million metric tonnes (MT) of waste annually. Due to insufficient collection and processing systems, over 60 percent of this waste is either burnt or disposed of in the open, leading to environmental implications. Waste Warriors Society (WW) aims to address these issues by catalyzing systemic change for waste management solutions in this eco-sensitive region. By enhancing community engagement, strengthening service-delivery infrastructure, and building the capacities of local governments, Waste Warriors is tackling not only the mounting waste problem but also the climate crisis.

A Closer Look: Zero Waste Program, Community Activation, Dignified Livelihoods, and Research and Advocacy

Waste Warriors has four programmatic verticals focusing on Zero Waste Program, Community Activation, Dignified Livelihoods, and Research and Advocacy. Through their initiatives, WW supports urban local bodies in improving the existing waste management system, by recommending better collection mechanisms, setting up infrastructure, training waste workers and local body representatives to handle end-to-end waste management operations, community engagement, and awareness campaigns. Their interventions leverage behaviour change to inculcate ownership and responsibility towards waste in the local community.

WW set up four Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) collaboratively, including the first MRF for the state of Uttarakhand in Dehradun. The processes of dry waste recycling and wet waste composting in MRFs help in reducing GHG emissions, thereby combating climate change. In collaboration with Dehradun Nagar Nigam, WW organized city-wide awareness campaigns on waste management, leveraging creative media, puppet shows, and radio broadcasts to engage the community. In partnership with local governments, WW interventions help strengthen the implementation of Swachh Survekshan and solid waste management rules in the Himalayan regions.

A key component of WW's work across all its programs has been addressing the social stigma attached to waste, and waste workers. It aims to foster a sense of identity and agency among waste workers from vulnerable communities, such as women, youth, migrants, and works towards generating dignified livelihoods for them.

"Respecting the sanctity of the Himalayas, the communities and the biodiversity that inhabit this eco-sensitive region is critical. I urge people to attend at least one clean up drive, or visit a dumpsite hidden away from tourist areas, not just to see the magnitude of the climate issue, but to feel it."

VISHAL KUMAR
CEO, Waste Warriors Society

Biome Environmental Trust

Impact: 2,00,000+ recharge wells dug in the Bengaluru

Biome Environmental Trust works in the areas of land-use planning, energy, water, and sanitation. Driven by a strong agenda of making water a fundamental right for all, Biome works through knowledge-based activism, focusing on creating nature-based systems, ensuring livelihoods, and establishing community participation so that there is ownership and involvement in taking care of these resources. A significant part of Biome's work revolves around simplifying and disseminating crucial information and regulations on resource management to the wider community.

A Closer Look: Million Wells for Bengaluru Campaign

The Million Wells for Bengaluru campaign was initiated in 2015, with the objective of recharging the groundwater table in the city, incentivizing ownership and responsibility for water management among local citizens, and creating livelihood opportunities for the local community of traditional well diggers (called Bhovi or Mannu Vaddars) in Karnataka. The campaign is expected to run until 2025.

Recharge wells have low economic cost, with fewer carbon emissions, and use only a tenth of energy leading to increased savings. The recharge well, when adopted by each and every household, can also help mitigate flooding in the city. To implement the Million Wells program, Biome focused on building awareness and educating citizens on how their water usage affects the groundwater table through events like exposure walks, workshops and discussions, photography exhibitions, social media, and articles in electronic and print media, with the aim of incentivizing them to action. Further, Biome ensured that the traditional insights of the marginalized well-digger communities of Karnataka, known as Bhovi or Mannu Vaddars, were integrated in designing the program and awareness material. The campaign was able to create fresh livelihood opportunities for the Mannu Vaddars, who were then employed in digging the recharge wells across various locations in Bengaluru.

The campaign also succeeded in building a sense of collective ownership over the shallow aquifer, with more than 2,00,000 recharge wells already dug in the city. Biome is now supporting the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on AMRUT 2.0 for a pilot project on the management of shallow aquifers, as technical experts.

"It is important to understand what is happening locally and build the capacity of institutes up to the ward level to respond to climate change."

AVINASH KRISHNAMURTHY
Director, Biome Environmental Trust

Reap Benefit

Impact: 5,60,000+ crowd-sourced climate data points collected; 200+ hyperlocal communities started; 552+ solutions built, Activated 1,21,000+ Problem Solvers

Reap Benefit seeks to cultivate a tribe of local problem solvers to drive climate action in their respective communities by tackling everyday issues using local data, solutions, and campaigns. It works closely with the youth through experiential mentorship programmes in Education Institutions, Civil Service organisations, Governments, and civic technology platforms. These experiences enable young citizens to identify local environmental problems, collect quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the issues, ideate and pilot solutions and campaigns, and communicate the data and solutions with local governments. The experiential learning is enhanced by hands-on activities; do-it-yourself solution kits; games; and Reap Benefit's technology platforms, which include a WhatsApp Chatbot, Samaaj Data - a repository of crowdsourced, crowd-verified hyper-local data on climate and governance and a Civic Forum.

A Closer Look: Paryavaran Mitra

To strengthen citizens' involvement in the state government's efforts towards preserving the environment, the Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi (DDC) launched the Paryavaran Mitra programme in June 2022, in collaboration with the Environment Department, GNCTD. The programme aims to create a network of people with the knowledge, commitment, and potential to meet the challenges of environmental sustainability in their own spheres of influence.

Reap Benefit is actively supporting the Government of Delhi on this flagship intervention. Leveraging its experience in creating innovative technological platforms, it helped develop a WhatsApp-based chatbot system, which was used to implement the project and engage thousands of Paryavaran Mitras. Using the platform, interested citizens were also able to sign up for volunteer activities in the areas of greening, pollution control, and waste management.

By April 2023, 10,200 residents had expressed interest in the initiative through the chatbot taking close to 5,000 actions towards Civic and Climate Issues. Citizens shared over 175 suggestions and comments on environment-related policies and had an influence on 9 climate and environment policies related to – rainwater harvesting, park creation and maintenance, Winter Action Plan, ban on crackers, Anti-smog guns, EV retrofitting, etc.

"We want to solve climate change at the hyperlocal level, using hyperlocal solutions and leveraging hyperlocal data. Our vision is to mobilize 10 million youth and create a network of 10,000 young civic leaders across India."

KULDEEP DANTEWADIA

Co-founder and CEO, Reap Benefit

Janaagraha

Impact: 2,00,00,000+ citizens in 3,000+ cities reached through civic technology platforms, platforms for participation catalysed for 16,00,000+ million citizens in 2,900+ urban poor settlements in Odisha

Janaagraha works with citizens and governments to transform the quality of life in India's cities and towns by harnessing citizen participation, city finance, and urban policy and research. Janaagraha aims to work at the intersection of cities, governance and climate action to enable strong city-systems for effective environmental governance.

A Closer Look: City Systems for the Environment

Janaagraha is leveraging its city-systems framework to identify gaps in climate governance in Bengaluru. As part of the policy advocacy work undertaken by the organisation, two separate tracks of work are being undertaken.

First, a national-level analysis of 186 initiatives across 19 ministries – schemes, missions, standards and programmes – related to the environment was analysed. The working paper aims to highlight the importance of multi-level governance for climate action, the localisation of climate goals through the strengthening of existing systems at the city government level, and the recognition of the role of the community in driving climate action. The second track involves the assessment of laws, policies, plans, schemes and orders for the state of Karnataka to assess environmental governance in its cities and towns. The framework has been derived by using Janaagraha's city - systems framework and the National Institute of Urban Affairs' Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework (CSCAF).

Based on the synergies identified in existing schemes, Janaagraha advocates for efficient localization of climate governance by strengthening the capacities of urban local bodies (ULBs) to act on last-mile environmental sustainability.

"In the next few years, it is cities that will determine if the battle against climate crisis is won or lost. We need to strengthen climate governance and institutions, localize sustainable development by building better capacities in local governments and we also need to strengthen citizen participation by giving them a platform to engage with climate action more meaningfully."

PRARTHANA RAMESH

Head - Environment City Systems, Janaagraha

CLIMATE AND

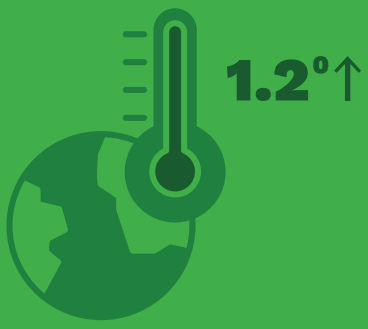
15 LIFE ON LAND

Changing climatic variables are also altering basic ecosystem structures and functions, negatively affecting the ability to provide ecosystem services, such as food, timber, and water regulation. This has a significant negative impact on populations dependent on these resources.

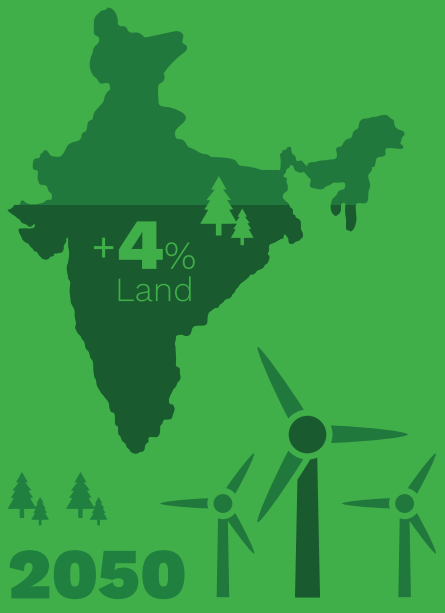
Climate-related extreme weather events accelerate habitat loss and fragmentation, negatively affecting biodiversity, particularly in vulnerable ecosystems.

As per estimates by the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water, achieving India's net zero targets would require around 4 percent of India's land to be utilized for power generation by 2050. This will necessitate large-scale land use changes affecting several ecosystems, particularly forests, and grasslands.

According to IPCC, the 1.2-degree rise in global mean temperature, since the pre-industrial period, has been accompanied by a rapid decimation of natural capital.



The 2022 SDG progress report also estimates a net loss of around 100 million hectares of forest area between 2000 and 2020.



Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) are an innovative approach to utilize the power of nature to address these challenges. These solutions aim to mimic natural processes to provide sustainable and effective alternatives to resource-intensive solutions. India, with its rich biodiversity, can implement NBS initiatives at scale in sectors like protecting existing natural ecosystems, ecological restoration, nature-based adaptation, nature-based city planning, and agroforestry.

Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)

Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) generates interdisciplinary knowledge to inform policy and practice towards conservation and sustainability. It integrates climate change as a cross-disciplinary theme across its work on conservation and sustainability, to ensure socially just development in India, to enable the use of this knowledge by policymakers, and to train the next generation of scholars and leaders.

A Closer Look: Climate Action and Ecological Restoration at ATREE

ATREE's focus on restoration seeks to reverse ecosystem degradation in a manner most suitable to the local ecologies of landscapes and the needs of their people and biodiversity. ATREE's initiatives are implemented across forest landscapes, agricultural lands, riverine ecosystems, Open Natural Ecosystems and lands impacted by invasive species. For each of these ecosystem types, ATREE prioritizes interventions that address degradation, enrich biodiversity and improve carbon sequestration such that it generates multiple benefits to people, especially women, the environment and the economy. ATREE invests in curating partnerships and alliances to enable scaling up such efforts.

One such initiative is the Alliance for Reversing Ecosystem Service and Threats (AREST). A joint program anchored by ATREE, Columbia University, Environmental Defense Fund, Foundation for Ecological Security and International Council for Research in Agroforestry, AREST aims to help restore ecosystems across semi-arid and sub-humid zones of India with emphasis on four types of habitats – lands infested with invaded species (mainly Lantana), open and natural habitats, riparian zones and degraded agricultural lands. The partnership is aimed at uniting land users, governments, grassroots organisations, and funders to restore 12 million hectares (MHa) of land in 204 districts across 13 states, affecting 90 million households.

Additionally, ATREE has initiated a pilot project in Maharashtra for restoring degraded grasslands. The objective is to create a model of localised solutions for grassland restoration in India that is not just about the mass planting of grasses. The interventions range from controlled grazing, protection for the first two years, building demi-lunes (a water harvesting intervention where small bunds are created) in bare soil areas to prevent run-off, and selectively planting grass. However, the objective is to be community-centric and demand-driven.

"Our restoration projects have been people-centric with a demand-based approach, focusing on what communities want and addressing those through a scientific approach."

DR. ABI TAMIM VANAK

Director - Centre for Policy Design, ATREE

Foundation of Ecological Security (FES)

Impact: 13,17,00,000+ acres of Commons being managed by 48,000+ village institutions, positively impacting 27,09,00,000+ lives across 14 states of India.

Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) works towards sustainable management of common resources such as forests, agricultural lands, natural habitats and water bodies as a vital means to mitigate the impact of climate change. Interlinkages between Commons, agriculture and livestock production systems are viewed at a grassroots level, connecting the larger community of farmers and livestock keepers with the conservation of natural resources. Through its work, the organisation also seeks to explore the interrelationship between the uplands (commons), the lowlands (farming systems), and the livelihoods of people – viewing the landscape as a continuum.

A Closer Look: The Promise of Commons Initiative

The Promise of Commons is a collaborative initiative to address the systemic barriers to ecological security through resource management planning, securing land rights and ensuring rural community access to resources. The aim of the initiative is to support community governance of 30 million acres of Commons in India (1/5th of India's total common lands) for improved ecological, social and economic outcomes for 38 million rural communities by 2028.

The initiative works on four mutually reinforcing strategies, namely, catalyzing collaborative action, strengthening the agency of actors, enabling public and policy support and engendering improved social inclusion and transparency. These strategies enable essential system shifts and help secure rights of the local communities (particularly women) to access, use and manage Commons, strengthen the agency and power of women and disadvantaged in the governance of Commons, and lead to improved incomes and livelihoods of the community.

As the anchor organization of the Promise of Commons Initiative, FES has so far established partnerships with 10 government programs across 8 states and 100 NGOs, to accelerate action on the ground and promote climate action by strengthening resilient livelihoods, water security and local governance. To generate knowledge, exchange lessons, and build evidence, partnerships with 25 international and national think tanks, and academic/research bodies, are in place.

"Investing in the community-led management and governance of Commons is an unparalleled opportunity to secure massive gains in rural incomes, while delivering ecological dividends. FES' multi-pronged, layered approach, aids the restoration and management of Commons, sustained by the people that depend on them."

SUBRATA SINGH

Acting Executive Director, FES

Technology for Wildlife Foundation (TfW)

Technology for Wildlife Foundation (TfW) is working to harness the potential of technology to amplify conservation of wildlife and ecosystems. They acquire conservation-relevant data from satellites and field work, as well as from their own fleet of aerial and underwater robots. This data is then integrated, simplified, and visualised to aid conservation actors make informed decisions that impact the future of the planet. With expertise in robotics, geospatial analysis, artificial intelligence, and augmented/virtual reality, TfW implements projects at the intersection of these domains.

A Closer Look: Mapping wildlife habitat in difficult terrains

The Sciurid lab explores the evolution and behavior of small mammals and how they are responding to anthropogenic pressures and climate change. The research group works across multiple landscapes in India, including the Trans-Himalayas, Western, and Eastern Ghats. One of their programs, based in Ladakh studies voles marmots and pikas (a mammal species) for the same purpose.

In collaboration with Sciurid Lab, TfW is helping enable systematic surveillance of these wildlife species for long-term conservation management, by leveraging Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to map the burrows of these animals - including distribution, size and number. Using a robot in this scenario significantly reduces the time and health risks associated with high-altitude treks. Further, it provides for the ability to have high-resolution maps of the burrows, which over time could be tracked to understand the effects of climate change.

TfW is currently collaborating with the Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research in Bhopal to use computer vision to segment these burrows by size so as to be able to distinguish between burrows used by marmots and pikas. By streamlining these methods using open-source software, TfW and their collaborators are working to better understand and hence conserve these species and their beautiful habitat.

“We don’t believe that technology is the answer to everything. But, we do believe that appropriate use of technology can significantly amplify conservation impact.”

NANDINI MEHROTRA

Program Manager, Technology for Wildlife

Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS)

Impact: 24,000+ claims across 6 parks in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu

Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS) aims to advance wildlife research, conservation, policy, and education, with the purpose of promoting science-based conservation for the protection of wildlife and wildlands. It seeks to alleviate anthropogenic impacts on wildlife, while also empowering local communities near protected areas through education, healthcare, finance, job skills training, alternative livelihood options, and conflict mitigation strategies.

A Closer Look: Wild Seve Program

Launched in 2015, Wild Seve is a conservation intervention that provides timely assistance to people affected by human-wildlife conflict around the national parks of Bandipur and Nagarahole in Karnataka, India. A toll-free helpline advertised throughout the landscape allows farmers to contact Wild Seve staff, who are immediately dispatched to the site.

This idea was conceptualized as CWS realized how human-wildlife conflict causes various socio-psychological problems in the daily lives of affected people, and tends to make them more combative towards the wild animals over time. The program intended to build tolerance among people, and expedite action during conflict, by providing assistance beyond barriers of illiteracy, inherent transaction costs and a complex government process. Wild Seve's widely advertised toll-free helpline allows farmers to contact Wild Seve staff, who are then dispatched to the site. Field assistants document each conflict incident and file a claim for ex-gratia compensation on behalf of the affected farmer.

To date, 24,000+ claims have been filed, benefiting more than 10,000 people from across 1,500 village settlements. Wild Seve is also part of an integrated solution approach to supporting people living with wildlife. Other interventions include Wild Shaale (an environmental education program for 10-13 year olds) and Wild Surakshe (aimed to deliver public health and training workshops on preventing wildlife–related disease transmission and access to emergency service providers).

"There is no single solution to this complex problem, and we need to conserve wildlife and wildlands by integrating science with conservation innovation."

DR. KRITHI KARANTH
Executive Director, CWS

CLIMATE AND

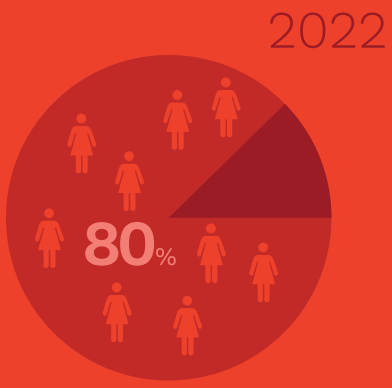
5 GENDER EQUALITY

As primary caregivers and providers of food in the family, women are severely exposed to the vulnerabilities of natural disasters.

It has been observed that in many areas across the world, "women depend more on natural resources, however lack access and decision-making power related to it."

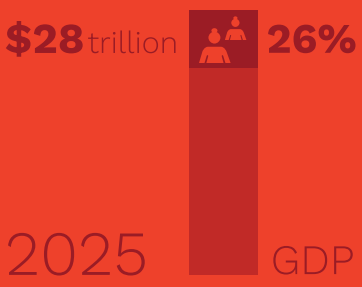
Evidence gathered by the United Nations Development Programme has shown that women face the brunt of increased sexual and domestic violence due to the cascading effects of climate change.

IIt has been observed by UN Women that most of the female population is engaged in the agriculture sector, particularly for women in low- and lower-middle-income countries. This also holds true for India where about 80 per cent of the rural women are employed in agriculture



According to the estimates released by the United Nations Environment Programme in 2022, almost 80 per cent of the people displaced by climate change are women.

As per McKinsey Global Institute, $28 trillion or 26 per cent could be added to the GDP by 2025 if women are given an equal footing in the labour market. This is more than enough to bridge the climate finance gap needed to fund the battle against climate change



Equipping women with the knowledge to adapt to changing environmental conditions, mainstreaming gender-inclusive policies that recognize women's roles as caregivers, farmers, and community leaders, scaling financial resources and technical support to women-led initiatives; and encouraging participation in decision-making processes are crucial strategies for enabling women to lead the charge on climate action.

Buzz Women

Impact: 4,60,000+ women trained

Buzz Women enables economic, social, personal and ecological empowerment of rural women in Karnataka by making knowledge, skills and opportunities available at their doorsteps. Through the 5Cs (cash, confidence, climate, care and community) approach, Buzz Women is creating women change-makers at the grassroots-level by enabling awareness, confidence, financial knowledge, communication and leadership capacities

A Closer Look: The Buzz Green Programme

Initiated in 2020, Buzz Green takes awareness on climate change and close-to-home climate actions to the doorstep of rural women to combat how climate change impacts rural women disproportionately. It focuses on three levels: awareness, climate action, and ecopreneurship. Women are trained and equipped with knowledge about natural resources, climate-smart living practices, agricultural sustainability, and food security.

Women volunteers known as ‘hasiru prerakis’ or 'green motivators’ are selected and trained to organize and lead their communities towards sustainable decision-making in their work and households. Women are also mentored to start their own income-generating enterprises. In all their work, Buzz Women seeks to combat cultural stigmas, arising from systemic structures which inhibit women’s agency and autonomy. It ensures that local women can lead the discussions on natural resource management, such as the impact of farming practices on local ecology and the consumption of sustainably grown healthy foods.

Women have come together in solidarity to fight against climate change and have set up community kitchen gardens, which run primarily on reused wastewater and eco-friendly agricultural practices. The crops grown in the garden are used for domestic purposes and supplementing food security for their families. Women have also started to revert to older agriculture practices, minimising the usage of pesticides, rotating crops to retain the nutrient value of the soil and have started desi-poultries. In the past three years, Buzz Women has trained over 3,000 women as active Buzz Green Motivators.

“Our programmes are designed to work with local women to empower them to tackle patriarchal barriers and drive change.”

UTHARA NARAYANAN

Chief Change-Maker, Buzz Women

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP)

Impact: 60,00,000+ people reached; 3,50,000+ women empowered as farmers, leaders and entrepreneurs

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) strives to empower women and adolescent girls at the grassroots as entrepreneurs and leaders in the under-served, climate hit geographies across 2,300+ villages in the country. SSP facilitates networks of rural women entrepreneurs to provide community-wide information, products and services in impact sectors such as clean energy, safe water, sanitation, health, nutrition, agriculture, and food security with the aim of enabling these women to realize their leadership potential and wellbeing for sustainable development.

A Closer Look: Women's Entrepreneurship in Clean Energy Programme (wPOWER)

A vast majority of rural households continue to suffer from a chronic lack of access to modern energy services while also facing the brunt of the risks associated with climate change. The demand for clean energy technology and its products lag behind in rural India due to limited awareness and access. SSP is trying to address these pervasive issues by empowering and creating strong networks of women clean energy entrepreneurs who can outreach, and enable access to clean energy solutions for the “last mile”. SSP’s ‘Women’s Entrepreneurship in Clean Energy program’ enables market-based solutions to work for rural communities that have a concrete need for modern energy solutions. The initiative, called wPOWER, connects all the vital dots including, women’s entrepreneurship, awareness of clean energy technologies, access to products and support over the last mile.

The network of women clean energy entrepreneurs known as Sakhis forms the core of the program, aided by multi-sector partnerships that enhance access to technology, finance and markets. Sakhis delivers solutions like advanced cook stoves, bio-digesters, solar lamps, solar water heaters and provide product servicing at the doorstep of rural households. Further, the program is scaled through training and capacity building of rural women as Sakhis or women entrepreneurs on business management and clean energy technologies; promoting clean energy solutions through public awareness programs; facilitating business linkages between women entrepreneur networks, technology providers, financial institutions and the government; establishing public and private sector partnerships for product design, development and marketing of clean energy products; and transferring best practices and business models between India and other countries.

Since 2015, the program has empowered 200+ women as local entrepreneurs called Sakhis to sensitize more than 4,00,000 people and market, distribute and sell socially beneficial products like LED bulbs, solar lamps, induction cook stoves, sanitary pads, bio compost, and a range of consumer products.

“Our clean energy programme isn’t singular. It has a climate aspect and with the involvement of women entrepreneurs, it has a gender aspect to it as well. Making it all the more essential to invest in and expand.”

UPMANYU PATIL
Director-Programs, SSP

Mahila Housing Trust (MHT)

Impact: 14,200+ women trained as climate resilient specialists; adaptation programs for air pollution, extreme heat, and effective water management benefitted 93,89,000+ individuals

Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) is a grassroots-technical, development organization that aims to champion a community based resilience model that is women-led, integrated, evidence-based, and focuses on innovative communication strategies to promote a culture of resilience. Since its inception, MHT has been mobilizing women to exercise their civic rights and empowering them. Its efforts are particularly focused on addressing five climate stressors (heat extremes, flooding, water scarcity, vector-borne diseases, air pollution) that are slow to onset, attract less attention, but frequently impact women, the most. Additionally, it has also been working on access to renewable energy for the poor and low income businesses.

A Closer Look: Jodhpur Heat Action Plan

The state of Rajasthan in India is historically one of the hardest hit by heat in the country, the impacts of which are particularly pronounced for vulnerable groups like women, who as per research experience a greater loss of income and increase in caregiving as a result of extreme heat. MHT, building on its strong presence in the city of Jodhpur, has been working to empower women in poor communities and build their resilience to incidences of intense heat waves.

In collaboration with Jodhpur Municipal Corporation and Natural Resources Defence Council, MHT helped co-create the city's first Heat Action Plan. The plan is based on local data and community inputs that enable the city to better organize local heat actions and protect public health. As part of the initiative, MHT is helping the city implement a low-cost cool roof program targeting the most vulnerable settlements with poor-quality homes that trap heat and become dangerously hot. The Trust painted the roofs of selected slum households with solar reflective paint, which helped bring down indoor temperatures by several degrees. Additionally, the organization is also constructing a first-of-its-kind cooling station near informal markets in Jodhpur, which will be a respite for the vendors and other citizens for heat.

To date, MHT has installed and facilitated 20,000+ cool roofs across India. It has brought relief to women, children, and elderly people living in the slums who can now comfortably spend time indoors during the summer, thereby improving their health while allowing them to work and study at home.

"MHT has always championed a community-based resilience model that is women-led. It is time we see women as not victims of climate change but as agents of climate action."

BIJAL BRAHMBHATT
Director, MHT

WAY FORWARD

As we work towards achieving the agenda of Sustainable Development 2030, we must acknowledge that the biggest challenges of global, national, and local development governance, earmarked by the SDGs, can only be addressed through continuous combat with the biggest threat faced by the planet i.e., climate change. This is particularly true for emerging economies like India, which stands at the cusp of a new and unforeseen paradigm of development, where they need to balance economic growth and development with climate action for all. Understanding the intersections of climate change and SDGs is critical for developing effective solutions to both challenges.

Given India's vulnerability to climate change and its tectonic impact on the SDGs, there is an urgent need for stakeholders to come together and build consensus on the way forward. There is a need to centre the discourse on climate action around vulnerable communities and people first, and engender collaborative action by exploring pathways of building resilience in our societies and systems.

This compendium sheds light on the increasingly important roles that civil society organisations are playing in the climate ecosystem through their community-centred interventions. These CSOs are uniquely -positioned to be key allies in strengthening climate action in the country - with their proximity to communities, presence in intersectional sectors, understanding of local contexts, and their advocacy and mobilization skills. It's crucial to spotlight these capabilities and their innovative solutions, as they represent a gold mine of potential strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Equally, it is essential to scale these strategies to a level that matches the scale of the climate challenge we face. Only then can the full potential of these solutions be realised.

However, it is imperative to understand that climate action requires an integrated effort and approach. The movement towards a sustainable and inclusive future for communities mandates the collaboration of all actors in the climate action space. This includes civil society, the government, philanthropy, producers, and consumers themselves. Building on the insights shared by the organisations profiled in this report, here are some considerations for these actors to scale inclusive and equitable climate action in the country.

1 GOVERNMENT

Identify and collaborate proactively with CSOs to mainstream community needs across interventions, leverage their access to communities, contextual understanding, and geographical spread

Reassess public budget allocation and utilization towards climate action, prioritize integration of research-backed plans that consider local needs and challenges

Integrate intersectionality of climate in policy-making across sectors like health, agriculture, urban development, ecosystem conversation, women empowerment, etc. to facilitate holistic climate action, while prioritizing the impact on marginalized and vulnerable populations; delineate clear institutional structures at each level of climate governance

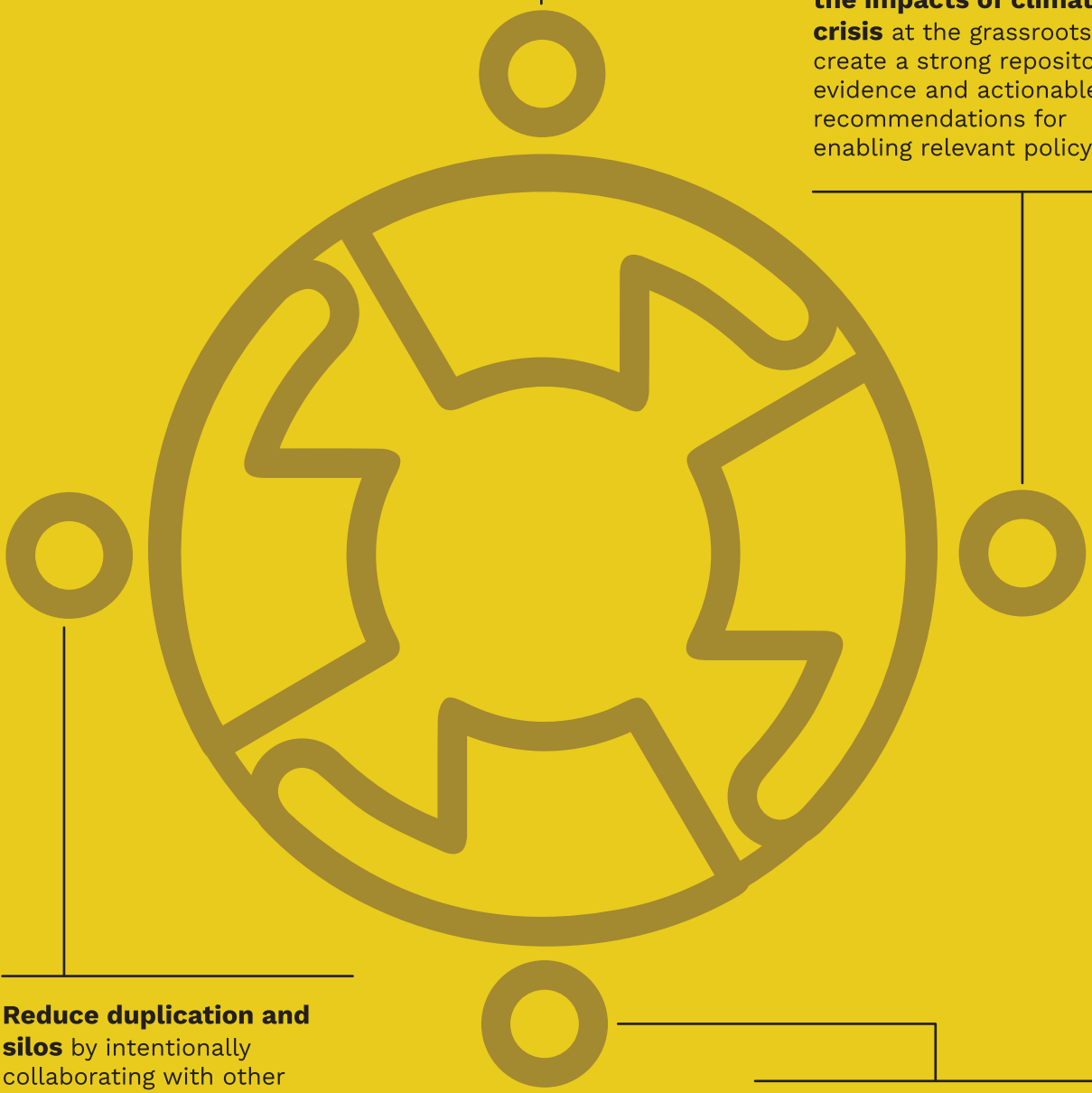
Invest in mass media campaigns to shift the narrative on climate action beyond the mitigation-adaptation binary and inspire conscious action towards sustainability from all stakeholders

Realign the sustainability – development dichotomy by mainstreaming how climate action advances the sustainable development agenda and can promote economic growth

2 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Embed a climate lens across existing programs and interventions to strengthen resilience of target populations against increasing impacts of climate change

Curate data and stories on the impacts of climate crisis at the grassroots to create a strong repository of evidence and actionable recommendations for enabling relevant policy shifts



Reduce duplication and silos by intentionally collaborating with other organisations and stakeholders to scale best practices and cross-learnings

Strengthen community capacities through education, skill-building, and awareness programs on climate action, especially in ecologically sensitive areas

3 PHILANTHROPY

Invest in climate action with urgency, while adopting an intersectional and intersectoral approach by identifying climate linkages across legacy portfolios (such as food security, energy, health, etc.). Scale giving towards civil society organisations working to strengthen resilience of communities to the impacts of climate crisis.

Move away from project-based funding to long-term impact giving towards sustained climate action, support civil society with flexible grants to enable wide-scale impact.

Prioritize place-based funding to account for unique needs, ecological, and socio-economic factors associated with regions. Foster innovations for region-specific climate challenges, and support civil society organizations on climate action in underserved geographies.

Invest in building narrative, data, and evidence on impacts of climate crisis, which is crucial in mainstreaming issues around climate change in the popular discourse especially in India given the nascence of this discourse and the potential threat it can create for vulnerable communities.

The climate crisis is a daunting challenge for India, but it also presents an opportunity for transformative, collective action. Multi-stakeholder platforms can be instrumental in enabling collaboration and consensus among the stakeholder groups and can create common opportunities to drive deeper impact by leveraging collective resources, networks, and diverse skill sets across sectors and actors affected by the climate crisis.

The ClimateRISE Alliance is a collaborative platform, built with over 100+ civil society organisations, ecosystem builders, and funders, that aims to build knowledge, consensus, and common outcomes for the most vulnerable communities. The Alliance has been incepted with the objective to shape an India view, a common vocabulary, and enable a multi-stakeholder engagement approach on intersectional climate action in India.

Also, at the core of ClimateRISE is the belief in collaboration, driven by transformative partnerships across civil society, think tanks, governments, and philanthropy - thus creating a big tent of diverse beliefs, experience, and expertise towards achieving meaningful change.

In the last window of time to stave off the climate crisis's worst impacts, it is critical for us to rethink, reimagine, and reshape our future. The most promising future is the one we build together. It is only by coming together that we can move beyond the predominant narratives of doom and gloom and inspire hope for a promising future for our communities.

BUILDING A RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE, AND EQUITABLE INDIA BY PLACING PEOPLE, NATURE, AND CLIMATE FIRST

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