

CHRONICLE - XIV

(APRIL 2026 - SEPTEMBER 2026)



Foreword

Dear *J*almitra,

“**I**t gives me immense pleasure to present India Water



Foundation's Chronicle, capturing the highlights of the past six months a period marked by significant advances, complex geopolitical shifts, and an increasingly urgent imperative to translate commitments on sustainable development into tangible action. India's development trajectory remained resilient while its clean-energy transition gathered further momentum. By July 2026, India had crossed 300 GW of installed non-fossil electricity capacity. The global economy, meanwhile, entered a more uncertain phase. The IMF's July 2026 outlook projected global growth at 3.0% for 2026 and 3.4% for 2027, as geopolitical conflict, energy disruptions, trade tensions and persistent inflation.

Multilateralism also witnessed renewed momentum. India's BRICS Chairship culminated in the New Delhi Summit in September, where leaders emphasised resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability, while calling for stronger representation of emerging and developing economies in global institutions. The SCO Summit in Bishkek likewise marked the organisation's 25th anniversary, with India highlighting security, connectivity and opportunity as pillars for regional cooperation.

The UN World Water Development Report 2026 highlighted persistent inequalities in access to water and sanitation; The UN's 2026 SDG assessment further underlined that progress remains uneven and insufficient, demanding greater urgency, scale and solidarity. The environmental outlook remains equally consequential. WMO projections indicate the development of a strong El Niño alongside a positive Indian Ocean Dipole, with implications for rainfall, drought, agriculture and water security. These interconnected pressures reinforce a fundamental lesson: sustainable development can no longer be pursued through isolated interventions.

As 2030 draws nearer, the imperative is clear: convert commitments into convergence, partnerships into implementation, and ambition into measurable impact.

Thank you.

Dr. Arvind Kumar

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EDITORIAL

2026 at the Crossroads from Fragmentation to a New Architecture of Cooperation

Dr. Arvind Kumar*

As the world moves through the second half of 2026, the defining story is no longer that of a single crisis, but of several transformations unfolding simultaneously. The period has exposed the growing interdependence of geopolitics, economic security, climate resilience, technological change, energy systems and sustainable development. Wars and geopolitical tensions have continued to unsettle markets and institutions, yet alongside these disruptions, new forms of cooperation are emerging. The central question is increasingly whether the international system can move from managing successive shocks to building the resilience required to withstand them.



The development agenda illustrates this tension most clearly. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026, released in July, found that only 36% of assessable SDG targets were on track or showing moderate progress. At the same time, the decade since 2015 has produced substantial gains: nearly one billion additional people have gained access to safely managed drinking water, global electricity access has expanded to 92% of the population, and internet access has risen sharply. Yet conflict, climate change, debt distress, slower economic growth, inequality and declining development assistance threaten to erode these achievements. The message is therefore not that the SDGs have failed, but that progress remains too slow and uneven for the 2030 deadline.

Water has emerged even more prominently within this development equation. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2026, released in March, placed equality and opportunity at the centre of water security. It reported that 2.1 billion people still lack safely managed drinking water, while women and girls spend an estimated 250 million hours each day collecting water. The report also underlined how climate change, water scarcity and disasters magnify existing inequalities. Water, therefore, cannot remain confined to the boundaries of environmental policy; it intersects directly with health, education, livelihoods, gender equality, food security and human dignity.

The climate system is simultaneously entering another period of heightened uncertainty. By September, the World Meteorological Organization reported that El Niño was firmly established and expected to strengthen into a very strong event, with an exceptionally high likelihood of persisting through February 2027. Such conditions can significantly alter rainfall and

temperature patterns, increasing risks of floods, droughts and extreme heat. Earlier WMO forecasts had already indicated the rapid development of El Niño alongside a positive Indian Ocean Dipole. For countries dependent on monsoons, agriculture and water resources, such developments demonstrate why climate resilience must increasingly be treated as economic and developmental infrastructure rather than simply as an environmental objective.

The economic picture is equally complex. The IMF's July 2026 World Economic Outlook projected global growth of 3.0% in 2026 and 3.4% in 2027. The global economy has demonstrated greater resilience than initially feared, but the recovery remains uneven. The war shock continues to weigh on energy-importing and vulnerable economies, while investment associated with artificial intelligence is providing momentum to economies integrated into technology value chains. At the same time, global disinflation has stalled, with the IMF warning of continued risks from renewed conflict, energy disruptions and financial-market repricing.

This convergence of technology and economics is one of the most consequential developments of 2026. Artificial intelligence is no longer merely a technology-sector phenomenon; it is becoming an issue of development, competitiveness, energy demand, labour markets and global governance. The United Nations has increasingly placed AI governance within the multilateral agenda. In September, the UN Secretary-General's report highlighted fragmented financing for AI capacity-building in developing countries and recommended consideration of a Global Fund for AI Capacity-Building. The challenge is therefore twofold: preventing a new technological divide while ensuring that developing countries can participate in shaping the rules governing technologies that will influence their economic futures.

The changing technological landscape is also transforming energy geopolitics. Renewable energy is increasingly associated not only with decarbonisation but with energy security, industrial competitiveness and strategic autonomy. India's progress is particularly notable. India's economic resilience has accompanied this energy transition. Real GDP grew by 7.8% in the first quarter of financial year 2026–27, according to official estimates released in August. Against a global environment marked by trade uncertainty, geopolitical disruption and uneven growth, maintaining domestic economic momentum provides India with greater room to invest in infrastructure, technology, energy security and social development.

The geopolitical architecture, meanwhile, is becoming increasingly multipolar. India's presidency of BRICS culminated in the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi on 12–13 September. The New Delhi Declaration placed resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability at the centre of the grouping's agenda and reiterated commitments to a more representative international order, sustainable development and inclusive growth. The summit also demonstrated the complexity of contemporary multilateralism: countries with different political systems, economic interests and strategic priorities continue to seek common ground on development, finance, technology and global governance.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation provided another indication of this evolving architecture. At the 26th SCO Summit in Bishkek on 31 August–1 September, leaders marked the organisation’s 25th anniversary and adopted the Bishkek Declaration alongside more than 20 decisions and statements covering areas including climate, energy conservation, nuclear safety, technology and environmental cooperation. India articulated its priorities around Security, Connectivity and Opportunity, while the summit sought to outline the organisation’s next phase of regional cooperation.

These developments point towards a wider transformation in multilateralism. The question is no longer simply whether traditional institutions will survive, but how global governance can become more representative, responsive and capable of delivering collective goods. The opening of the UN General Assembly’s 81st session in September has placed this challenge at the centre of the international conversation. Its theme—“Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All”—captures the dilemma confronting the multilateral system. The agenda extends from sustainable development and climate action to AI governance, sea-level rise, pandemic preparedness and the right to development.

The rise of AI adds another dimension to this institutional transformation. The UN General Assembly presidency has stressed that developing countries must have a meaningful voice in determining how artificial intelligence is governed, particularly because technological benefits and risks are unevenly distributed. This is closely connected to the wider development challenge: technological progress without equitable access could deepen existing divides, while inclusive innovation could accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Taken together, the developments of the past six months reveal a world simultaneously fragmenting and reconnecting. Geopolitical tensions are disrupting traditional assumptions about trade, energy and security, while BRICS, SCO and other platforms demonstrate the growing importance of broader coalitions and Global South agency. Climate change is increasingly inseparable from economic resilience; water is inseparable from human development; energy transition is inseparable from national security; and artificial intelligence is becoming inseparable from questions of equity and governance.

As 2030 approaches, the world does not lack ideas, technologies or institutional platforms. What remains scarce is sufficient convergence between ambition, finance, cooperation and implementation. The coming years will consequently be defined not merely by the ability to respond to crises, but by the ability to transform interconnected challenges into coordinated action.

For India, this is both a responsibility and an opportunity. Its expanding clean-energy capacity, economic resilience, engagement with BRICS and SCO, and emphasis on development partnerships position it within a broader transition in global governance. The task ahead is to

connect these individual advances into a coherent framework in which sustainability, resilience, innovation and inclusive development reinforce one another.

The defining imperative of 2026 is therefore not simply to recover from disruption. It is to redesign cooperation around the realities of an interconnected world. The future will belong to those institutions, countries and partnerships capable of turning fragmentation into convergence, technology into shared opportunity, and commitments into measurable outcomes.

**Editor, Focus Global Reporter*

INTERVIEW

SHRI DR. AMIT KUMAR GHOSH, IAS

Additional Chief Secretary (Health & Family Welfare), Department of Health & Family Welfare and Medical Education, Government of Uttar Pradesh

SHRI DR. AMIT K. GHOSH, IAS, is a senior Indian Administrative Service officer of the 1994 batch (Uttar Pradesh cadre) who currently serves as Additional Chief Secretary-Medical Health, Family Welfare & Medical Education, Government of Uttar Pradesh, one of the state's most critical administrative positions responsible for public health strategy, healthcare delivery, and medical education governance. He was promoted to the rank of Additional Chief Secretary in 2025 after serving as Principal Secretary in the same department, reflecting his extensive administrative experience and leadership in shaping UP's health and medical education programs.



In his role, Dr. Ghosh oversees policy formulation and implementation for public health services, hospital systems, preventative health campaigns, and medical education institutions across Uttar Pradesh—India's most populous state. He has led initiatives such as establishing centers of excellence in surgical care, expanding cancer screening, and strengthening essential medicine supplies, and he plays an active role in leveraging digital health and AI-enabled healthcare transformation for the state.

Dr. Ghosh regularly engages with stakeholders across government, healthcare providers, and community groups to drive improvements in health outcomes, quality of care, and equitable access to services in both rural and urban areas. His leadership reflects a commitment to enhancing health system performance through evidence-based policy, operational excellence, and collaborative governance..

Excerpts from an interview of Shri Dr. Amit Kumar Ghosh, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary (Health & Family Welfare), Department of Health & Family Welfare and Medical Education, Government of Uttar Pradesh by Dr. Arvind Kumar, Editor, Focus Global Reporter

EDITOR: In over three decades you have held charge of portfolios as varied as industries, highways, social justice, and now health and medical education. How has that range of experience shaped the way you approach public health governance today?

DR. GHOSH: If I look back at the trajectory of my career, I see three decades of continuous learning in how governance actually works on the ground, a wide range of responsibilities at both the state and central levels, from district administration to industrial development, infrastructure, social welfare, and now public health, each one adding a layer I draw upon daily in the health department. My years leading industrial development as Managing Director of UPSIDC and as Director of Industries gave me an appreciation for project economics, capacity planning, and the discipline of execution timelines skills that translate directly into building and equipping medical colleges and hospitals at scale. My time in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, working on major infrastructure initiatives including the Bharatmala Pariyojana, sharpened my understanding of how large, multi-agency projects succeed only when logistics, land, finance, and political will are aligned simultaneously a lesson invaluable when expanding hospital infrastructure across a state as vast as Uttar Pradesh. And my stint as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, working on welfare reforms for marginalized sections, kept equity at the center of my thinking reminding me that public health is not just about building capacity, but about ensuring that capacity actually reaches the poorest, the most remote, and the most vulnerable. Field postings as District Magistrate in districts as varied as Lucknow, Meerut, and Uttarkashi further grounded me in the realities of implementation because policy that looks elegant on paper can fail entirely at the last mile if it doesn't account for local terrain, culture, and capacity. Health governance, in the end, is a synthesis discipline: it needs the project rigor of industry, the execution muscle of infrastructure, and the moral compass of social justice, all working together.

EDITOR: Uttar Pradesh recorded the sharpest improvement of any state in NITI Aayog's latest SDG India Index, moving into the "Front Runner" category on a 25-point gain over its baseline score. How much of that leap would you credit to the health sector specifically, and what changes now that the state carries "front runner" expectations?

DR. GHOSH: I'd say health has been one of the genuine engines of this transformation. Uttar Pradesh's overall SDG score climbed from 42 to 67 between 2018-19 and 2023-24 the sharpest jump of any state in the country and on the National SDG Index, we moved 11 places, from 29th to 18th, crossing from the "Performer" band directly into "Front Runner." What's notable is that

the health goal didn't just ride along with that overall climb, it led it in relative terms: independent analysis of the underlying data shows Uttar Pradesh's SDG 3 score itself rose by roughly 35 points between the 2018 baseline and the 2020-21 assessment, a faster rate of improvement than India's national health-goal gain of 22 points over the same window. That's the kind of granular movement that tells you the sector isn't coasting on the composite number it's actually outperforming within it.

The underlying indicators back this up with real specificity. Institutional deliveries in the state rose from 67.8 percent in NFHS-4 (2015-16) to 83.4 percent in NFHS-5 (2019-21), full immunisation coverage among children aged 9-11 months now stands above 93 percent, and maternal mortality fell from 197 per lakh live births in 2016-18 to 141 in the most recent Sample Registration System reporting period; a decline of close to 30 percent in under half a decade. On financial protection, Uttar Pradesh has issued more Ayushman Bharat cards than any other state in the country around 5.64 crore so far, covering 87 percent of our 9 crore eligible families backed by 6,099 empanelled hospitals, again the highest of any state, split between 2,921 government and 3,088 private facilities. Since the scheme's inception, 74.4 lakh beneficiaries in the state have received free treatment worth over Rs 12,283 crore, with Rs 4,200 crore of that going specifically toward tertiary care like cancer treatment, cardiology, and organ transplants. Add to that a wave of new medical colleges, from 17 before 2017 to over 80 today, changing the doctor-to-population ratio in districts that had never had a college before, and you have primary access, secondary and tertiary capacity, and financial protection all moving in the same direction simultaneously, precisely the kind of systemic, cross-cutting progress the SDG framework is designed to reward.

What changes with Front Runner status is the ambition we now hold ourselves to. We're no longer measuring ourselves only against our own past; we're benchmarked against states scoring in the high 70s where we're still climbing toward that range. Our clear next frontier is maternal health outcomes, where, even with the gains I've described, we remain some distance from the SDG target of below 70 maternal deaths per lakh live births by 2030. That's why we're now directing focused investment into emergency obstetric care, blood bank networks, and referral transport because Front Runner status isn't a finish line, it's an invitation to close the remaining distance faster than anyone else has.

EDITOR: Under the "One District, One Medical College" mission, the state has grown from 17 functional government medical colleges before 2017 to 81 by March 2026, with more opening this year and public-private partnership colleges coming up in districts such as Hathras, Baghpat and Kasganj. What has been hardest about scaling this fast, and how are you making sure faculty strength and teaching quality keep pace with the new seats?

DR. GHOSH: The numbers really do tell the story of intent: from 17 functional government medical colleges before 2017 to 35 by 2022, and now 81 as of March 2026; a scale of expansion no other state has attempted in this timeframe. The genuine challenge has been faculty;

specifically, senior faculty in specialities like radio-diagnosis, anaesthesia, and psychiatry, where the national pool of qualified professors and associate professors is limited and every state is competing for the same talent.

We've tackled this on three fronts simultaneously. First, the Medical Bond Scheme, introduced in 2018, requires every MBBS graduate from a government college to serve within the state for two years, which has meaningfully expanded our pipeline of junior residents feeding into future faculty positions. Second, we opened the door to retired professors, engaging them as consultants at a competitive monthly remuneration so that decades of teaching experience aren't lost to the system just because someone has crossed the retirement age this has been particularly valuable for stabilising new colleges in their first few academic sessions. Third, we brought most of our new autonomous medical colleges under Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical University, which lets us standardise curriculum, faculty benchmarks, and clinical training protocols across all of them rather than each college improvising its own standards.

The public-private-partnership route in districts like Hathras, Baghpat, and Kasganj alongside Mahoba, Mainpuri, and Hamirpur is a further multiplier: the state provides land on long-term lease and viability gap funding support, while private operators bring in capital and specialised faculty recruitment networks, letting us reach underserved districts faster than the government-only model could alone. The result is a system where seat expansion and faculty strength are being built as one integrated pipeline, not two separate races.

EDITOR: Uttar Pradesh has been recognised as the country's best-performing state in the recent 100-day TB-Mukt Bharat Abhiyan, screening over 15 lakh people and notifying more than 68,000 patients in the campaign's first six weeks alone. Beyond the intensity of a 100-day sprint, what is the department doing to convert this into a lasting reduction in the state's TB burden on case-finding, drug-resistant TB, and Ni-kshay Mitra-backed nutrition support?

DR. GHOSH: The 100-day intensity was never meant to be a one-off event, by the time TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 concluded, Uttar Pradesh had screened over 31 lakh people and detected 1.85 lakh new TB patients, nearly 52,000 of them asymptomatic cases who would very likely have gone undiagnosed under passive surveillance alone. We achieved 91% coverage of our identified high-risk villages and urban wards, deploying more than 1,000 X-ray machines and an equal number of NAAT machines so that 91% of notified patients received molecular-grade diagnostic confirmation rather than symptom-based guesswork. As I said at the AIIMS Gorakhpur



conclave, our strategy has rested on innovation, technology, partnerships, and community ownership and it's the institutionalisation of that combination, not the sprint itself, that will determine whether this becomes a durable shift in the state's TB curve.

On case-finding, the campaign's real legacy is structural: our roughly 22,000 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs now function as the operational backbone for continuous, not just campaign-period, case detection, and I've directed all districts to upload screening and testing data to the Nikshay Portal in real time, so we can identify slow-progress blocks and course-correct on a rolling basis rather than waiting for the next national drive. Between January and June 2026 alone, the state notified 3.37 lakh cases against our annual target of seven lakh 96% of the pro-rata target which tells me the underlying case-finding machinery is holding its pace well beyond the 100-day window.

On drug-resistant TB, we're integrating the shorter, six-month BPaLM regimen Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid, and Moxifloxacin into our MDR/RR-TB treatment protocol, cutting what used to be a gruelling multi-year regimen down dramatically and improving adherence rates. And on nutrition, Ni-kshay Mitra sponsorships remain central to treatment completion because a TB patient who is also food-insecure is a patient at high risk of default, so we're actively expanding community, corporate, and PSU sponsorship enrolment alongside the clinical push,

treating nutrition support as a core pillar of cure, not an add-on to it.



EDITOR: Rural tap water connections in Uttar Pradesh have risen from barely 2 percent in 2019 to over 90 percent today under the Jal Jeevan Mission, alongside near-universal sanitation coverage under Swachh Bharat. How do you see the broader connection between water and health playing into the state's public health strategy, and what remains to be done?

DR. GHOSH: I think of water as the most basic infrastructure of preventive health — more foundational, in a sense, than a hospital bed, because it determines how much people need that hospital bed in the first place. When clean drinking water access in this state moved from around 74 percent in the early 1990s to nearly universal today, and sanitation coverage climbed alongside it, we weren't just improving quality of life in an abstract sense we were removing entire categories of preventable illness before they could ever reach our health system. A robust curative system matters enormously, but a population with reliable clean water and functioning sanitation simply needs less of that curative care to begin with. That's the philosophy I try to bring to how the health department engages with our colleagues in the water

and sanitation departments, we're not adjacent missions, we're the same mission approached from two different points of entry.

The pace of change on tap water has been extraordinary in practical terms: from barely 2 percent of our roughly 2.67 crore rural households connected in August 2019 to over 90 percent today under Har Ghar Jal. For a household, that means women and young girls are freed from hours once spent fetching water, time that now goes toward income generation, education, or simply rest and that has its own quiet but real effect on maternal and family health. For our own institutions, it means health centres, schools, and anganwadis functioning with running water on-site, which changes everything from basic hygiene practices to how confidently a frontline worker can manage a delivery or a minor procedure.

What remains is really about depth rather than breadth. Coverage numbers tell you a household has a tap; they don't tell you what's coming out of it, how consistently, or in what quantity. We're now pushing hard on water-quality testing and surveillance, strengthening village-level water and sanitation committees, and making sure that a connection isn't treated as the finish line but as the start of an ongoing quality and reliability commitment. Water and health, in my view, will only get more tightly integrated in how this state plans public health going forward because you cannot build a resilient health system on top of an unreliable water system.

EDITOR: Uttar Pradesh now leads the country under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, with well over ten crore health records linked to ABHA IDs through platforms including the state's own eKavach system. In practical terms, what has this changed for a patient or a frontline worker in a UP village, and where is the department headed next on AI-enabled healthcare?

DR. GHOSH: The scale here is worth stating plainly: Uttar Pradesh now leads the entire country with over 15 crore ABHA-linked health records, well ahead of the next largest contributor, and we were the first state to achieve 100 percent registration of both health facilities and health professionals on the national registries. That's not a vanity statistic it's the plumbing that makes everything else possible.

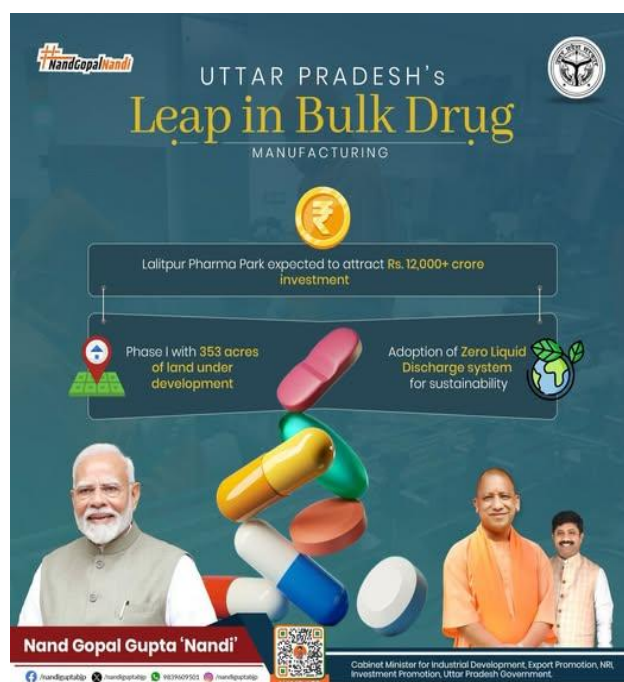
For a patient in a village in, say, Balrampur or Chitrakoot, what this actually means is that their health record no longer lives only in a folder they have to remember to carry. Through eKavach, which feeds directly into the national ABDM architecture, a person's prescriptions, lab results, and treatment history from an Ayushman Arogya Mandir visit are available by QR-code scan-and-share at the district hospital they're referred to next, without repeating tests or re-explaining their history to a new doctor. We've already generated over 1.4 crore OPD tokens digitally, which cuts the queuing and paperwork burden that used to consume a frontline worker's morning. For an ASHA or ANM, it means the anaemia and immunisation tracking I described earlier isn't running on a separate paper register it's tied to the same patient ID across her entire care journey, so follow-up doses and referrals don't fall through the cracks.

On AI, we've moved from pilots to a funded roadmap. The state's new AI Mission, backed by roughly ₹2,000 crore over three years, has named healthcare as a cornerstone application area specifically early disease diagnosis, critical care decision support, and data-driven public health management and we're setting up dozens of AI and data labs across the state to support this. We're already working with IIT Kanpur's Gangwal School of Medical Sciences and Technology on AI-enabled telemedicine and point-of-care diagnostics, aimed at giving a primary health centre in a remote block access to something close to specialist-level triage support. With a data foundation as large as ours already built through ABDM, the honest next step is turning that data into predictive tools flagging disease outbreaks, high-risk pregnancies, and TB clusters before they escalate, rather than only recording what already happened.

EDITOR: The state is positioning itself as a national hub for pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing, with the Bulk Drug & Pharma Park coming up in Lalitpur and a Medical Device Park near the Noida International Airport. How does this industrial push connect back to your core mandate as a health administrator — in terms of drug affordability, supply security, and local access to devices and diagnostics?

DR. GHOSH: I look at this less as an industries-department project I happen to be adjacent to, and more as the upstream half of the same mandate I hold on the health side. The Lalitpur Bulk Drug & Pharma Park, spread across nearly 1,472 acres in the Bundelkhand region, with Phase I already covering over 350 acres of formulation units, bulk drugs, and common infrastructure, is fundamentally about ending our dependence on imported active pharmaceutical ingredients largely sourced from China today for the generic medicines that our own Ayushman Bharat and state health programmes procure at scale every year. When the state controls bulk drug production closer to home, procurement costs come down and price shocks from global supply disruptions, the kind we all remember from the pandemic years, become far less likely to disrupt our essential drug list.

The Medical Device Park 350 acres near the Noida International Airport under the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority, complemented by a further 250-acre Pharma Formulation Park nearby speaks directly to a statistic I think about often: India still imports roughly 80 percent of its medical devices. Every X-ray unit, NAAT machine, or diagnostic kit we deployed during our TB elimination drive, for instance, currently carries import lead times



and currency exposure that a domestic manufacturing base would eliminate. The park's planned ASCA-certified testing laboratories are particularly significant for me as a health administrator, because they mean devices can be tested and certified within the state rather than shipped overseas and back, cutting the time between a device being designed and it reaching a primary health centre in Bahraich or Sonbhadra.

We've also brought in CSIR and DRDO as knowledge partners specifically to steer R&D toward affordable generics and diagnostics relevant to our own disease burden anaemia, TB, maternal health rather than purely export-oriented product lines. So when I'm asked how an industrial park connects to my job, my answer is simple: a state that manufactures its own medicines and devices is a state that can guarantee its own citizens affordability and supply security, rather than being a price-taker in a global market it doesn't control.

EDITOR: As the countdown to the 2030 SDG deadline shortens, what is your own vision for where Uttar Pradesh's health system needs to be by then, and what message would you leave with readers; policymakers, global partners and citizens alike about what it will take to get there?

DR. GHOSH: I believe a credible vision has to be honest about the distance still ahead, not just the distance already covered. And we have covered real distance: Front Runner status in the SDG India Index, medical colleges up from 17 to over 80, the best TB case-finding performance of any state in the country, anaemia among pregnant women falling even as the national figure rose, and a digital health backbone that now leads India in scale. My vision for 2030 is that this becomes one connected system rather than a set of parallel wins where the same ABHA-linked record that tracks a woman's anaemia treatment also flags her as a high-risk pregnancy, routes her to the nearest equipped facility, and where that facility has a full complement of trained faculty and a locally manufactured, affordable supply of the medicines and devices it needs.

To policymakers, my message is that health outcomes are won or lost in the years between elections, not the year of one sustained capital and human-resource investment matters more than any single announcement. To global partners, I'd say Uttar Pradesh's scale, 240 million people, makes it a meaningful place to test what works at population level, and we remain genuinely open to that collaboration. And to citizens, the honest ask is trust and participation showing up for screening camps, completing treatment courses, and using the facilities we've built, because a health system's outcomes ultimately depend on the households it serves choosing to walk through its doors.

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MS. DEEPALI KHANNA

Senior Vice President & Head of Asia, the Rockefeller Foundation

Ms. Deepali Khanna leads The Rockefeller Foundation’s Asia Regional Office, advancing impact through partnerships, innovative grants, and thought leadership. A seasoned leader in global development, she has played key roles in the G20 and G7 ecosystems, including co-chairing task forces. Deepali chairs the board of Digital Green Foundation and is a frequent commentator in leading global and regional publications. A sought-



after speaker at international forums, she bridges perspectives on sustainable development and strategic philanthropy. Previously, she held leadership roles at The MasterCard Foundation and Plan International, managing programs across multiple continents.

Excerpts from an interview of Ms. Deepali Khanna, Senior Vice President & Head of Asia, The Rockefeller Foundation by Dr. Arvind Kumar, Editor, Focus Global Reporter

EDITOR: As Senior Vice President, Asia Regional Office, how do you define your core mission for the region today, and what are the two or three “big bets” that you believe can most transform Asia’s development and climate trajectory in this decisive decade?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: Our core mission in Asia is to help expand opportunities while addressing the challenges the region faces. While it has some of the world’s fastest-growing

economies, it is also home to communities that are deeply vulnerable to climate shocks, food insecurity, health risks, and unequal access to energy and finance. The task at hand is to ensure that progress is sustainable and communities are resilient. Our role is to bring together governments, philanthropy, private capital, civil society, and frontline communities to solve these issues at scale.

The first big bet Asia needs is a just and equitable energy transition. Recent geopolitical disruptions have only underscored the necessity of being self-sufficient in terms of energy generation and distribution. Renewable energy has the potential to curb emissions and transform livelihoods, but we must ensure that the shift is equitable and creates access and opportunities, including for last-mile communities.



The second big bet is to ensure digital infrastructure, AI, and data can help us deliver development solutions with greater speed and precision. For example, in public health and safety, they can help authorities detect patterns, issue early warnings, and mobilize resources to address impending crises.

And a final transformative big bet for Asia is to scale investments in climate action strategies focused on communities placed most at risk by extreme weather, health threats, and other modern challenges. For this, it is essential that climate finance move from commitments and pledges to actual implementation.

EDITOR: You have often emphasized that communities most affected by climate change must be at the forefront of decision-making and solution design. How is the Foundation ensuring that climate resilience initiatives in Asia are truly community-led rather than merely community-targeted?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: Who can understand climate risk better than people who have faced extreme weather, floods, crop losses, water stress, displacement, or livelihood disruption? With their experience and their innate understanding of what works in worst-case scenarios, we can help implement solutions that they can own and sustain.

This is especially important in Asia because climate vulnerability is highly localized. A solution that works for a smallholder farmer in India may not work for a coastal community in Indonesia or an urban informal settlement in the Philippines. Local context matters.

The Big Bets Fellowship offers a useful example of this approach. One of the Asia-Pacific fellows, Mustika Wijaya, is working through her non-profit organization, Solar Chapter, to help 300 villages in Indonesia access clean water by 2030. Her work recognizes that installing a water system is not enough; communities must be involved from the start and have ownership over governance, investment, and long-term maintenance. This is especially important in contexts where water systems often fail after installation due to a lack of local capacity and ownership.

EDITOR: Asia faces a massive SDG and climate financing gap, even as new vehicles such as blended finance, catalytic capital, and outcome-based instruments are emerging. From your vantage point, what needs to change in policy, in philanthropy, and in markets to ensure that finance actually reaches climate-vulnerable communities, small cities, and local institutions?



MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: Recent analysis has shown international finance commitments for climate and health increased significantly between 2018 and 2022. However, as you pointed out, it is not adequately reaching the most affected countries and communities. To truly close the gap, we need to emphasize innovative financing mechanisms that can not only mobilize private and commercial investment but also reach last-mile communities. That's where philanthropy and policy can help.

Philanthropy has shown its strength in playing a catalytic role in early-stage design, data, evidence, and local capacity building for the benefit of vulnerable communities. By providing risk-tolerant capital, it absorbs much of the uncertainty that keeps commercial players from investing in solutions that may take longer to become profitable, but that are needed most to improve lives and livelihoods. Philanthropy must continue to be bold in assuming those risks that allow markets to expand to new corners of the world for communities who need it most.

But catalytic capital alone isn't enough; we also need the right policy approach. Creating an enabling policy environment to advance change for the benefit of underserved communities requires clear investment pipelines, especially for adaptation, climate-health priorities, resilient infrastructure, and local institutions. Those elements are what lay the foundation for true scale, which is ultimately what is needed to bridge the SDG and climate finance gap.

EDITOR: The Rockefeller Foundation has been a leading voice on distributed renewable energy and linking energy access with livelihoods and poverty reduction. How do you see the idea of a “just and equitable energy transition” playing out across diverse Asian contexts, and what safeguards are needed so that no community is left behind?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: A just and equitable energy transition in Asia cannot be understood only as replacing fossil fuels with renewables. It must be about expanding opportunity. Clean energy should help smallholder farmers increase incomes and grow businesses, and help communities access reliable and affordable power and rely on better-functioning health facilities.

Across Asia, even though contexts will differ, the just energy transition can succeed as long as it's about meeting the needs of communities not served in traditional investment and development. The essential safeguards have to include affordability, reliability, community participation, support for workers and farmers, gender inclusivity, and investment in storage and digital systems to make grids more resilient.

EDITOR: The Rockefeller Foundation has supported initiatives that place women at the center of climate resilience and economic empowerment. Why is it critical for women, especially from the Global South, to be in leadership roles in climate governance, and what systemic shifts are needed to move from “token representation” to genuine power-sharing?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: Women's exclusion from climate action strategies reflects a structural failure with grave consequences. Women are 14 times more likely to lose their lives during disasters and their aftermath. In disaster shelters and relief camps designed without considering women's safety, sanitation, mobility, or caregiving responsibilities, women and girls are often exposed to further harm. Similarly, when recovery packages ignore informal work, unpaid care work, or women's lack of land and asset ownership, women are left to absorb the shock without institutional support.

On the other hand, women and girls are already leading climate action in their communities. The Rockefeller Foundation's grant support for Plan International's Youth Leadership Academy for Gender and Climate Action in Asia-Pacific reflects this belief. The initiative supports 40 youth leaders, 70% of whom are girls and young women, across Indonesia, India, Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand. It recognizes young women not as symbolic participants, but as leaders and influencers in climate action and climate justice.

Investing in women and girls' leadership, financing women- and youth-led organizations, collecting gender-disaggregated data, designing adaptation plans with women's realities in mind, and ensuring women have authority over resources — those are the true markers of women's inclusion. Climate governance must recognize women and girls as planners, decision-makers, and leaders.

EDITOR: In an era of polycrisis - climate shocks, pandemics, conflicts, and economic volatility—how do you see the role of strategic philanthropy evolving? What does it mean, in practical terms, for a foundation like Rockefeller to act as a systems-change actor rather than just a grant-maker?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: These polycrisis necessitate approaches that do not treat challenges in siloes but as structural issues. A strategic philanthropic approach begins by identifying issues, understanding how they intersect, and planning around proven solutions that will benefit the full spectrum of need. For The Rockefeller Foundation, this means employing evidence, convening power, partnerships, and taking risks to unlock larger flows of public and private finance and get the right solutions to the people who need it most.

The Climate and Health Funders Coalition, for example, has brought more than 35 philanthropies together and mobilized an initial US\$300 million to accelerate integrated action on climate and health. The effort focuses on extreme heat, air pollution, climate-sensitive infectious diseases, and stronger climate-health data, while also shifting funding and power to communities most affected by climate change.



EDITOR: From your experience, what makes a public–philanthropy–civil society partnership truly effective, and could you share an example from Asia where such collaboration has shifted the needle on climate or developmental outcomes?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: The focus of a strong partnership is always to pool expertise and resources in a way that solves a real problem for people. In Rajasthan, India, for instance, the Global Energy Alliance worked with state officials to support solar deployment through digital tools and on-ground assistance to farmers.

That enabled Nirmal Das Swami, a wheat farmer in Rajasthan, to use part of his land to install a solar park that powered not just his farm but his entire community. With reliable, affordable, and clean energy, his crop yields and income improved, while the surrounding community also benefited from the power supply. At a larger scale, the initiative has helped install 243 solar sites, impacting around 177,000 farmers and reaching 667,000 homes. It has also supported job creation and improved power reliability for farmers.

When partnerships are effective, infrastructure doesn't remain something with an abstract benefit. The improvement in the lives of thousands of people is tangible and significant, as it opens doors for them to avail other opportunities.

EDITOR: Digital public infrastructure, AI, and data platforms are reshaping how we plan and deliver climate and development interventions. How is The Rockefeller Foundation leveraging digital and data innovations to improve targeting, accountability, and impact in areas like climate resilience, water security, and health in Asia?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: Digital tools can help us respond to development challenges with greater precision and speed. The question is whether it strengthens people's ability to access information and services.

For instance, the South Asia initiative on extreme heat, which The Rockefeller Foundation supports with the World Health Organization–World Meteorological Organization Climate and Health Joint Program and Wellcome, is designed to develop decision-support tools, such as early warnings and heat-risk assessments. These tools can help governments and health systems identify vulnerable populations, plan responses earlier, and reduce avoidable illness and deaths from extreme heat.

Asia has enormous potential to ensure that communities benefit from digital, AI, and data platforms. The opportunities go beyond early warning systems, including services to strengthen climate and health surveillance, supporting farmers with real-time advice, and helping governments and partners target interventions more effectively.

EDITOR: Water sits at the heart of climate, energy, food, health, and livelihoods. How is The Rockefeller Foundation approaching the water–climate–development nexus in Asia, and what kinds of partnerships or models do you see as most promising for scaling resilient water systems?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: Whether due to changing rainfall, floods, groundwater depletion, or droughts, disruptions to water availability immediately become apparent in public health, food, livelihoods and local economies. So we cannot approach water as a standalone issue. We have to see it as central to climate resilience and human development.

For us, the focus is on helping build systems that are prepared for these interconnected risks. Some of the mechanisms include strengthening local institutions, improving the use of climate and weather data, supporting early warning and risk assessment systems, and ensuring that finance reaches the communities and cities that need it most.

A good example is The Rockefeller Foundation's support for AVPN's Asia Partnership for Investment in Resilient Economies (ASPIRE). The initiative is designed to strengthen development finance in Asia by scaling Asian-led financing solutions and connecting capital to community-driven efforts that improve lives and livelihoods. It brings together government, philanthropy, development finance, and private sector leaders to shape inclusive and sustainable finance pathways that center on Asia's priorities.

The larger point is that resilience cannot be built after a crisis has already arrived. We need to invest earlier, plan better, and design water, health, food, and energy systems together. That is how communities move from coping with climate shocks to being better prepared for them.

EDITOR: What is your vision of “Asia’s moment” in global climate and development governance? If you were to leave our readers with one call to action, especially policymakers, practitioners, and young professionals in the climate space, what would it be?

MS. DEEPALI KHANNA: My view is that global climate and development governance must learn from Asia's leadership in climate action being people-driven. That “moment” will come from people and institutions that understand local contexts, but can also build models that others can learn from and adapt.

To support this, it’s important for practitioners and young professionals to stay close to communities and understand that innovation must always be grounded in reality and how diverse people experience it, while it’s up to policymakers to give them room for implementing those solutions.

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DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V.

Chairman, NABARD

Dr. Shaji Krishnan V has been serving as Chairman of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) since December 2022. With over three decades of distinguished experience spanning commercial banking, development finance, and rural banking, he brings deep domain expertise and strategic leadership to India's apex development finance institution for agriculture and rural development.



Prior to his appointment as Chairman, he served as Deputy Managing Director at NABARD, where he led several transformational initiatives.

These include the establishment of NABARD's Climate and Sustainability vertical, development of fintech engagement strategies, creation of a comprehensive data warehousing system, digitisation of supervisory processes, and strengthening of enterprise-wide risk management frameworks.

Dr. Shaji has over a decade of board-level experience and currently serves on the boards of key national institutions, including the Sahakar Sarathi Private Limited (SSPL), the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), and the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC). He also chairs NABARD Consultancy Services Ltd. (NABCONS) and NABVENTURES Ltd., the institution's venture capital arm supporting agri-food and rural innovation. In addition, he is Chairman of the Bankers' Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), Lucknow, and serves on the governing bodies of the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad, and the National Institute of Bank Management (NIBM), Pune.

His past board engagements include the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), Canara HSBC Life Insurance Company Ltd., and Canara Bank Securities Ltd. He has also chaired key NABARD subsidiaries such as NABKISAN Finance, NABFoundation, and NABSanrakshan. At the international level, he has served as Chairman of the Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) and has led several expert committees constituted by the Government of India on rural finance, cooperative reforms, and sustainable development.

Before joining NABARD, Dr. Shaji had a distinguished 26-year career with Canara Bank, where he held senior leadership positions, including General Manager and Head of Business Development. He played a key role in the amalgamation of Syndicate Bank with Canara Bank and served as Chairman of Kerala Gramin Bank, then the largest Regional Rural Bank in India, where he advanced financial inclusion and digital transformation.

Academically, Dr. Shaji holds a Ph.D. in Finance from the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode, an MBA (PGDM) in Public Policy and Infrastructure Finance from IIM Ahmedabad, and a postgraduate degree in Agriculture. He is a Certified Associate of the Indian Institute of Banking and Finance (IIBF), holds certification in Treasury, Investment and Risk Management, and is an NSE Certified Market Professional (NCMP).

A thought leader in the domains of Banking and financial systems, Dr. Shaji has contributed to scholarly research and co-authored a book on Financial Engineering and Quantitative Risk Analytics. In recognition of his contributions to the rural development banking, he was conferred the Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) by Kerala Agricultural University.

Excerpts from an interview of Dr. Shaji Krishnan V, Chairman, NABARD by Dr. Arvind Kumar, Editor, Focus Global Reporter

EDITOR: NABARD has completed 44 years, and you have spoken about driving inclusive growth through digital transformation, rural enterprise support, and mission-mode projects. Under the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, how do you define NABARD's strategic positioning for rural transformation over the next decade?

DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V: As India advances towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, rural transformation must be viewed through a much broader lens than agriculture alone. The future of rural India will be shaped by the convergence of digital infrastructure, climate resilience, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, strong local institutions, and innovation-led growth. In this evolving landscape, NABARD is positioning itself not merely as a development finance institution but as a catalyst for integrated rural transformation.

Our strategy over the next decade is anchored in five key shifts.

First, we are moving from being a credit provider to a rural economic architect. The focus is expanding beyond agricultural finance to strengthening entire rural value chains through FPOs, agri-processing, and non-farm enterprises. Our objective is not only to raise productivity but to sustainably enhance rural incomes. In this direction, NABARD has partnered with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to facilitate the creation of 4,000 rural enterprises over

the next three years, with similar collaborations being explored with UNICEF's YuWaah initiative.

Second, climate resilience will be a defining pillar of rural transformation. Through our Climate Strategy 2030, dedicated climate-focused department, and financing instruments such as NABARD Green Lending Facility (NGLF), NABARD Green Impact Fund (NGIF), Climate Change Fund-Interest Differential (CCF-ID) and NABARD Carbon Asset Financing (NCAF) under NABARD Carbon Fund (NCF), NABARD is building a robust climate finance ecosystem to support water security, regenerative agriculture, renewable energy, and resilient livelihoods.

Third, we are strengthening digital and financial inclusion ecosystems. Initiatives such as the Centralised Digital Credit Infrastructure, including Jan Sethu and Sahakar Sethu, will improve efficiency, transparency, and customer experience while enhancing the competitiveness of rural financial institutions.

Fourth, NABARD will continue to build stronger rural institutions at scale. Accelerator programmes for FPOs, PACS, and MFIs, along with initiatives such as Sahakar Sarathi Pvt. Ltd., are aimed at improving governance, market linkages, and institutional sustainability.

Fifth, we will increasingly act as a mobiliser of blended finance, leveraging public resources to attract private and impact capital for rural infrastructure, climate action, and enterprise development.

NABARD will also strengthen its role as a policy thought leader through data-driven insights and field-based evidence. Our objective is to build a rural economy that is inclusive, climate-resilient, market-linked, and digitally empowered, with success measured by stronger institutions, higher incomes, and sustainable livelihoods.

EDITOR: NABARD has launched its Climate Strategy 2030, built on four pillars: accelerating green lending, shaping markets, internal green transition, and strategic resource mobilisation. How would you assess the on-ground progress of these pillars so far, and what have been the biggest implementation challenges?

DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V: Climate change is one of the most significant risks facing India's rural economy, particularly affecting small and marginal farmers, women, and vulnerable communities. Recognising this challenge, NABARD operationalised its Climate Strategy 2030 to integrate climate action into rural finance and development while strengthening resilience and promoting sustainable growth.

Under Accelerating Green Lending, we have moved from pilot interventions to a more structured climate finance architecture through initiatives such as the NABARD Green Lending Facility (NGLF) and the NABARD Green Impact Fund (NGIF). Strategic partnerships with institutions

such as Bank of India, REC Limited, and NIIF have strengthened our ability to scale climate-positive investments. However, challenges remain in building a pipeline of bankable green projects and addressing the risk perceptions associated with long-gestation investments.

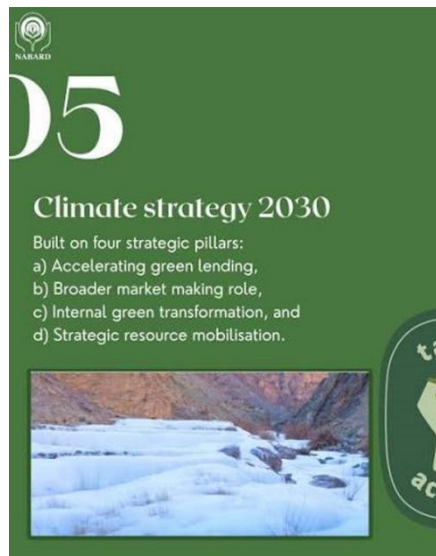


Image Source/Credit/Courtesy: NABARD

Through the Market Making pillar, NABARD is helping build the ecosystem required for climate finance to flourish. The NABARD Carbon Fund, expansion of the DiCRA platform, AI-enabled climate analytics, and innovation initiatives such as the National Climate Stack Innovation Challenge are creating stronger foundations for climate-informed decision-making. At the same time, gaps in MRV systems, limited climate data, and high transaction costs continue to constrain participation by smallholders.

The Internal Green Transformation pillar focuses on embedding climate considerations across NABARD's own systems. ESG policies, climate risk frameworks, green taxonomy integration, and portfolio-level green tagging are helping us evolve into a climate-aligned institution. The principal challenge here is building capacity across the ecosystem to effectively operationalise these frameworks.

Under Strategic Resource Mobilisation, NABARD has expanded engagement with international climate funds and development partners to attract concessional finance. However, project execution delays, compliance requirements, and co-financing challenges remain areas requiring attention.

The progress achieved so far has laid a strong foundation. Going forward, our focus will be on strengthening project pipelines, scaling blended finance solutions, enhancing climate data infrastructure, and building institutional capacities. Ultimately, our objective is to ensure that climate action translates into resilience, sustainable livelihoods, and inclusive rural growth.

EDITOR: Agricultural credit reached ₹28.7 lakh crore in FY25 and is projected to cross ₹32 lakh crore in FY26. What are the key drivers behind this growth, and how do you ensure that incremental credit actually reaches small, marginal, and tenant farmers rather than being concentrated among large agri-corporates?

DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V: The strong growth in agricultural credit reflects a combination of policy support, institutional reforms, and increasing demand from a diversifying rural economy. As agriculture becomes more market-oriented and resilient, demand for both working capital and investment credit has expanded across crops, livestock, fisheries, and rural enterprises.

Several factors have contributed to this growth, including Priority Sector Lending mandates, interest subvention schemes, increasing investments in allied sectors, digitalisation of credit delivery, and growing investments in agriculture and rural infrastructure.

NABARD's field experience demonstrates that improvements in livelihoods directly translate into increased demand for institutional credit. Across our watershed development interventions, a study covering 34 projects found that credit flow nearly tripled, while agricultural term lending increased fivefold, driven by improvements in water availability, productivity, diversification, and farm incomes.

Equally important is ensuring that the benefits of credit growth reach small, marginal, tenant, and tribal farmers. Encouragingly, the share of credit flowing to small and marginal farmers has increased from 41.5% in 2015–16 to 54.5% in 2025–26, indicating a clear shift towards greater inclusion.

This has been supported by policy measures such as PSL sub-targets, the Kisan Credit Card programme, interest subvention schemes, collateral-free loans, and NABARD's refinance support to cooperative banks and RRBs. At the institutional level, SHGs, JLGs, FPOs, and tribal development programmes are enabling small producers to access credit collectively and overcome constraints related to scale and collateral.

Digital innovation is further strengthening inclusion through initiatives such as e-KCC and integration with the National Fisheries Digital Platform, which are making credit delivery faster, paperless, and more accessible.

Our objective is not simply to expand the volume of agricultural credit but to ensure that every additional rupee of credit supports productive investment, income enhancement, and resilient livelihoods across the most underserved segments of rural India.

EDITOR: NABARD's SHG-Bank Linkage Programme has connected over 1.44 crore self-help groups, of which 83.5% are women-led. How do you evaluate the programme's impact on rural women's economic agency, and what are your future plans to deepen and scale this model?

DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V: Women's economic empowerment remains one of the most powerful drivers of inclusive rural development. Over the last three decades, NABARD's Self-Help Group–Bank Linkage Programme has emerged as one of India's most successful financial inclusion initiatives, bringing millions of women into the formal financial system.

As of March 2026, more than 145 lakh SHGs were savings-linked with banks, of which nearly 90% were exclusive women SHGs. Outstanding bank credit to SHGs exceeded ₹3.33 lakh crore, reflecting both scale and sustainability.

The impact extends far beyond access to credit. SHGs have enabled women to develop financial literacy, leadership capabilities, repayment discipline, and collective bargaining power. They have reduced dependence on informal lenders while strengthening women's participation in household decisions, local governance, and livelihood activities. Increasingly, SHGs are becoming platforms for enterprise creation rather than only thrift-and-credit groups.

Going forward, NABARD's focus is on transforming the SHG movement into a more enterprise-oriented, digitally enabled, and market-linked ecosystem. Programmes such as m-Suvidha are supporting women-led enterprises through skill development, credit facilitation, and market access.

We are also strengthening market linkages through initiatives such as Gram Dukans, exhibitions, e-commerce enablement, and digital marketing platforms. Simultaneously, solutions like the Money Purse Application and upcoming platforms such as Jan Sethu and Sahakar Sethu will help deepen digital access and improve credit delivery.

Special attention is being given to ultra-poor women through the Graduated Rural Income Generation Programme (GRIP), which combines livelihood assets, capacity building, and financial inclusion support.



Image Source/Credit/Courtesy: NABARD

NABARD has been collaborating with DAY-NRLM under a strategic MoU on different fronts that include skilling, capacity building and livelihood promotion for rural women SHGs/ members. Among other initiatives that are being explored with NRLM are (i) a pilot for real-time CLF-VO-SHG banking transactions on LokOS, (ii) setting up a not-for-profit Corporate BC with 2 lakh SHG and cooperative members as BCs.

Thus, NABARD's plan is to consolidate the SHG-BLP into a more enterprise-oriented, digitally enabled and market-linked model.

EDITOR: The newly launched GRIP targets extremely poor rural households with a combination of refundable grants and capacity-building support to transition them into formal economic activities. How is this approach fundamentally different from traditional poverty alleviation programmes, and what are your early learnings?

DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V: One of the most persistent challenges in rural development is helping ultra-poor households transition sustainably from vulnerability to economic self-reliance.

The Graduated Rural Income Generation Programme (GRIP) has been designed precisely to address this challenge.

Implemented across five states and covering 2,500 ultra-poor rural women, GRIP combines capacity building, livelihood support, enterprise development, and financial inclusion in a structured graduation framework.

Unlike traditional poverty alleviation programmes that often rely primarily on subsidies or direct credit, GRIP adopts a more holistic approach. Beneficiaries receive intensive training, mentoring, and productive assets valued at up to ₹15,000, enabling them to establish nano-enterprises and generate income immediately.

A distinctive feature of the programme is the Returnable Grant model. Instead of creating a repayment burden through conventional loans, beneficiaries are expected to return up to 50% of the asset value over time without interest. This helps instil financial discipline and accountability while preserving confidence and flexibility.

Early outcomes have been encouraging. As on 31 May 2026, all 2,500 beneficiaries have received productive assets and are actively running enterprises. Acceptance of the Returnable Grant concept has been strong, with around 72% of the expected amount already received from beneficiaries and many making repayments ahead of schedule.

The next stage will focus on linking these women entrepreneurs to formal banking channels using their performance-based ratings and transaction histories. Our objective is to create a sustainable pathway that enables ultra-poor households to graduate from vulnerability to entrepreneurship and formal financial inclusion.

EDITOR: In FY25, NABARD facilitated the first-ever cyber insurance cover for RRBs and cooperative banks. With rural financial services rapidly digitising, how do you assess the cybersecurity vulnerabilities of these institutions, and what is NABARD doing to build their digital resilience?

DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V: As rural financial services become increasingly digital, cybersecurity is no longer merely a technology issue, it is a core institutional resilience and trust issue.

Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Cooperative Banks face a range of vulnerabilities, including legacy systems, limited specialist IT capacity, reliance on third-party service providers, and exposure to evolving threats such as phishing, ransomware, cyber frauds, and data breaches.

NABARD's response has been comprehensive and proactive. A significant milestone was the facilitation of the first sector-wide cyber insurance programme for RRBs and Cooperative Banks

through National Insurance Company. What began with coverage for 193 institutions, the scope has now expanded to 309 banks comprising 294 Rural Cooperative Banks, 14 RRBs and TAICO Bank with liability protection exceeding ₹2,500 crore, while substantially reducing insurance costs through collective procurement.

However, cyber resilience cannot be achieved through insurance alone. NABARD's inspection processes include dedicated assessments of IT governance, information security, and cyber risk management. Regular capacity-building programmes for board members, senior management, and IT personnel help strengthen awareness and preparedness across institutions.

At the infrastructure level, NABARD has facilitated Core Banking Solutions for cooperative banks through a centrally managed ASP model, ensuring standardised security, better governance, and stronger operational controls.

Cyber resilience is further reinforced through periodic IS and IT audits, business continuity reviews, and monitoring of hosted infrastructure.

Our objective is to ensure that digital transformation in rural finance is secure, resilient, and trusted, enabling institutions to embrace technology confidently while safeguarding customer interests.

EDITOR: Under the Unnati Phase II programme, the PACS Accelerator Scheme is being expanded from 30 pilot cooperatives to 10,000 PACS. What unique value do Primary Agricultural Credit Societies bring to India's rural credit landscape, and how will their digitalisation change the grassroots financial services delivery?

DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V: Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) represent the foundation of India's cooperative credit architecture and serve as the first point of contact with formal finance for over 13 crore farmers.

However, changing economic realities require PACS to evolve beyond their traditional role as credit intermediaries. Under the vision of 'Sahakar Se Samriddhi', NABARD is supporting their transformation into Multipurpose Service Centres capable of delivering a much wider range of financial and developmental services.

The PACS Accelerator Programme was launched to demonstrate how diversification into areas such as input supply, warehousing, processing, renewable energy, logistics, and community infrastructure can strengthen institutional viability while creating new sources of income and employment.

Based on the encouraging outcomes from the pilot phase, the programme is now being expanded to 10,000 PACS under Unnati Phase II. Digital tools, AI-enabled project preparation, dashboards, and technology-driven monitoring systems will support this scale-up.

At the national level, NABARD is coordinating with relevant ministries and agencies to align PACS diversification activities with different government schemes in renewable energy, agri-logistics, digital agriculture, also processing and rural enterprise promotion, etc.

Digitisation will be transformational. Computerised PACS will be able to offer faster loan processing, digital payments, DBT services, real-time monitoring, and seamless integration with banking and government platforms. In parallel, diversification into areas such as Common Service Centres, Jan Aushadhi Kendras, dairy, fisheries, and custom hiring centres will make PACS one-stop rural service hubs.

Our objective is to transform PACS from predominantly credit institutions into digitally enabled, member-centric rural business hubs capable of delivering a wide range of financial and developmental services at the grassroots.

EDITOR: On NABARD's 44th Foundation Day, you launched the RuralTech CoLab portal – an open digital innovation platform for start-ups, research institutions, and technology firms. How will this platform transform the rural innovation ecosystem, and what kind of participation are you expecting from non-traditional stakeholders?

DR. SHAJI KRISHNAN V: Innovation will be a critical driver of rural transformation in the coming decades. The RuralTech CoLab Portal has been conceived as a national platform to connect India's innovation ecosystem with real rural development challenges.



Image Source/Credit/Courtesy: NABARD

The platform enables NABARD to engage more systematically with FinTechs, AgriTechs, start-ups, technology firms, research institutions, and development partners to identify, co-create, pilot, and scale practical solutions for the rural economy.

The portal will be complemented by the RuralTech Innovation Sandbox, which will support challenge-led innovation, hackathons, rapid prototyping, and field testing. The emphasis is not simply on generating ideas but on creating solutions that are practical, validated, and scalable.

A key feature is the participation of non-traditional stakeholders as co-innovators rather than service providers. We expect stronger engagement from start-ups, academic institutions, technology companies, and innovators in areas such as digital agriculture, traceability, geospatial intelligence, artificial intelligence, and digital financial services.

The response from the ecosystem has already been encouraging, with 32 companies empanelled across strategic domains including FPO digital enablement, traceability solutions, drone-based monitoring, and AI-powered document generation.

Our objective is to create a pipeline of scalable, field-tested innovations that strengthen rural institutions, improve financial inclusion, accelerate digital agriculture, and support the transformation of rural India in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR

SVP, Global CSR, HCLTech & Director, HCLFoundation

Dr. Nidhi Pundhir is an international humanitarian services and socio-economic-environmental development specialist. In the capacity of Senior Vice President, Global CSR, she leads the global CSR agenda for HCLTech and heads the HCLFoundation, which is the CSR arm of HCLTech, in India.

Dr. Pundhir has strategized as well as executed impactful programmatic frameworks that are aligned to the global Sustainable Development Goals, for the most disadvantaged and isolated communities, including environmental targets. She has a deep understanding of poverty issues and delivers realistic approaches towards poverty alleviation. In her current role, Nidhi has envisioned HCLTech's flagship Global CSR Policy. She has built the HCLFoundation's vision, mission, and strategy to the next level, ensuring high-quality programme delivery that brings about meaningful difference on ground.

With more than 27 years of experience in actualizing Human Rights and Environmental action at national and international levels, some of the key portfolios she has held were with SOS Children's Villages as Director Programme Development, Asia, and at Plan International's International Headquarters as Global Advisor on Child Protection in Development.

Dr. Pundhir holds a doctorate in Public Health Management, with her thesis on "Right to Health During First 1000 Days of Life for Children Living in Slums", from IIHMR University, Jaipur and M.Phil. in Health Systems Management from BITS, Pilani, India..



*Excerpts from an interview of **Dr. Nidhi Pundhir**, SVP, Global CSR, HCLTech & Director, HCLFoundation by **Dr. Arvind Kumar**, Editor, Focus Global Reporter*

EDITOR: Over the years, HCL Foundation has grown into one of the largest CSR arms in India, impacting millions of lives. If you were to capture the ethos and journey of the organization in one narrative, what would that story look like?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: The story of HCL Foundation is ultimately a story of possibility, a story of transformation.

Over the past decade, we have maintained that sustainable development need not be delivered to communities; it must be built with them. What began as a commitment to responsible corporate



citizenship (we had humble roots in HCL Techies' volunteering contributions even before CSR became a mandate) has today evolved into a mission of enabling lasting social transformation across education, skill development and livelihoods, environment, health, water stewardship, biodiversity, sports for development, disaster risk reduction and response and so much more.

The journey is a testament of purpose, technology and compassion collaboratively transforming communities at scale, we have positively impacted more than 8.54 million lives thus far, with over half of them being women reaching Our mission through this, has remained constant: to be the source code for socio-economic and environmental development. If you look at our story you'll see these constant patterns of us identifying local strengths, investing in long-term partnerships, and creating systems that outlast projects.

The impact story told through the changing lives of farmers embracing sustainable practices, para-athletes breaking barriers on international platforms, artisans rediscovering economic dignity via digital marketplaces and communities restoring ecosystems while reclaiming ownership of their future. But the true essence of this journey lies in how it's been walking with communities, not just for them.

EDITOR: At IWF's International Conference on ESG Transversality, you spoke about how technology-enabled mapping uncovered thousands of water bodies that existed on the ground but not on record. What did that gap tell you about how India has historically governed its water commons?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: That discovery highlighted a fundamental challenge: what is not visible in governance systems often becomes invisible in planning and protection. It is mind boggling to see traditional water bodies do so much i.e. they continue to support groundwater recharge, biodiversity and local climate resilience, and despite it all they remain absent from formal records!

This gap reflects a historical disconnect between community knowledge and institutional data systems. Communities often know these assets intimately, but planning frameworks have not always captured them comprehensively. Technology helps bridge this divide by creating a common evidence base. However, mapping alone is not the solution. The real opportunity lies in combining geospatial intelligence with local stewardship, enabling governments, communities, and civil society to manage water commons more effectively and equitably.

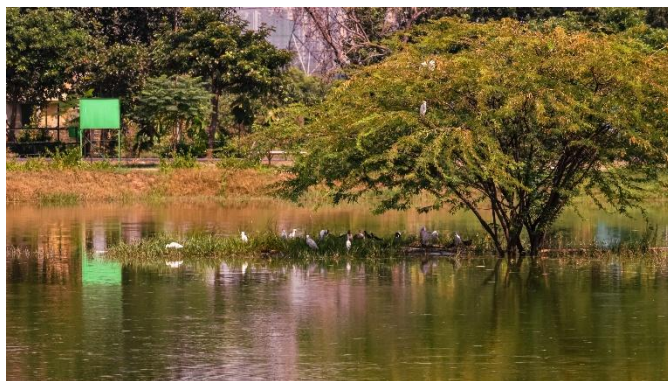


For example, we are actively exploring this convergence through the Water DaMS ecosystem currently being piloted in Madurai. The initiative integrates a web-based management platform, field-data mobile applications, GIS mapping, and a decision-support system to strengthen evidence-based governance of water bodies.

As part of this pilot, the initiative includes geo-referencing revenue village maps, generating shape files for water bodies and waterways, and collecting detailed field data for 120 water commons, including irrigation tanks, ponds, ooranis, temple tanks, and their respective channels.

EDITOR: In May 2025, HCL Foundation introduced a dedicated Water category under HCLTech Grant. What gap in the CSR-water ecosystem was this designed to fill, and what kind of innovations are you hoping NGOs will bring?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: Water is central to both human survival and climate resilience. Water challenges today are increasingly complex, intersecting with climate resilience, agriculture,



public health, livelihoods, and ecosystem restoration. Yet many promising organizations working in this space struggle to access patient, scale-oriented funding. The dedicated Water category under HCLTech Grant was created under the leadership of Ms. Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Chairperson HCLTech, towards recognizing water security as a strategic development priority in its own right. We

wanted to encourage ambitious, evidence-based solutions that address governance, sustainability, and resilience.

At HCLFoundation, we take a holistic approach that combines infrastructure creation, ecosystem rejuvenation, and community participation. To date, we have harvested more than 155 billion liters of water and rejuvenated over 400 water structures, ensuring that water security is restored where it is needed most. But beyond numbers, the most critical part of our model is community ownership. We work with farmer cooperatives, women's groups, and fisherfolk to ensure they not only benefit from water conservation projects but also take responsibility for their upkeep.

A powerful example is Project Vembanad in Kerala, where fisherfolk are actively engaged in removing invasive weeds to protect their livelihood and ecosystem. When communities are stewards of their resources, sustainability moves from being a project to becoming a lived practice.

We are particularly interested in innovations that integrate technology with community ownership, strengthen watershed management, improve water-use efficiency, restore ecological systems, and generate measurable long-term outcomes. Equally important are innovations in institutions and governance, because enduring water security is as much a social challenge as a technical one.

EDITOR: India Water Foundation champions a 'Putting People First' approach. Where have you seen this convergence produce the most durable water security outcomes, and where does it still break down?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: The most durable outcomes emerge when communities are involved from planning through implementation and stewardship. We have seen remarkable success where local institutions, particularly women-led groups, farmer collectives, and village committees, become custodians of water assets rather than beneficiaries of projects.

However, the model breaks down when participation becomes symbolic rather than substantive. Infrastructure can be built quickly, but ownership cannot. Sustainable water security requires long-term engagement, local capacity building, and shared accountability. Projects that prioritize construction over governance often struggle to maintain impact over time.

The lesson is clear: people are not a component of water solutions; they are the foundation of them. For instance, in addition to the Water DAMS portal describes above, a Decision Support System (DSS) is being developed to analyze the current condition of these waterbodies, prioritize restoration feasibility, and generate data-driven restoration estimates, enabling a holistic and technology-enabled rejuvenation framework under HCL Foundation programmes. GIS-based mapping and topographical analysis were used for site selection, catchment assessment, and hydrological planning.

EDITOR: HCL Foundation has established STEM and digital labs and is running coding and AI initiatives for students. Is technology-in-education CSR closing the learning gap or merely adding devices to classrooms?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: The strength of technology lies in its ability to democratize access and accelerate equity, and we see it as an enabler across all our focus areas.

While technology has transformative potential in education, a device in a classroom does not automatically improve learning outcomes. What creates impact is the combination of relevant content, teacher capacity, student engagement, contextual pedagogy, and continuous support.

We have already seen success with our coding and AI initiatives in government schools and the establishment of over 70 STEM and digital labs reaching many students. In healthcare, telemedicine and AI-driven diagnostics are bridging critical gaps in underserved regions. At the same time,

The SRoI of our projects stand testimony to the fact that outcomes, not equipment, should remain the benchmark of success.

EDITOR: HCL Tech Grant replaced its Environment category with a standalone Biodiversity category in FY26. What does a biodiversity-positive CSR programme actually look like?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: A biodiversity-positive programme goes far beyond plantation counts. While sapling plantations have their own value, biodiversity is also equally about restoring ecological relationships, strengthening habitats, protecting species diversity and enhancing ecosystem functionality.

Core pillars of a Biodiversity-Positive CSR Programme, where we believe in in-situ conservation leading to Ecosystem/Habitat Restoration, landscape and associated biodiversity conservation, and soil and moisture conservation. A few real examples of biodiversity-positive responses include Forest Ecosystem Revival (West Singhbhum, Jharkhand), Coastal & Aquatic Biodiversity (24 Parganas, West Bengal), Empowers marginalized groups to take over the local governance of natural ecosystems to avoid resource exploitation and utilize them sustainably.



Additionally, the landscape-level grassland restoration aims to conserve the critically endangered bird, the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in western India, and to conserve the Horseshoe Crab, one of the planet's oldest "living fossils" in the Indian Sundarbans.

Success therefore, should be measured through indicators such as ecosystem health, species richness, habitat restoration, community participation and long-term ecological outcomes. Not simply counting trees!

EDITOR: My E-Haat is digitising the artisan economy. What has it taught you about the difference between creating a marketplace and creating sustainable income?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: My E-Haat is not just a marketplace — it's a market access movement. From the start, it has maintained that digital platforms alone are never enough. Artisans also require design support, quality enhancement, branding, logistics, financial literacy, customer engagement capabilities and consistent market linkages. The initiative creates sustainable livelihoods by strengthening the value chain of the arts and crafts sector and by connecting artisans directly to markets through online and offline platforms.

We believe in empowering collectives and SHG's for long term impact and sustainability, because a successful artisan isn't merely selling products online; they are building micro-enterprises. ZingnZest, a women led social enterprise in Noida led by women working on bakery products, making savouries and various food items while FPO-Melagiri Natural Products Private Limited incorporated in NTFP Products is working in Karnataka.

EDITOR: Where is the CSR sector still getting women's empowerment wrong?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: Our sector sometimes focuses on inclusion without adequately addressing agency. Empowerment is not simply about involving women in existing systems; it is about enabling them to shape those systems. We must expand access to education, mentorship, and leadership opportunities for women across sectors. Equally important is recognizing the leadership women already demonstrate at the grassroots—whether through self-help groups, farmer collectives, or community institutions.

In-fact my commitment to this field is rooted in my own journey. I grew up in Rajasthan in a family of educators, yet I saw how girls around me were discouraged from pursuing education, with 'settling after marriage' seen as their only path. This reality instilled in me a sense of responsibility to break barriers—not just for myself, but for others.

When women lead community institutions, producer groups, cooperatives, and governance structures, the benefits extend far beyond individual outcomes and strengthen entire communities.

EDITOR: If the next generation of CSR leaders could leave behind one practice and adopt one new practice, what would they be?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: I would encourage the sector to move beyond short-term project thinking and embrace systems thinking.

I have seen that people who genuinely enjoy engaging with communities and solving problems collectively often find the work very meaningful. On the other hand, those looking only for quick outcomes or very structured environments may sometimes find the sector difficult. What really helps is a balance of professional capability and empathy. The work becomes far more impactful when you approach it with both competence and humility.

EDITOR: How is HCL Foundation aligning its priorities with the UN SDGs, and what systemic changes need urgent attention in the next 5–10 years?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: All our flagship programmes are mapped to the UN SDGs and our focus is to contribute measurable outcomes through advance these goals at both the community and national level.

Looking ahead, the most urgent systemic shifts needed are in three areas. First, climate resilience, as communities are already facing the brunt of environmental degradation and extreme weather events. Second, universal access to quality healthcare, which remains a fundamental gap. And third, digital equity, because without closing the digital divide, millions will be excluded from opportunities for education, employment, and participation. We believe these areas will define sustainable progress in the next decade.

EDITOR: If you could change one thing about how India's corporate sector approaches water stewardship in its CSR mandates, what would it be? And what role can civil-society think tanks play?

DR. NIDHI PUNDHIR: I would encourage a shift from viewing water primarily as a project area to viewing it as a shared strategic resource requiring collective stewardship.

Our CEO championing the cause of the Yamuna River Basin through the Yamuna River Basin challenge is testimony to this collective I mentioned. And not just fellow corporates. Water

challenges are so interdisciplinary that they transcend organizational boundaries. Any aquifer or water body demands a greater degree of collaboration among businesses, governments, civil society organizations, academic institutions and local communities.

Civil-society think tanks have a critical role to play in this transition. They can generate evidence, facilitate dialogue, identify emerging risks, build consensus around policy solutions, and help translate knowledge into action. In a rapidly changing climate context, institutions that connect science, policy, and practice will become increasingly important in shaping India's water future.

At its core, effective water stewardship is not about managing scarcity; it is about creating resilience. And resilience can only be built collectively.

HCL Tech reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 46%, and achieved zero waste-to-landfill across all campuses, replenished more than 31x its water usage and is committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2040 and continuing to advance responsible governance and social impact initiatives.

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MR. MATTHIEU PEGON

Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Climate Investment Funds

Mr. Matthieu is a Deputy Chief Executive Officer. Previously, Matthieu served as Director of Blended Finance at IDB Invest. In this role, he oversaw the deployment of IDB Invest's concessional resources in private sector investments where risks are too high for commercial finance alone.

Prior to joining IDB Invest, Matthieu worked in various origination and structuring roles at multilateral climate fund Green Climate Fund and BNP Paribas, a global investment bank.



Matthieu holds a bachelor's and a master's degree from Grenoble École de Management, a master's degree from ESCP Business School, and is a PhD candidate at ESCP Business School.

Excerpts from an interview of Mr. Matthieu Pegon, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Climate Investment Funds by Dr. Arvind Kumar, Editor, Focus Global Reporter

EDITOR: With over US\$14 billion in pledges and operations across 80+ developing countries, how do you personally define CIF's unique role in the global climate finance architecture, and what is the single biggest shift you are seeking to bring to the institution?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: The nearly \$14 billion CIF is a pioneering multilateral climate fund delivering catalytic, low-cost finance. With our funding, developing countries crowd in the investments needed to drive economy-wide transformation through resilience, nature-based solutions, or clean technology. On average, every CIF dollar generates \$10 in co-financing.

CIF works at the nexus of climate and development, driving economic resilience, competitiveness, and inclusive growth. We work exclusively through six multilateral

development banks to create quality jobs, strengthen productivity, stabilize incomes, and enhance long-term energy and macroeconomic security.

And results show our model works. Our funding has reduced or avoided 52 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent annually. We have delivered 28.4 GW of installed renewable energy capacity, brought 38+ million hectares of land under sustainable management, and improved the lives of 70+ million people through our forestry and resilience programs.

In terms of current shift, we see growing demand to harness CIF's funding to catalyze private investments. We are meeting it with innovative approaches.

EDITOR: CIF's 2025 Strategic Directions paper reportedly called for a formal Private Sector Strategy. How do you see the private sector's role evolving in CIF's work, particularly in de-risking and crowding in commercial finance for climate action in emerging economies?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: Public concessional finance will never be sufficient on its own to address the scale of the climate challenge. For example, clean energy investment in emerging markets must grow sevenfold to \$1.9 trillion by 2030 (IEA), with private sector covering more than half. For resilience, developing countries need \$310 billion per year, or twelve times current flows.

CIF's approach has always been to enter early, absorb first-mover risk, prove viability, and then step back as commercial investors step in. We are now doubling down on this approach, as made clear in our private sector strategy published in March 2026.

CIF's Industry Decarbonization Program features a 50 to 100 percent private sector set-aside, with Brazil and Mexico's plans just endorsed. We are also working on a high-leverage mechanism designed to crowd in \$6 to \$12 in private finance for every \$1 of CIF investment. Our ARISE resilience program has a mandatory 40 percent private sector set-aside built into every country envelope.

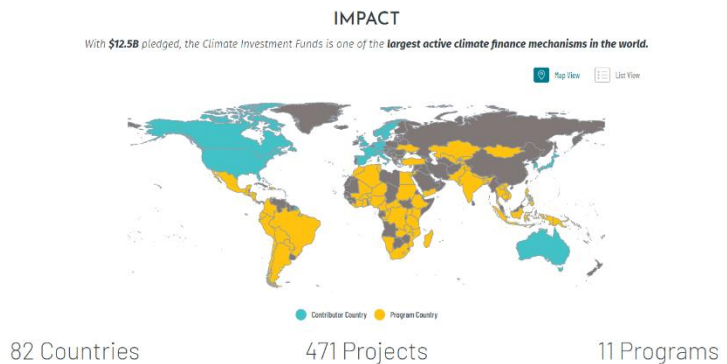


Image Source/Credit/Courtesy: www.cif.org

EDITOR: The CIF Capital Markets Mechanism (CCMM) made history in January 2025 with a US\$500 million inaugural bond, oversubscribed six times with a US\$3 billion orderbook. You called it "a proof of concept for a new way of raising climate finance." How do you see this instrument transforming the sustainability and scalability of climate finance for the Global South?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: CCMM, rated Aa1 by Moody's and AA+ by Fitch, is financial instrument through which CIF raises bonds from international capital markets. Proceeds are channeled to the Clean Technology Fund (CTF) to accelerate financing for clean energy and technologies in emerging economies.

With CCMM, CIF is the only multilateral climate fund with access to capital markets. This means our donor funding's reach is extended: we harness it to draw in additional private capital for climate action.

With this pioneering move, we learned something important: institutional investors are keen to invest in well-structured climate finance vehicles that channel financing to developing countries. The demand is there.

EDITOR: ARISE is CIF's next-generation resilience program, launched in April 2026. How does ARISE differ from CIF's earlier Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR), and what makes this moment particularly urgent for resilience investments, given that every US\$1 invested yields US\$10.5 in benefits?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: You are right: investing in climate resilience is a smart economic choice – for progress, for people, for prosperity. Resilience is the backbone of livelihoods, economic growth and stability.



Image Source/Credit/Courtesy: www.cif.org

CIF has been ahead of the curve since 2008, delivering the world's first large-scale resilience program – with \$1 billion invested – surpassing all our targets and learning valuable lessons. Our investments reached 65 million+ people, in 31 countries, integrated resilience into more than 800 policies/plans, built 16,000+ climate-

resilient infrastructure assets (roads, wharfs, energy, water resources), and mobilized \$3+ for every CIF \$.

PPCR proved the model, ARISE takes it to the next level as our next generation resilience program. Climate impacts are intensifying, eroding productivity, disrupting supply chains, destroying jobs, and countries are facing growing fiscal pressures from these climate disasters. ARISE helps countries develop investment pipelines, strengthen resilience markets, and deploy innovative financial instruments that attract private investment and unlock long term economic value.

EDITOR: What does success look like for ARISE five years from now, and how do you ensure that the most vulnerable countries—including small island developing states and least developed countries—are not left behind in the selection process?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: The overwhelming response to ARISE’s call for expressions of interest reflects the high global demand for catalytic resilience finance from developing economies. Submissions cover 76% of the African continent (41 countries), with 73% of all least developed countries (33 LDCs) applying. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) also represent a major group of applicants (18 countries), highlighting the acute exposure of these economies to climate-related shocks.

Our vision for ARISE is that resilience is mainstreamed into national economic strategies, budgets, and investment planning. Concretely, it means countries use CIF's catalytic, concessional finance to crowd in private capital, build investment pipelines, and put in place the fiscal tools — resilience bonds, parametric insurance, blended finance structures — that reduce their vulnerability to climate shocks over the long term.

The selection process is informed by an Independent Expert Group with expertise spanning climate adaptation, resilience finance, and development economics. It reviews all expressions of interest and submits a ranked list to the Strategic Climate Fund Trust Fund Committee for final selection.

EDITOR: CIF's US\$1 billion Industry Decarbonization Program is the first global concessional finance initiative dedicated to cutting industrial emissions in developing countries. Heavy industries like cement, steel, and fertilizers are notoriously hard to abate. What is CIF's distinct value proposition in this space, and how do you balance industrial transformation with protecting jobs and livelihoods?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: CIF’s Industry Decarbonization Program is the first global concessional finance initiative specifically dedicated to hard-to-abate sectors in developing countries. Green industrial products (near-zero emissions steel, cement, aluminum and ammonia)

represent a \$5 to \$20 trillion market value by 2035, and countries that decarbonize now will be better positioned to compete.

Hard-to-abate sectors face unique challenges: there's no off-the-shelf green substitute for clean steel or low-carbon cement, the retrofits are capital-intensive, and producers in developing countries increasingly face carbon border measures that penalize high-emission exports. CIF's concessional finance is designed to absorb that first-mover cost gap - the premium for green inputs and process retrofits - so the first plants get built and prove the model for private capital to follow.

Just transitions are at the core of the program. Investment plans must include concrete measures for workforce reskilling, protecting livelihoods, inclusive green job creation, and addressing gender and social equity gaps. This includes understanding who is currently employed in these industries, where vulnerabilities lie, including for women and informal workers, and how transition pathways can expand access to new opportunities. This is the smart thing to do to ensure people are equipped to participate in the industries defining the next decade of growth.

EDITOR: India, with its target of 500 GW of non-fossil capacity by 2030, received US\$70 million in concessional funding under CIF's Renewable Energy Integration Program, mobilizing an additional US\$865 million in co-financing. What makes India's energy transition journey distinctive, and what are the most critical barriers CIF is helping India overcome in integrating intermittent renewable power?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: CIF and India have been partners since 2011. Our partnership illustrates the full continuum of energy and clean technology transition.

When CIF first engaged in 2011, solar energy in India was nascent and commercially unproven — we helped lower the risk of the earliest utility-scale solar plants and opened the door for private investment to follow. As the market matured, we moved with it: in 2019, when floating solar and battery



Image Source/Credit/Courtesy: www.cif.org

storage had yet to attract mainstream institutional support, CIF stepped in to finance the pilots that proved their viability. We also financed the transmission infrastructure needed to physically connect private solar parks to the grid. The seemingly unglamorous but essential work that determines whether renewable capacity actually delivers power.

The results compound: a single \$16 million CIF investment mobilized over \$2 billion in co-financing, of which \$1.47 billion came from the private sector — a mobilization ratio of 1 to 142 for this specific project. The storage and transmission investments now being made will allow India to absorb and dispatch intermittent renewable power at scale, directly supporting energy security in the country, and the NDC goal of 60 percent of installed electric capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2035.

This is what a continuum of support looks like — not a one-time intervention, but a partnership that evolves as a country's ambition grows and its market deepens. Please note that REI India projects corresponding to the \$70 million envelope referenced in the question are still being developed and have not yet been submitted to the TFC for funding approval.

EDITOR: The Nature, People, and Climate (NPC) program supports nature-based solutions that bridge mitigation and adaptation. How do you measure success in nature-based investments where outcomes—biodiversity, ecosystem health, community resilience—are often harder to quantify than in energy projects?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: CIF's nature and resilience investments have already brought more than 39 million hectares — an area larger than Germany, under sustainable land or water management, and have benefited over 70 million people.

Our new Nature, People, and Climate program uses an Integrated Results Framework built around six categories of indicators - some flexible to meet country needs, and others designated as core indicators. This layered structure allows us to capture both aggregated portfolio-level results and specific country priorities.

For co-benefits such as biodiversity, the framework applies established methodologies and requires multilateral development banks (MDBs) to report on at least one co-benefit indicator per project.

Measurement is supported by a Monitoring and Reporting Toolkit and an Evaluation and Learning Toolkit, with indicators integrated into countries' own national frameworks so that measurement capacity endures beyond CIF funding.

EDITOR: Given that CIF's mandate emphasizes that "Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, men, youth, and other vulnerable groups have access to opportunity," how do you operationalize gender and social inclusion beyond rhetoric—and what accountability mechanisms ensure these commitments translate into tangible benefits on the ground?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: Successful climate transitions require investing in people — all people. CIF embeds gender and social inclusion into program design and monitoring systems from the outset. For example, we require results frameworks with disaggregated indicators from our MDB partners.

CIF funding focuses on tackling structural barriers through policy reform, institutional strengthening, and direct access grants, most notably our \$11 million Women-Led Coal Transitions mechanism, WOLCOT, which channels funding directly to local women's organizations in South Africa, Indonesia, the Philippines, North Macedonia, and the Dominican Republic, empowering them to take a seat at the table in coal-to-clean transition strategies.



Image Source/Credit/Courtesy: www.cif.org

Our nature programs have committed \$110 million in direct grants to Indigenous Peoples and local communities since launch, grants that are showing strong results at the community level. In Indonesia, for example, women in forest communities used these grants to add value to forest products, becoming entrepreneurs selling directly to consumers and meaningfully improving their livelihoods. CIF evaluations consistently show that when women and marginalized groups have secure livelihoods, access to finance, and a voice in decision-making, climate investments deliver deeper and more durable results.

CIF recognizes that women, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalized communities are not simply beneficiaries of climate action, they are its leaders. Our next generation resilience program, ARISE, is built on this principle, championing locally-led adaptation solutions and empowering communities and women to drive innovation with funding approaches rooted in the places most affected by climate change.

To reinforce consistent delivery, CIF is strengthening implementation support and accountability, including clearer results tracking, stronger requirements for disaggregated reporting, and closer engagement with MDB partners throughout implementation. We are also evaluating new frontiers in social inclusion accountability: adaptive social protection mechanisms that build country capacity to respond fast and equitably to climate shocks, directing resources to those most in need; and performance-based incentives that support our MDB partners in delivering measurable results for marginalized communities.

EDITOR: CIF's mandate as a "learning laboratory" places strong emphasis on South-South knowledge exchanges. In your view, what is the most underutilized source of climate knowledge in the Global South, and how is CIF working to unlock peer-learning among countries facing similar climate challenges?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: The most underutilized source of climate knowledge in the Global South is the firsthand experience of the countries that have already navigated climate transitions or are currently deploying CIF funding.

CIF delivers on our learning laboratory mandate by generating rigorous evaluative evidence on just transitions, transformational change, and scaling climate finance. We anchor our decisions in that evidence and share it globally. We also promote real-time learning, for example through our annual knowledge exchange events.

The last one happened in April 2026, when we convened 160 participants from 30+ countries in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for our first Global Knowledge Exchange, where peer learning on country platforms drove the agenda. In September 2025, we launched the Clean Energy Learning Laboratory (CELL), a pioneering platform linking energy transition and integration experts with implementers across developing nations to share lessons and unlock financing. CELL has already delivered numerous learning events and webinars, driven by country demand.

If a country can reach its climate goals five years faster by learning directly from a peer that faced the same challenges, the value is enormous and the cost of brokering that connection is negligible relative to learning everything from scratch.

EDITOR: As someone who has spent over two decades in emerging market finance, what is your message to developing countries that are simultaneously pursuing poverty alleviation, economic growth, and climate action in an increasingly constrained global fiscal environment?

MR. MATTHIEU PEGON: Low carbon and climate resilient development requires whole-of-system transformation — addressing policy, capacity, and investment barriers. Underpinning all of this lies sustainable and inclusive economic growth; productive climate investments create economic growth, which raises tax revenues and shrinks public debt burdens. That shift in logic is what defines effective climate finance today.

The foundation of all of it is countries ownership and quality national institutions. CIF provides scaled-up, predictable, low-cost finance through our MDB partnerships and works directly with Ministries of Finance.

This supports platforms that bring together national leadership, cross-sectoral coordination, and a clear investment pathway — defining the strategic vision before selecting individual projects and then aligning international partners around priorities that countries themselves have set.

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REPORTS

World Economic Forum 2026

The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026, held in Davos, Switzerland, brought together global leaders from governments, international organisations, industry, academia, and civil society to deliberate on the most pressing challenges shaping the future of humanity. The 2026 meeting was strongly anchored in rebuilding global trust, strengthening multilateral cooperation, and accelerating collective action across climate resilience, sustainable development, digital transformation, and inclusive economic growth. A central theme of the discussions was the recognition that fragmented global responses are inadequate to address interconnected systemic risks such as climate change, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, geopolitical instability, and widening economic inequalities. A major focus of the Forum was sustainability-driven transformation, with climate action, water security, energy transition, and resilient infrastructure identified as foundational pillars of future development. Read the full report here: <https://focusglobalreporter.org/report-on-world-economic-forum/>



India Energy Week 2026

India Energy Week 2026 (IEW 2026), held from 27–30 January 2026 at the ONGC Advanced Training Institute, Goa, served as a strategic platform reinforcing India's leadership in shaping the global energy transition. The event convened policymakers, global energy leaders, financial institutions, technology innovators, and multilateral organizations to advance dialogue on energy security, sustainability, and inclusive growth. At a time of accelerating climate challenges and geopolitical uncertainty, IEW 2026 highlighted India's commitment to balancing energy access, affordability, sustainability, and security. Read the full report here: <https://focusglobalreporter.org/report-on-india-energy-week-2026/>

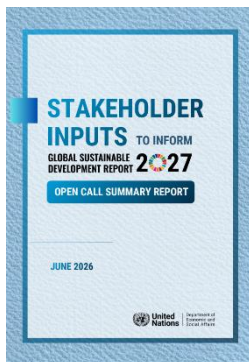


India AI Impact Summit

The AI Impact Summit India 2026 represents a pivotal moment in the nation's technological evolution, bringing together policymakers, industry leaders, researchers, development institutions, and civil society to shape a responsible and inclusive artificial intelligence ecosystem. As India accelerates its digital transformation, the summit serves as a strategic platform to examine how artificial intelligence can be harnessed to drive sustainable development, strengthen governance, and enhance societal resilience. Read the full report here: <https://focusglobalreporter.org/india-ai-impact-summit-report/>



Stakeholder inputs summary report prepared to inform the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report 2027



From Policy Silos to Systems Thinking. We are pleased to share that the India Water Foundation's submission has been featured in the Stakeholder Inputs Summary Report prepared to inform the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2027. Our recommendation highlights the urgent need to strengthen the Climate–Water–Energy–Food–Biodiversity Nexus through science-based pathways, integrated resource planning, and risk-informed decision-making. As climate extremes intensify and resource pressures grow, sustainable development can no longer be pursued through isolated sectoral approaches. Resilient futures demand interconnected solutions that secure water, food, energy, and ecosystems simultaneously. The India Water Foundation's contribution, titled: "Climate-Water-Energy Nexus: Science-Based Pathways for Resilient, Low-Carbon Resource Systems and Risk-Informed Planning" has been featured on Page 12 of the UN stakeholder summary report informing the work of the Independent Group of Scientists drafting the GSDR 2027. This recognition reinforces the importance of nexus-based governance, nature-positive development, and evidence-driven policy frameworks for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals while remaining within planetary boundaries.

Read the full report here:

https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/OpenCallSummary_StakeholderInputs_2027GSDR.pdf

High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Water Transversality for Climate Resilience and Biodiversity Restoration"

On 3 June 2026, the India Water Foundation convened a High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Water Transversality for Climate Resilience and Biodiversity Restoration", bringing together distinguished experts from international organizations, academia, policy institutions, and civil society to explore water's central role in addressing the world's interconnected environmental and development challenges. The dialogue reaffirmed that water is the foundation of climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, food security, public health, energy systems, and sustainable economic growth. Participants emphasized the need to move beyond fragmented approaches by integrating water considerations into climate policies, biodiversity frameworks, and national development strategies. Discussions highlighted the importance of nature-based solutions, including watershed restoration, wetland conservation, river rejuvenation, and sustainable land management, as effective pathways for strengthening resilience while protecting ecosystems. Speakers also underscored the significance of inclusive water governance, community participation, gender responsive leadership, scientific innovation, and enhanced investments to build resilient water systems. Looking ahead to the 2028 United Nations Water Conference, the dialogue called for elevating water as a strategic global priority and strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships to accelerate the achievement of climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development goals. The event concluded with a shared commitment to advancing Water Transversality as an integrated framework for securing a resilient, water-secure, and sustainable future.



Read the full report here:

https://indiawaterfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/HLPD_3RD-JUNE-2026_REPORT.pdf

SB64 official side event: High-level Policy Dialogue on cross sector partnerships for water security in a climate resilient world



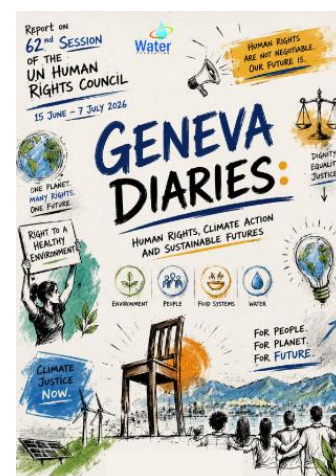
On 16 June 2026, the India Water Foundation, in partnership with CICERO (Center for International Climate Research) and the AKO Foundation, convened a High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Cross-Sector Partnerships for Water Security in a Climate Resilient World" on the margins of the 64th sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB64) in Bonn, Germany. The Dialogue brought together distinguished policymakers, scientists, and practitioners to address the urgent imperative of transforming fragmented sectoral approaches into integrated water governance frameworks. The Dialogue was anchored in a stark reality: nearly 75% of the global population lives in water-insecure regions, with 4 billion people experiencing severe water scarcity for at least one month each year. Climate change is fundamentally disrupting the hydrological cycle through intensifying floods, droughts, glacier melt, and sea-level rise, making water the primary medium through which climate impacts are experienced. Speakers from India, Norway, and international organisations articulated a powerful consensus: water is not merely a sector but the "connective tissue" linking climate resilience, food security, public health, ecosystem integrity, energy transitions, and economic development. The Dialogue identified actionable pathways for cross-sector partnerships, emphasized the critical role of science-policy integration, showcased innovative financing mechanisms including water credits, and called for embedding water transversality across all climate governance frameworks.

Read the full report here:

https://indiawaterfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/SB64_Report_2026_Final.pdf

Geneva Diaries

The 62nd regular session of the UN Human Rights Council (15 June–7 July 2026) addressed a broad agenda of thematic and country-specific human rights issues, with a strong focus on climate/environment and crisis situations. Key activities included thematic panels (e.g. on climate finance and women in sports), numerous Interactive Dialogues (e.g. on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Sudan, Venezuela, DRC, and with Special Rapporteurs), as well as side events highlighting human rights in environmental contexts. Several resolutions

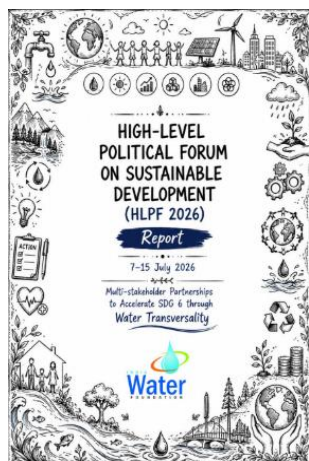


were adopted on topics such as climate change, poverty, health in conflict, and corporate accountability (often by consensus); official vote tallies were generally not specified, implying broad agreement or consensus. The Council's 20th anniversary was marked by calls to strengthen its mandate and civil society participation. Civil society remained highly engaged throughout the 62nd session of the Human Rights Council through side events, advocacy campaigns, and public activities at Broken Chair Square (Place des Nations), including the "Right to a Healthy Environment" march on 25 June, despite concerns over constraints on NGO participation within the Council. Among the active participants, the India Water Foundation (IWF) contributed both inside and outside the Council by delivering an intervention through Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, during the 10th Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food on food and climate change, while also organizing an exhibition at Broken Chair Square showcasing India's achievements in health, nutrition, water, and sanitation as examples of integrated, rights-based sustainable development. Overall, the session underscored the intersection of human rights with climate change and food systems, continued scrutiny of country crises (Middle East conflict, Sudan, Venezuela, etc.), and sustained engagement of States, UN officials, and civil society.

Read the full report here:

<https://indiawaterfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/GENEVADIARIES.pdf>

REPORT: High Level Policy Dialogue on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to accelerate SDG 6 via Water Transversality



India Water Foundation organised the High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to Accelerate SDG 6 via Water Transversality" as an Official Side Event of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) 2026. Supported by the International Office for Water (OiEau), International Water Resources Association (IWRA), International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) and the World Water Council, the dialogue convened senior policymakers, international organisations, multilateral development banks, river basin institutions, academia and development practitioners to deliberate upon innovative approaches for accelerating SDG 6 through integrated governance, collaborative financing and cross-sectoral partnerships. The dialogue sought to advance the concept of Water Transversality, an emerging governance framework that recognises water as the foundational connector across multiple development systems rather than as an isolated sector. Through the participation of leading international experts and government representatives, the dialogue explored practical

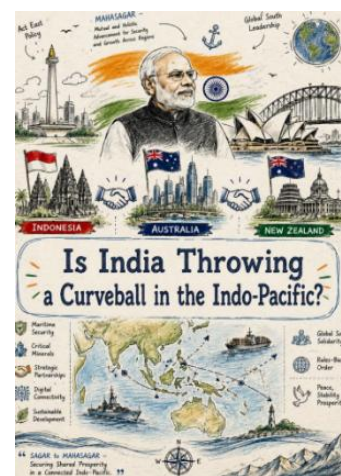
pathways for strengthening policy coherence, mobilising finance, enhancing institutional coordination and promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration to build resilient water systems capable of supporting sustainable development. Several converging outcomes were recorded. It was agreed that water can no longer be planned in isolation, and must be mainstreamed as economic infrastructure, a geopolitical bridge and a social-justice imperative across ministries and investment frameworks. Cross-sectoral partnerships spanning governments, basin authorities, multilateral banks, philanthropy, academia and communities were identified as indispensable to closing the sector's financing gap, estimated at over 100 billion dollars annually. Disaster risk reduction, disaggregated data, education and community ownership were called upon to be embedded as core pillars of implementation, not peripheral add-ons. Participants were urged to carry this integrated agenda to the 2026 UN Water Conference, where it was proposed that ministries of education, finance and water be brought to a shared table for the first time. The dialogue was closed with calls for stable regulatory and institutional environments, decentralised wastewater treatment, climate-smart agriculture, and deeper scientific and data collaboration to be prioritised as the global water community moves from commitment to implementation in the final stretch to 2030 and also setting a precedent for 2026 UN Water Conference.

Read the full report here:

https://indiawaterfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/HLPF2026_REPORT.pdf

Is India Throwing a Curveball in the Indo-Pacific?

Between 6 and 11 July 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook a six-day, three-nation tour of Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand his most consequential Indo-Pacific outreach since assuming office for a third term. Officially framed as an extension of India's Act East Policy and its newer MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision, the visit resulted in nearly 55 agreements spanning defence, maritime security, critical minerals, clean energy, trade, education, technology and cultural cooperation. The three destinations represented distinct yet complementary pillars of India's evolving Indo-Pacific strategy: Indonesia as ASEAN's largest economy and a leading Global South partner; Australia as a critical strategic, technological and resource partner in the Quad; and New Zealand as an increasingly important Pacific democracy with which India sought to revive high-level political engagement after more than four decades. The significance of the tour, however, extends far beyond the agreements signed. It must be understood as part of a much broader diplomatic trajectory that has unfolded over the past year. Prior to this Indo-Pacific outreach, Prime Minister Modi had undertaken an intensive series of visits across Europe including France, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Sweden,



Norway and Italy followed by engagements in the United Arab Emirates and Seychelles. Viewed collectively rather than in isolation, these visits reveal a coherent strategic design that stretches from continental Europe through the Middle East and the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia and the Pacific. This emerging diplomatic arc reflects a fundamental evolution in India's foreign policy. Rather than pursuing conventional bilateral diplomacy centred on isolated partnerships, New Delhi is increasingly constructing an interconnected network of strategic relationships across multiple theatres. The objective is neither alliance formation nor bloc politics; instead, it is the creation of diversified political, economic and technological partnerships that enhance India's strategic autonomy while reducing excessive dependence on any single power centre.

Read the full report here:

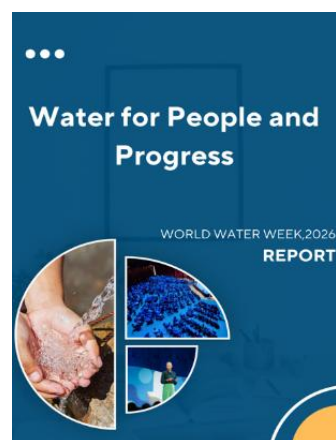
<https://focusglobalreporter.org/is-india-throwing-a-curveball-in-the-indo-pacific/>

World Water Week 2026

World Water Week is the leading global platform for dialogue, collaboration and innovation on water, organized annually by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). The 2026 edition was held in Stockholm from 23-27 August 2026 under the theme “**Water for people and progress,**” with the programme focusing on water security and safely managed drinking water and sanitation as foundations for human development, health and resilience, with particular attention to communities facing persistent inequality. The primary focus of event is on turning ambition into reality. As **Helena Thybell** Executive Director of SIWI, emphasized that the world already has many solutions to water challenges, but the urgent need is to implement them together through collective action. As discussion in Stockholm highlighted not only where the challenges remain, but also emphasized where meaningful progress is possible through innovation, partnerships, and inclusion. The opening panel reflects on how international process can better reinforce one another, and how governments, businesses, researchers and civil society can work together to accelerate implementation in the lead-up to the UN 2026 Water Conference.

Read the full report here:

<https://focusglobalreporter.org/report-world-water-week-2026/>



On the 17th session of the Conference of Parties to the UNCCD COP-17

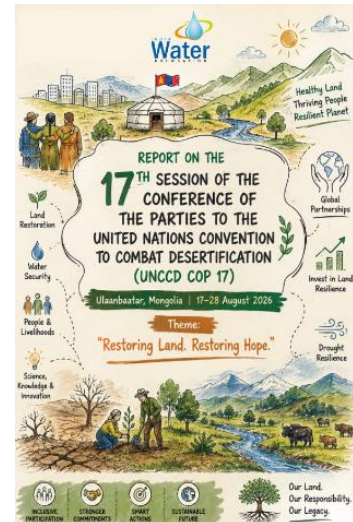
The Seventeenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 17) was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 17 to 28 August 2026 under the theme “Restoring Land. Restoring Hope.” The session brought together approximately 15,000 participants, including government representatives, international organizations, scientists, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, youth, the private sector and other stakeholders. COP 17 took place at a critical moment when land degradation, desertification and drought are increasingly affecting ecosystems, food and water security, livelihoods and economic development across the world.

The UNCCD COP 17 demonstrated both the growing importance of land restoration in the global sustainability agenda and the political challenges confronting multilateral environmental cooperation. Despite procedural difficulties and disagreements over several agenda items, Parties succeeded in adopting 34 decisions covering a range of substantive and institutional matters. Important outcomes were achieved on rangelands and pastoralists, land tenure, sand and dust storms, resource mobilization, capacity-building, private-sector engagement and the future functioning of the Science-Policy Interface. At the same time, a number of critical issues, including migration, knowledge-sharing and aspects of the global response to drought, remained unresolved and were deferred for further consideration at COP 18.

One of the most important features of COP 17 was the recognition that land degradation and drought can no longer be treated as isolated environmental concerns. Their impacts extend across water resources, agriculture, food systems, biodiversity, livelihoods, public health, migration and economic stability. The discussions therefore increasingly reflected the need for integrated and cross-sectoral approaches capable of connecting land restoration with wider sustainable development priorities.

Read the full report here:

<https://focusglobalreporter.org/report-on-the-17th-session-of-the-conference-of-the-parties-to-the-unccd-cop-17/>



ACTIVITIES OF INDIA WATER FOUNDATION

GLOBAL INPERSON

Championing inclusive development at UNHRC 61st session

Dr. Arvind Kumar, President of the India Water Foundation, addressed the General Debate (Item 5) during the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Geneva, highlighting India's evolving approach towards inclusive and equitable development. In his statement, he emphasized that, in recognition of migration dynamics, historical disadvantage, and entrenched social hierarchies, India has strengthened inclusive development frameworks that prioritize women, youth, and marginalized communities. He further underlined India's multi-dimensional policy approach, which addresses not only identity-based concerns but also the underlying structural drivers of vulnerability. Reaffirming the country's commitment to social harmony, pluralism, and participatory governance, he noted that India continues to view its diversity as a foundational strength in its ongoing nation-building journey. The intervention reflects IWF's active engagement in global human rights discourse, contributing to conversations on inclusive growth, social equity, and sustainable development. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XMOB2D0Kk>



Advancing inclusive democracy: IWF at UNHRC 61st session



Ms. Shweta Tyagi, Chief Functionary of the India Water Foundation, represented the organisation during the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, contributing to the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Disabilities. In her intervention, she underscored that the Government of India is guided by a rights-based framework under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, which guarantees equality, non-discrimination, and equal opportunity, including in political and public life, thereby promoting inclusive

democratic participation. She further highlighted India's targeted initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in electoral processes. These include accessible voter registration systems, Braille-enabled electronic voting machines, priority assistance at polling stations, home voting provisions for persons with benchmark disabilities, and dedicated awareness campaigns to

encourage voter enrolment and participation. The intervention reflected IWF's continued engagement in global policy dialogues, reinforcing the importance of inclusive governance frameworks and equitable participation in democratic processes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nm4E3z816Gw>

Addressing air pollution and public health at UNHRC

Ms. Shweta Tyagi, Chief Functionary, India Water Foundation, participated in the General Debate (Item 3) at the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, highlighting the critical intersection of air quality, public health, and environmental governance. In her statement, she emphasized that clean air is fundamental to the right to health and a healthy environment, while acknowledging the serious risks posed by air pollution, particularly for children, the elderly, and vulnerable communities. She further noted that the Government of India has adopted a comprehensive, science-based approach to address air pollution, combining regulatory frameworks, policy interventions, and monitoring mechanisms. She underscored the increasing emphasis on accountability of private actors through environmental regulations, corporate sustainability reporting, and compliance systems. Reaffirming India's commitment, she highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen air quality governance while balancing developmental priorities, ensuring that public health protection and environmental sustainability remain central to national policy frameworks. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45UG2ASxuhQ>



Dr. Arvind Kumar Highlights India's Climate-Resilient Food Systems at UNHRC

During the 10th Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food at the 62nd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Dr. Arvind Kumar, Founder and President of India Water Foundation, delivered a substantive intervention on the nexus between climate change, food systems, and human rights. Emphasizing that food system transformation is a rights-based imperative, he showcased India's pioneering initiatives, including climate-resilient crop varieties, the National Mission on Natural Farming, and the Jal Jeevan Mission as practical models for advancing food security, water resilience, and public health. Dr. Kumar also called for enhanced climate finance,



technology transfer, and equitable adaptation support for developing countries, reaffirming that water remains the critical connector between climate resilience, sustainable agriculture, and human well-being. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zAHozfjdro>

Showcasing India's Development Story at Geneva's Iconic Broken Chair Square

On the sidelines of the 62nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the India Water Foundation organized a public exhibition at Geneva's renowned Broken Chair Square titled "Water, Nutrition, and Community Wellbeing: India's Journey Towards a Climate-Resilient Future." The exhibition presented India's achievements in safe drinking water, sanitation, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and climate adaptation through an engaging visual narrative. Drawing significant attention from delegates, diplomats, civil society representatives, and the public, the exhibition highlighted India's integrated and rights-based approach to sustainable development while demonstrating how water serves as the foundation for climate resilience, food security, biodiversity conservation, and community well-being.



Interactive Dialogue at 63rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

“Climate change is ultimately a human rights crisis. Financing that increases debt can weaken countries’ ability to protect vulnerable communities and advance economic and social rights.” said Dr. Arvind Kumar, President & Founder, India Water Foundation, during the 63rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, under Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on the Rights of Peasants, Climate Financing, and the Human Rights of Women and Children in Conflict Situations.



In his intervention, Dr. Kumar highlighted the imperative of mobilising adequate climate finance for the full realisation of human rights, while drawing attention to the importance of new, additional, reliable and largely grant-based adaptation finance.

The intervention reinforces a central message: climate action and human rights cannot be addressed in isolation. Climate finance must translate into greater resilience, equity and protection for those most vulnerable to climate impacts.

SB64 Official Side Event: High-Level Policy Dialogue on Crosssector Partnerships for Water Security in a Climate Resilient World

On 16 June 2026, the India Water Foundation, in partnership with CICERO (Center for International Climate Research) and the AKO Foundation, convened a High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Cross-Sector Partnerships for Water Security in a Climate Resilient World" on the margins of the 64th sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB64) in Bonn, Germany. The Dialogue brought together distinguished policymakers, scientists, and practitioners to address the urgent imperative of transforming fragmented sectoral approaches into integrated water governance frameworks. The Dialogue was anchored in a stark reality: nearly 75% of the global population lives in water-insecure regions, with 4 billion people experiencing severe water scarcity for at least one month each year. Climate change is fundamentally disrupting the hydrological cycle through intensifying floods, droughts, glacier melt, and sea-level rise, making water the primary medium through which climate impacts are experienced. Speakers from India, Norway, and international organisations articulated a powerful consensus: water is not merely a sector but the "connective tissue" linking climate resilience, food security, public health, ecosystem integrity, energy transitions, and economic development. The Dialogue identified actionable pathways for cross-sector partnerships, emphasised the critical role of science-policy integration, showcased innovative financing mechanisms including water credits, and called for embedding water transversality across all climate governance frameworks.



GLOBAL ONLINE

High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Water Transversality for Climate Resilience and Biodiversity Restoration"

On 3 June 2026, the India Water Foundation convened a High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Water Transversality for Climate Resilience and Biodiversity Restoration", bringing together distinguished experts from international organizations, academia, policy institutions, and civil society to explore water's central role in addressing the world's interconnected environmental and development challenges. The dialogue reaffirmed that water is the foundation of climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, food security, public health, energy systems, and sustainable economic growth. Participants emphasized the need to move beyond fragmented approaches by integrating water considerations into climate policies, biodiversity frameworks, and national development strategies. Discussions highlighted the importance of nature-based solutions, including watershed restoration, wetland conservation, river rejuvenation, and sustainable land management, as effective pathways for strengthening resilience while protecting ecosystems. Speakers also underscored the significance of inclusive water governance, community participation, gender responsive leadership, scientific innovation, and enhanced investments to build resilient water systems. Looking ahead to the 2028 United Nations Water Conference, the dialogue called for elevating water as a strategic global priority and strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships to accelerate the achievement of climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development goals. The event concluded with a shared commitment to advancing Water Transversality as an integrated framework for securing a resilient, water-secure, and sustainable future.



High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to Accelerate SDG 6 via Water Transversality"

India Water Foundation organised the High-Level Policy Dialogue on "Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to Accelerate SDG 6 via Water Transversality" as an Official Side Event of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) 2026. Supported by the International Office for Water (OiEau), International Water Resources Association (IWRA), International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) and the World Water Council, the dialogue convened senior policymakers, international organisations, multilateral development banks, river basin

institutions, academia and development practitioners to deliberate upon innovative approaches for accelerating SDG 6 through integrated governance, collaborative financing and cross-sectoral partnerships. The dialogue sought to advance the concept of Water Transversality, an emerging governance framework that recognises water as the foundational connector across multiple development systems rather than as an isolated sector. Through the participation of leading international experts and government representatives, the dialogue explored practical pathways for strengthening policy coherence, mobilising finance, enhancing institutional coordination and promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration to build resilient water systems capable of supporting sustainable development. Several converging outcomes were recorded. It was agreed that water can no longer be planned in isolation, and must be mainstreamed as economic infrastructure, a geopolitical bridge and a social-justice imperative across ministries and investment frameworks. Cross-sectoral partnerships spanning governments, basin authorities, multilateral banks, philanthropy, academia and communities were identified as indispensable to closing the sector's financing gap, estimated at over 100 billion dollars annually. Disaster risk reduction, disaggregated data, education and community ownership were called upon to be embedded as core pillars of implementation, not peripheral add-ons. Participants were urged to carry this integrated agenda to the 2026 UN Water Conference, where it was proposed that ministries of education, finance and water be brought to a shared table for the first time. The dialogue was closed with calls for stable regulatory and institutional environments, decentralised wastewater treatment, climate-smart agriculture, and deeper scientific and data collaboration to be prioritised as the global water community moves from commitment to implementation in the final stretch to 2030 and also setting a precedent for 2026 UN Water Conference.



NATIONAL INPERSON

Rajasthan Water Conclave 2026

Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation, participated in the Rajasthan Water Conclave 2026, held on 24 July 2026 in Jaipur, focusing on the critical role of partnerships in advancing water security. Speaking at the panel discussion on “Partnerships for Water Security: Unlocking the Potential of CSR & PPP,” he emphasised the need to move beyond fragmented CSR interventions towards longterm, outcome-based partnerships anchored in ESG principles, stressing that water security must be supported by sustained investment, monitoring and measurable impact. The Conclave brought together senior policymakers, water experts, civil society organisations and private-sector leaders, and was graced by Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma, Hon’ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan, and Shri Suresh Singh Rawat, Hon’ble Minister of Water Resources, Government of Rajasthan. Dr. Kumar also participated in a high-level roundtable chaired by the Hon’ble Chief Minister, which highlighted the importance of collective action, innovation and convergence among government, communities, civil society and the private sector for strengthening Rajasthan’s long-term water security.



Countrywide” programme of All India Radio (Akashvani)

Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation, participated in the “Countrywide” programme of All India Radio (Akashvani), sharing his perspectives on “Technology and Innovation for India’s Water Security.” The discussion explored how AI, IoT, real-time monitoring, smart and microirrigation, wastewater reuse, Zero Liquid Discharge, groundwater management and data-driven approaches can strengthen India’s water security. Dr. Kumar emphasized that technological solutions must extend beyond metropolitan centres to small towns and rural communities, supported by local capacity, appropriate financing and enabling policies. He underlined that India’s water future will depend not merely on creating greater water availability, but on managing, conserving, recycling and distributing water more intelligently and sustainably. Technology, policy, finance and public participation must therefore advance together to build a truly water-secure and resilient India.

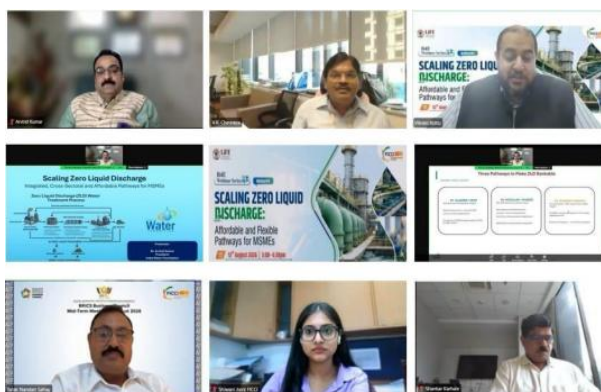


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwUhwC5dSHo>

NATIONAL ONLINE

Webinar Series on “Scaling Zero Liquid Discharge: Affordable and Flexible Pathways for MSMEs.

Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation, participated in the 4th webinar of FICCI’s Business for Environment (B4E) Webinar Series on “Scaling Zero Liquid Discharge: Affordable and Flexible Pathways for MSMEs.” The discussion examined practical approaches to making Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) technically feasible, financially viable and scalable for India’s MSME sector. Dr. Kumar emphasised that ZLD cannot be approached as a one-size-fits-all compliance obligation. He highlighted the need for shared cluster infrastructure, modular and phased treatment technologies, blended finance, fit-for-purpose solutions and lifecycle economics to



enable MSMEs to adopt sustainable wastewater management systems. He further underscored the importance of moving beyond individual compliance towards water-resilient, resource-efficient and climate-ready MSME clusters, where wastewater is treated as a source of recovered water, resources and economic value. The webinar brought together experts from government, industry and leading institutions to deliberate on emerging ZLD technologies, policy frameworks, financing mechanisms and pathways for long-term sustainability, reinforcing the need for collaborative approaches to accelerate water and resource efficiency across MSME clusters.

https://x.com/ficci_india/status/2087134118681412078

MEETINGS

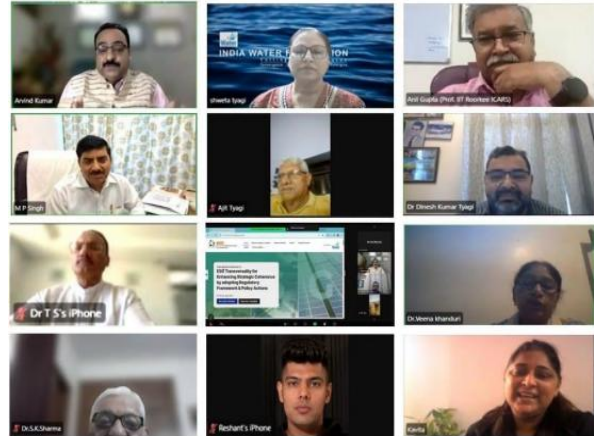
Bilateral Meeting with India's Ambassador to the WTO

As part of its strategic engagements in Geneva, the India Water Foundation delegation, led by Dr. Arvind Kumar, held a meeting with Dr. C. Senthil Pandian, IAS, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The discussions focused on India's evolving role in multilateral trade, sustainable development, and the growing intersections between water security, climate-resilient agriculture, food systems, and international trade policy. The interaction reinforced the importance of cross-sectoral dialogue and strengthened the Foundation's commitment to promoting integrated policy solutions that connect water, climate, development, and global governance.



Strategic preparations for the upcoming ESG Transversality Global Awards and Conclave scheduled for 8–9 July 2027

India Water Foundation convened the first Advisory Board Preparatory Meeting for the 3rd Edition of the ESG Transversality Global Awards & Conclave 2027 on 11 August 2026, marking the commencement of strategic preparations for the upcoming Conclave scheduled for 8–9 July 2027. The virtual meeting brought together the IWF leadership and distinguished members of the Advisory Board to deliberate on the overarching theme, subthemes, programme architecture, thematic priorities, stakeholder engagement and strategic direction of the 3rd Edition. The discussions reflected a shared vision to make the Conclave more strategic, substantive and action-oriented, with greater emphasis on policy coherence, regulatory alignment, cross-sectoral partnerships and measurable implementation. The meeting laid an important foundation for strengthening ESG Transversality as a platform for translating commitments into coordinated policy action and sustainable outcomes, while deepening collaboration among governments, institutions, civil society, academia and the private sector.



ARTICLES

Wars, Warming, and the Theatre of Global Priorities

Shweta Tyagi,
Chief Functionary, India Water Foundation

There is a peculiar irony defining our times, while the planet warms steadily and silently, humanity appears increasingly preoccupied with making it burn faster. Sometimes literally.

Across continents, conflicts simmer and erupt, stretching from Eastern Europe to the Middle East, from fragile African regions to rising tensions in Asia. The world today is not merely witnessing isolated wars; it is experiencing a fragmentation of global attention, resources, and moral clarity. And somewhere in this geopolitical theatre, climate change, the defining challenge of our era, waits backstage, increasingly neglected.

The environmental cost of war has always been profound, but in the current era of industrial warfare, it is staggering. Bombings release massive quantities of greenhouse gases; burning infrastructure, oil depots, and forests inject carbon and toxins into the atmosphere; and the destruction of ecosystems disrupts biodiversity in ways that are often irreversible. War is, in essence, an accelerant of environmental degradation.

Yet, unlike industrial emissions, these are rarely accounted for in national climate inventories. The carbon footprint of conflict remains conveniently invisible perhaps because acknowledging it would force uncomfortable questions about priorities. Beyond emissions, wars dismantle environmental governance. Protected areas become battlegrounds, environmental regulations collapse, and conservation efforts are abandoned. In fragile ecosystems, this can undo decades of progress in mere weeks. When institutions fail, illegal mining, deforestation, and wildlife trafficking thrive in the chaos. The environment, as always, becomes the silent casualty.

Mounting ripple effects

The ripple effects do not stop at ecosystems. They extend into the social and economic fabric of societies, creating a cascade of crises that reinforce each other. Conflict displaces millions. Migration, already exacerbated by climate stress is intensified by war. Families flee not only violence but also the collapse of water systems, food supply chains, and livelihoods. Soon refugee camps will emerge in environmentally fragile zones, placing additional stress on scarce resources such as water and land. What begins as a humanitarian crisis soon becomes an ecological one.

Hunger follows close behind. Agricultural lands are destroyed, irrigation systems disrupted, and supply chains fractured. Fertile fields turn into battlefields, and food insecurity spreads far beyond the immediate conflict zones. In a world already grappling with climate-induced crop failures, war acts as a cruel multiplier. Unemployment and economic instability deepen the crisis. Industries collapse, investments vanish, and reconstruction demands enormous resources. Governments divert funds from development and climate action to defence and recovery. The opportunity cost is immense, every dollar spent on conflict is a dollar not invested in renewable energy, water conservation, or climate resilience.

Disease, too, finds fertile ground in war-torn regions. Damaged sanitation systems, polluted water sources, and overcrowded refugee settlements create conditions ripe for outbreaks. Climate change, with its shifting disease vectors, further compounds these vulnerabilities. The nexus of water, health, environment, and conflict becomes starkly visible yet rarely addressed in an integrated manner.



Image source- <https://www.fawco.org/global-issues/environment/environment-articles/4767-impact-of-war-on-our-natural-environment>

And then, of course, there is the geopolitical spectacle.

The global climate architecture, painstakingly built over decades through forums such as the UN and the UNFCCC, increasingly resembles a stage where actors occasionally forget their lines. Commitments are made, applauded, and quietly diluted.

Multilateralism, once the cornerstone of climate action, is now under strain.

The imagery of a major power theatrically stepping away from global climate commitments echoing past withdrawals and political posturing captures a deeper malaise. It is not merely about one leader or one country; it reflects a broader retreat from collective responsibility. When influential nations prioritize short-term geopolitical gains over long-term planetary survival, the signal sent to the rest of the world is unmistakable.

One might imagine a scene almost satirical where global leaders debate emissions targets inside a conference hall, while outside, the echoes of conflict grow louder. And just as consensus begins to emerge, a prominent figure exits dramatically, leaving behind a trail of uncertainty and a room full of unanswered questions. It would be amusing if it were not so consequential.

The fragmentation of global cooperation has direct implications for climate action. Trust erodes, negotiations stall, and ambition weakens. Developing countries, already bearing the brunt of climate impacts, find themselves navigating a world where promised finance and technology transfers remain elusive. The gap between rhetoric and reality widens.

Transversality, the answer?

In this context, the concept of integrated approaches, what may be termed “transversality” becomes not just relevant but essential. Water, energy, environment, and health cannot be addressed in silos, particularly in a world where conflict and climate risks intersect so profoundly. For instance, water scarcity can exacerbate tensions, while cooperative water management can serve as a bridge for peace. Renewable energy can reduce dependence on contested fossil fuel resources. Climate-resilient agriculture can mitigate food insecurity in fragile regions. These are not abstract ideas; they are practical pathways that link sustainability with stability.

However, such approaches require political will, sustained investment, and above all, a recognition that security in the 21st century is inseparable from sustainability. The current trajectory raises uncomfortable questions. Are we, as a global community, inadvertently undermining our own survival? Are we prioritizing immediate geopolitical gains over long-term planetary health? And perhaps most critically, can we afford to treat climate action as secondary in a world increasingly defined by conflict?

The answer, quite simply, is no.

Climate change does not pause for wars. Rising temperatures, melting glaciers, and extreme weather events continue unabated, indifferent to human conflicts. In fact, they often exacerbate them, creating a vicious cycle where environmental stress fuels instability, and instability, in turn, accelerates environmental degradation.

Breaking this cycle requires a fundamental shift in perspective. Climate action must be seen not as a competing priority but as a foundational element of global security. Investments in sustainability are investments in peace. Conversely, neglecting the environment undermines stability.

Way Ahead

There is a need for greater accountability. The environmental impacts of conflict must be measured, reported, and addressed. International frameworks should incorporate mechanisms to assess and mitigate the ecological consequences of war. Ignoring these impacts does not make them disappear; it merely delays the reckoning. Equally important is the role of innovation. Science and technology offer tools to monitor environmental damage, restore ecosystems, and build resilience. From satellite-based tracking of emissions to community-led water management systems, solutions exist. The challenge lies in deploying them at scale and ensuring that they reach the most vulnerable populations.

Ultimately, the story of our times is not just one of conflict and crisis. It is also one of choices. We can choose to continue on the current path, where wars drain resources, fragment cooperation, and push climate action to the margins. Or we can choose a different trajectory, one that recognizes the interconnectedness of our challenges and responds with integrated, forward-looking solutions.

The stage is set, the actors are in place, and the script is still being written.

The question is whether we will rise to the occasion or exit, stage left, leaving the planet to bear the consequences.

The Missing Pillar of Sustainability: Recognising Water's Economic Value as Critical Infrastructure

Ms. Disha Seth

Student

Modern economies measure the value of almost everything they depend on—energy, infrastructure, labour, even carbon emissions. Yet the one resource that quietly sustains them all, water, continues to remain largely invisible in economic decision-making. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2025 warns that climate change is fundamentally altering the global water cycle, making droughts, floods, and water insecurity increasingly severe causing ripples of destruction through every major sector—from agriculture and energy to manufacturing, healthcare, urban development, and food systems—revealing that water is an environmental resource which serves as the foundation of economic resilience. This prompts a pressing question: if every economy runs on water, why do our economic systems still fail to value it as such?

They rightly invest in transport networks, energy systems, and digital infrastructure because they drive development and productivity. Yet the water systems that enable all of them often receive far less recognition as strategic infrastructure. Their importance becomes most visible during crises such as when droughts reduce crop yields, floods damage infrastructure, or water shortages disrupt industries. As noted by the Global Commission on the Economics of Water (2024), the hydrological cycle has been systematically undervalued in economic decision-making despite underpinning human well-being and prosperity.

Recognising water as an economically valuable resource does not mean commodifying a basic human right or assigning a price to every drop. Rather, it means acknowledging that healthy water systems are productive assets that generate long-term economic, social, and environmental returns. More importantly, recognising water as economic infrastructure transforms the way institutions make decisions. Instead of treating water management as a recurring environmental expense, governments prioritise investments that prevent future crises, businesses incorporate water security into long-term planning, and financial institutions channel greater capital towards resilient water systems. Such investments reduce disaster-related losses, improve agricultural and industrial productivity, secure reliable water supplies, and strengthen climate resilience. In this sense, investing in water is not simply about protecting nature—it is about safeguarding the natural foundation upon which economies, societies, and sustainable development depend.

The path forward lies in embedding water into economic planning rather than treating it as a separate environmental concern. The Global Commission on the Economics of Water (2024) recommends recognising the hydrological cycle as a global common good and integrating natural capital accounting into national economic systems so that the benefits provided by rivers,

wetlands, and aquifers are reflected in public investment decisions. Similarly, the World Bank emphasises that investing in resilient water infrastructure and governance is essential for reducing long-term economic losses from climate change, while UN-Water advocates expanding blue finance, strengthening integrated water resource management, and improving water-use efficiency across sectors. Together, these measures shift water from being viewed as a recurring public expense to a strategic investment that enhances climate resilience, safeguards economic productivity, and advances sustainable development.

Recognising water as critical economic infrastructure is not about assigning it a price; it is about assigning it the priority it deserves. A truly sustainable future will depend not only on reducing emissions, but also on valuing and investing in the water systems that sustain economies, ecosystems, and societies alike.

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Smart water technologies: Are they really smart?

Ms. Shalini

Intern, IWF

Introduction

The 21st century is gradually being seen as a modern era, in which technology is advancing at an unprecedented pace. We are currently witnessing a major transformation from conventional technologies toward smarter, more efficient and autonomous systems. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has challenged conventional technology, as AI applications significantly improve quality of life by making technological processes more time-efficient, advanced, and autonomous. From multinational business platforms to individual households, AI applications have become increasingly integrated into everyday life.

AI tools are no longer limited to a single sector; instead, their applications are expanding rapidly across diverse fields. Water scarcity, groundwater depletion, pollution and climate change are pushing governments and communities to adopt new water technologies. Automated treatment systems, smart meters, Internet of Things (IOT) sensors, expand their wider usage as solutions that can make water management more efficient, resilient and sustainable. However, paradoxically, as technology becomes complex and innovative, its environmental impact is also increasingly growing. Most generative AI runs on large language models, and their daily development and operation require billions of data points to train them and massive resources. Those resources include electrical power, which generates massive amount of heat and requires millions liter of water to cool the equipment down. Despite the fact that AI offers significant opportunities to improve work efficiency and save time, its increasing adoption is placing pressure on natural systems and environmental cycles.

The Emergence of Smart Technology for Conserving Water

Water is an indispensable natural resource for the life of all living beings. According to the 2025 Continental Drying report, the World Bank estimates that global freshwater reserves have declined by 324 billion cubic meters annually over the past two decades, equivalent to the annual water needs of about 280 million people. This continuing decline in freshwater availability can have far-reaching consequences, including health issues, Ecosystem Damage, Reduced Agricultural Productivity, and economic losses everywhere. Therefore, there is an urgent need to adopt effective conservation and sustainable management of water resources. In this context, smart water technologies have emerged as an effective and promising tool for improving water efficiency and supporting more sustainable water management.

AI and IOT in Water Management

The integration of AI and Internet of Things (IOT) technologies is increasingly being used in smart water management to improve efficiency and effective water conservation. By reducing water wastage and supports sustainable resource management. According to a World Bank report, approximately 45 billion cubic meters of water are lost every year, resulting in economic losses of around US\$14 billion, largely due to poor connections, pipeline leakages, faulty metering, and unauthorized connections. However, within this framework, AI-based systems are the most promising tool to detect and analyses data from sensors for leakage detection, smart farming, water body monitoring and smart metering for water distribution systems. which allow authorities to respond quickly and reduce water losses. Alongside IOT, AI can also be valuable to support smart irrigation and agricultural technology. Overall, smart water technologies can serve as a crucial tool for smart and effective sustainable water management. As it can minimize water wastage and improve resource management.

Application and benefits of smart water technologies

Smart water technologies refer to sensors, automated meters, data analytics, internet of things (IoT) and predictive algorithms to monitor and manage water resources in real time. The review reports that around 45 billion cubic meters of water are lost globally every year, representing approximately US\$14 billion in losses, demonstrating the scale of the problem, which can be addressed by proper data management and monitoring techniques. As a result, many countries have adopted these smart water applications to monitor water quality, detect leakage in urban distribution networks, manage treatment plants and forecast water demand. In Lisbon, Portugal, a combination of flow meters, pressure transducers and acoustic sensors reportedly achieved a 40% reduction in water losses, generating savings of approximately €63,500.

SMART Water System Application

- **Pressure Sensor:** for pressure management and leakage control.
- **Flow meters:** Used for demand prediction, very handy in pump scheduling,
- **Ph Sensors:** Water quality monitoring.
- **Moisture sensor:** For controlling watering to crops or in the garden.
- **Weather forecasting:** For scheduling watering of crops.
- **Smart meters:** quality of service at user end.

Another important example comes from Singapore, where the Water-Wise smart-water-grid initiative used pressure, flow, pH and oxidation-reduction-potential sensors together with the Integrated Data and Electronic Alerts System (IDEAS) and Decision Support Tools Module (DSTM). The initiative was designed with a target of reducing water losses by 50%, Smart metering has also demonstrated measurable effects on consumer behaviour.

The agricultural sector provides another major application. The Daco smart-farming system in the Netherlands combines weather stations, GPS and soil-moisture sensors to determine how much water crops require; the reviewed study reports 20% water savings. In India, an ICAR field study on IoT-enabled moisture-sensor irrigation in banana cultivation reported a 25–30%

reduction in water use without compromising yield, illustrating the potential relevance of smart irrigation to Indian agriculture. Recent research on AI-enabled smart irrigation in India reported 35.1% lower water consumption compared with manual irrigation, showing the potential of combining AI with sensor-based systems.

Despite its benefits, the fact that AI has a wider environmental footprint cannot be ignored; many reports have suggested that AI infrastructure consumes water not only for cooling but also through electricity generation and semiconductor manufacturing, with evaporative cooling systems potentially losing around 80% of their cooling water through evaporation. Thus, the performance of smart water technology should be assessed not simply by the amount of water saved, but also by the amount of energy, infrastructure and water resources required for the daily operation of such technology itself.

The Overlooked Environmental Cost.

The environmental cost behind rapid development and operation of AI infrastructure and Data Centre is remain largely unnoticed and unaccounted for, as the expansion of AI systems contributes significantly to energy consumption, often relying on non-renewable energy sources. According to Google's 2026 Environmental Report, Google's water stewardship projects replenished approximately 7.7 billion gallons of water in 2025, equivalent to roughly 78% of Google's total freshwater consumption that year. However, Google does not attribute the entire 7.7 billion gallons specifically to AI infrastructure. This raises serious concerns about the long-term environmental impact.

The energy-intensive nature of AI consumption

AI systems are highly energy-intensive. Innovation and advancement of Smart applications directly increase the demand for computational power, leading to increased energy consumption. One primary contributor to the energy consumption is the training phase. As AI systems are largely learning models (LLMs) Such as ChatGPT, which involves feeding vast amounts of data into neural networks, which then adjust their internal parameters through iterative processes to optimize performance.

Energy consumption can range from hundreds to thousands of kWh, depending on model size, datasets, and hardware, contributing significantly to carbon emissions.

Data Centers: A Growing consumer of water

Data centers play a crucial role in supporting the AI infrastructure, serving as the backbone for storing and processing vast amounts of data. It works as the main networking equipment and storage system required to handle the computational demands of AI workloads.

However, these data centers are also significant energy consumer, Water is largely consumed for 2 reasons: first, directly through cooling systems, particularly evaporative and adiabatic cooling, and second, through the electricity generation needed to power these facilities.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that global data centers consumed around 560 billion liters of water in 2023, including approximately 140 billion liters for direct cooling and 373 billion liters indirectly through electricity generation; it also projects that water consumption associated with data centers could more than double by 2030. The growing water requirements of data centers can also be observed in major technology companies. Companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Meta have reported substantial water consumption associated with their operations, reflecting increasing resource requirements of large-scale digital infrastructure. Table below presents the water consumption of major technology companies and key data-center trends.

company	2023 water use	Trend	Notable Detail
Google	6.4B gallons	Rising	Largest discloser; one low site used 1B gallons in 2024
Microsoft	1.78 gallons	Up-34%	Company tied the jump to AI expansion
Meta	813M gallons	Rising	One Georgia site equals 10% of its country's water
Amazon	Not disclosed		Reports recycling, nit aggregate consumption

Non-renewable energy sources and carbon emissions

The G20, during India's 2023 presidency, highlighted AI's growing energy and resource requirements, including the environmental costs associated with critical and rare-earth materials, and proposed international cooperation to develop standards and equitable solutions. In many regions, AI systems heavily rely on non-renewable sources for power generation. Which contribute into carbon emissions and overall environmental impact. The generation of electricity from fossil fuels, such as coal and natural gas, contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and exacerbates climate change. The issue is significant in India: WRI India reported in May 2026

that more than half of India's data centers are located in water- stressed regions. India's data-center capacity has also increased from approximately 375 MW in 2020 to 1,500 MW in 2025, according to the Government of India, indicating that the water and carbon footprint associated with digital and AI infrastructure could become increasingly significant.

The carbon emissions associated with non-renewable energy sources directly contribute to the carbon footprint of AI systems. A study highlights that a large AI model can emit as much carbon as an average American car over its entire lifetime. AI infrastructure also relies on powerful hardware such as GPUs and data servers, which require rare earth metals and other finite resources in their manufacturing. Mining these minerals often leads to habitat destruction, pollution, and significant carbon emissions, and the technology contributes to the growing issue of electronic waste.

Who Benefits from smart technology?

As discussed above, smart water technologies have contributed significantly to water conservation through real-time monitoring systems, efficient resource management, and advanced sensors. These technologies can identify leaks, optimize water consumption, and improve the overall efficiency of water systems. Despite its benefits we cannot ignore the fact that these technologies must be considered alongside their environmental and social costs. The increasing use of AI and other data-intensive technologies requires large data centers that consume substantial amounts of electricity and water for computing and cooling. This creates a paradox: while smart technologies are designed to conserve resources such as water, the infrastructure supporting these technologies may itself consume considerable quantities of water and energy.

Therefore, an important question arises: are we genuinely achieving sustainability through these technologies, and at what environmental cost? Saving water through a smart monitoring system may look beneficial, but what if technological infrastructure consumed more than what it conserves to operate that system generates significant environmental impacts, the overall sustainability of the solution becomes more complicated. In some cases, we may risk creating a situation in which we use significant resources to achieve relatively limited savings.

If we examine the issue at broader level, the adoption of smart water technologies raises concerns not only about environmental impacts but also about social and human consequences. The benefits of smart technologies are not necessarily equally distributed across society. Large corporations, governments, and well-funded organization often have greater access to advanced technological infrastructure, data, and AI systems, while local communities may continue to experience problems such as water insecurity, unequal access to resources, and inadequate infrastructure. This raises the question of who actually benefits from smart technologies and who bears their environmental and social costs.

Furthermore, the impacts of AI extend beyond ecological systems. Rapid technological transformation is also affecting human well-being, employment, health, privacy, and social relationships.

The path to a Sustainable AI future

Environmental sustainability cannot be separated from social sustainability. With the rapid growth of AI, creating energy-efficient algorithms and hardware is a major opportunity to lower the environmental effects of AI computations. The path towards a sustainable AI future requires us to look beyond innovation and ask whether these technologies are truly sustainable in the long run. It's a time to shift from technological acceleration to responsible innovation. Recognizing the growing environmental footprint of artificial intelligence, Governments and international organization are increasingly introducing regulations and policy initiatives to make AI development more sustainable and resource- efficient. In the European Union, the Eco Design Directive and Regulation (EU) 2019/424 promote energy efficiency in servers and data-storage products. The United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative also examines how AI can support greener and more sustainable urban development.

Overall, sustainable AI requires more than improving computational efficiency. It demands whole-system, lifecycle approach that combines green algorithms and hardware with circular-economy practices, renewable governance, ethical design, and social equity. Ultimately, the objective should not be to make AI merely more powerful or more intelligent, but to ensure that its intelligence does not come at the expense of the very environmental resources it is expected to protect.

Conclusion

Consequently, sustainability should not be evaluated solely by measuring the immediate environmental benefits of a smart technology. It should also consider the resources consumed by the technology itself, the distribution of its benefits and costs, and its long-term effects on human well-being. A truly sustainable smart technology should therefore be environmentally efficient, socially inclusive, and accessible to the communities it is intended to serve.

The goal should not simply be to make existing systems “smarter,” but to ensure that technological innovation contributes to a genuinely sustainable future. Otherwise, we risk creating a technological paradox in which we consume substantial environmental and social resources in the pursuit of sustainability itself

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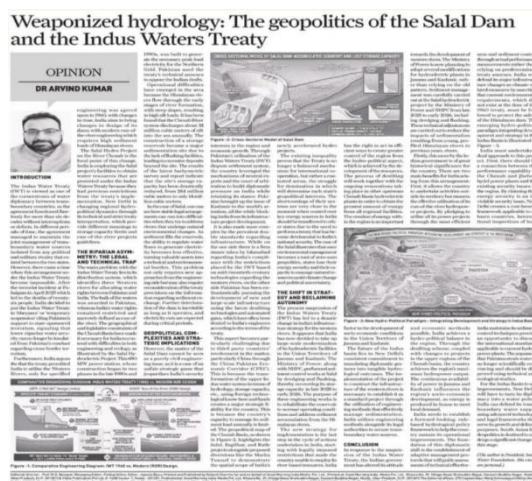
India's Strategic Tightrope in Global Turmoil

The current global order is facing various overlapping crises, which are collectively being described as the poly-crisis era. Given this situation, New Delhi finds itself at a very significant moment, more so after the wars in the Middle East and the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war, when the traditional international security mechanisms are gradually becoming obsolete. India, being a major power with its GDP rising to US\$4.18 trillion, seems to be the centre of global politics; it should maintain a low profile and also do some courageous acts to preserve its strategic autonomy, besides ensuring the creation of a peaceful and stable internal environment, if it wants to be free of the geopolitical mess.

Click on the link ahead to read the complete article: <https://firstindia.co.in/news/press-releases/indias-strategic-tightrope-in-global-turmoil>



Weaponized hydrology: The geopolitics of the Salal Dam and the Indus Waters Treaty



The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) is viewed as one of the cornerstones of water diplomacy between transboundary countries, as the agreement functioned flawlessly for more than six decades without interruptions or defects. In different periods of time, the agreement managed to maintain the joint management of transboundary water sources isolated from any political and military rivalry that existed between the two states. However, there came a time when this arrangement under the Indus Water Treaty become impossible.

Click on the link ahead to read the complete article: <https://thedailyguardian.com/opinion/weaponized-hydrology-the-geopolitics-of-the-salal-dam-and-the-indus-waters-treaty-715726/>

Women Redefining Sustainable Agriculture

We are pleased to share that Dr. Arvind Kumar's article has been featured in Kurukshetra, the Government of India's flagship magazine on rural development, with his article "Women Redefining Sustainable Agriculture." Published in the context of the United Nations' designation of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer, the article examines India's evolving rural landscape and the growing role of women as farmers, entrepreneurs, innovators and decision-makers. It highlights the transformative impact of Self-Help Groups, Krishi Sakhis, digital and drone technologies, climate-smart agriculture, water security, financial inclusion and women-led enterprises, while drawing attention to emerging state-level models from Meghalaya, Sikkim, Maharashtra and Telangana. The article underscores that recognising women not merely as agricultural workers but as farmers and economic leaders is central to advancing food security, climate resilience, sustainable rural development and the broader vision of Viksit Bharat.



Women Redefining Sustainable Agriculture

The UN has designated 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer. In India, this recognition comes after over a decade of sustained investment in rural women through Self-Help Groups, Krishi Sakhis, drone technology and improved land and legal rights. These initiatives are reshaping leadership in Indian agriculture—from the hill terraces of Meghalaya to the organic fields of Sikkim and the legislative corridors of Maharashtra.

Dr. Arvind Kumar

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed that the Government has spared no effort in empowering the country's youth, women, and farmers over the past decade and that it will continue on this path of service as India progresses towards Viksit Bharat. It is a theme he returns to often, especially when speaking about the women who anchor rural India's Self-Help Groups. "Women connected with Self-Help Groups are the strong link for

Viksit Bharat," he has said, describing them as central to a quiet yet sweeping transformation unfolding across India's villages—a transformation that has gained global recognition with the United Nations designating 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer.

This recognition is not ceremonial; it reflects a fundamental reimagining of rural livelihoods, where women are no longer passive recipients of welfare but active architects of economic change. Their contribution now spans the entire agricultural value chain from crop

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Click on the link ahead to read the complete article: https://indiawaterfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Kurukshetra-English-August-2026-2_Article_Dr-Arvind-Kumar.pdf
<https://indiawaterfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Arvind-Kumar-Kurukshetra-1.pdf>

Adulterated Trust: A grave Indian Crisis!

Published on 12th September 2026, The Daily Guardian

Adulterated Trust: A grave Indian crisis!

OPINION
DR ARVIND KUMAR



Adulterated trust is the most insidious enemy of a nation. It is the silent rot that undermines the very fabric of society, eroding the bonds of faith and integrity that hold communities together. In India, this crisis is not just a matter of individual dishonesty but a systemic failure that has reached alarming proportions. From the food we eat to the medicines we take, from the services we receive to the promises we are given, trust has been replaced by a cynical skepticism that threatens the future of the nation.

DECEPTION AT SCALE

The scale of deception in India is staggering. It is a crisis that spans every sector of the economy, from the smallest village shop to the largest multinational corporation. The food supply chain is riddled with adulteration, where the quality and safety of the products are compromised. The medical industry is plagued by counterfeit drugs and substandard treatments, putting the lives of millions at risk. The service sector is characterized by a lack of transparency and honesty, where promises are often broken and quality is sacrificed for profit.

THE CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of this crisis are dire. It has led to a loss of faith in institutions, a decline in productivity, and a general sense of hopelessness. The trust that once fueled India's economic growth has been replaced by a deep-seated cynicism that hinders progress and innovation. The nation's reputation as a global leader is being tarnished, and its potential for future success is being jeopardized.

THE WAY FORWARD

Addressing this crisis requires a multi-pronged approach. It starts with strengthening regulatory frameworks and enforcing strict penalties for those who engage in deceptive practices. It also involves promoting transparency and accountability in all sectors of the economy. Most importantly, it requires a cultural shift where honesty and integrity are valued over short-term gains. Only by rebuilding trust can India overcome this grave crisis and secure a bright future for its people.

Dr. Kumar highlights the urgent need to move beyond food security towards ensuring that what reaches the consumer is safe, genuine and trustworthy. The article explores adulteration across food and medicines, emerging regulatory measures, traceability, stronger enforcement, inter-agency coordination and the critical role of consumer awareness.

Click on the link ahead to read the complete article: <https://epaper.thedailyguardian.com/2026/09/11/e-paper-today-delhi-12-september-2026/>

ANNOUNCEMENT

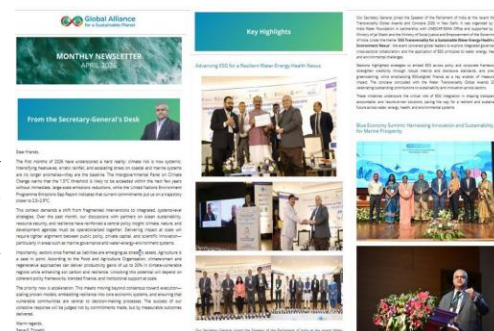
Global Recognition for IWF'S Water Transversality Global Awards and Conclave 2026 by IWRA

The India Water Foundation's flagship Water Transversality Global Awards & Conclave 2026, held in New Delhi in March 2026, received notable recognition in the latest newsletter of the International Water Resources Association (IWRA). The Conclave, convened under the theme "ESG Transversality for the Sustainable Water, Energy, Health & Environment Nexus," brought together global thought leaders and practitioners to advance integrated approaches to sustainability challenges. IWRA's Deputy Executive Director, Ulrike Kelm, actively contributed to key sessions, highlighting the critical importance of strengthened international cooperation, transparent governance, and accountability in addressing the interconnected water–energy–health–environment nexus. A major highlight of the Conclave was the conferment of Lifetime Achievement Awards upon three distinguished IWRA leaders Dr Rabi Mohtar, Dr Eric Tardieu, and Mr Ignacio Deregibus in recognition of their exceptional contributions to global water cooperation, river basin governance, and sustainable resource management. The acknowledgement by IWRA underscores the growing global resonance of IWF's Water Transversality platform as a convening force for advancing dialogue, partnerships, and action at the intersection of water and allied sectors. <https://www.iwra.org/iwra-update-march-2026/>



IWF's Water Transversality Conclave featured in Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet Newsletter 2026

The India Water Foundation's flagship Water Transversality Global Awards and Conclave 2026, held in New Delhi, has been prominently featured in the April 2026 edition of the Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet (GASP) newsletter. The coverage highlights the Conclave's role in advancing the discourse on ESG transversality across the water–energy–health–environment nexus. Organized by the India Water Foundation in partnership with the UNESCAP-SSWA Office, and supported by the Ministry of Jal Shakti and



the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, the Conclave brought together global leaders to deliberate on integrated governance frameworks and crosssectoral collaboration. The GASP newsletter underscored key thematic discussions from the event, including embedding ESG principles into policy and corporate systems, strengthening transparency through robust metrics and disclosure frameworks, addressing greenwashing risks, and leveraging ESG-aligned finance to drive measurable impact. The feature also recognized the significance of the Water Transversality Global Awards 2026 in celebrating innovation and leadership across sectors, reinforcing the importance of collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to sustainability. This international recognition reflects the growing global resonance of IWF's water transversality framework and its commitment to positioning water as a central connector in achieving sustainable and resilient development outcomes.

11th Annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI FORUM)

India Water Foundation participated in the 11th Annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum), held at the



United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Forum serves as a global platform for governments, international organizations, scientists, innovators, civil society, and the private sector to explore how science, technology, and innovation can accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Representing the India Water Foundation, Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, delivered a statement titled “Transforming Water Systems with Science, Technology

and Innovation.” The statement underscored the critical role of water as a foundational element of sustainable development and highlighted the urgent need for integrated, forward-looking approaches to water governance in an increasingly complex global landscape. Addressing the Forum, Dr. Kumar emphasized that in an era characterized by climate uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, environmental degradation, and widening inequalities, water can no longer be viewed as an isolated sector. Rather, it is the vital link connecting climate resilience, food security, energy transition, biodiversity conservation, public health, economic prosperity, and human security.

The statement called for a paradigm shift towards transversality in water governance, recognizing the interconnected nature of global challenges and the need for coordinated action across sectors and stakeholders. It stressed the importance of leveraging scientific knowledge, technological innovation, digital solutions, and data-driven decision-making to build resilient and

sustainable water systems capable of meeting present and future needs. The participation of the India Water Foundation at the STI Forum reaffirmed its commitment to advancing science-based, innovation-driven, and partnership-oriented solutions for water security. It also reinforced the Foundation's long-standing vision of promoting integrated water governance as a cornerstone for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building a resilient, sustainable, and water-secure future for all.

https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/India%20Water%20Foundation.docx_0.pdf

Partner Spotlight- GASP

The India Water Foundation has been featured in the Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet (GASP) Partner Spotlight Series, in recognition of its contributions to advancing integrated and climate-resilient water governance. The spotlight highlights IWF's work as the Knowledge Partner to the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority, where it supported the implementation of a cross-sectoral water management model linking water security with ecosystem restoration, sustainable livelihoods, and climate resilience.

The feature showcases the Meghalaya initiative as a successful demonstration of Water Transversality, illustrating how spring rejuvenation, watershed restoration, community-led governance, and ecosystem-based approaches can strengthen climate adaptation while promoting sustainable development. GASP also recognized IWF's broader commitment to localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), fostering community resilience, and promoting integrated water resource management through its "Putting People First" approach. This international recognition reaffirms the Foundation's growing role in shaping global discourse on water as a catalyst for climate resilience and sustainable development.



<https://media.licdn.com/dms/document/media/v2/D4D1FAQHYl8fiZsk8ug/feedshare-document-pdf-analyzed/B4DZ7KtQMIHcAY-/0/1781517322800?e=1784160000&v=beta&t=EgK93OyPNxTlBISnUbaaDtQpckD3rKxby11gbekumj0>

New Partnership – UNGCNI



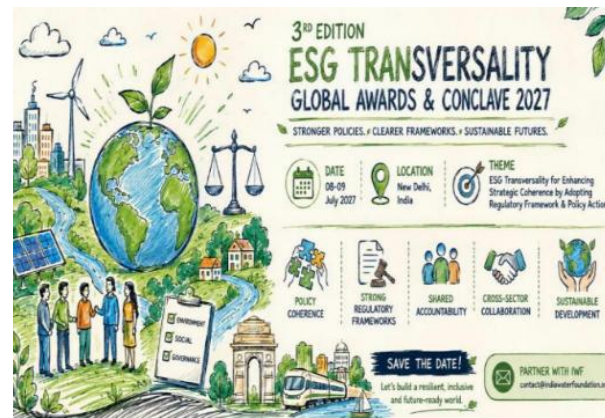
We are pleased to share that India Water Foundation (IWF) has joined the United Nations Global Compact Network India (UNG CNI), reaffirming our commitment to advancing sustainable, inclusive and responsible development. As a non-profit civil society organisation and think tank, IWF has been working since 2008 to advance the Sustainable Development Goals, environmental sustainability, climate resilience and integrated approaches to water, energy, health and livelihoods. Joining the UN Global Compact Network India provides an important platform to further strengthen our engagement with businesses, institutions and stakeholders and contribute to collective action towards a more sustainable and

equitable future. We look forward to meaningful collaboration, knowledge exchange and partnerships that help translate sustainability commitments into measurable action. Together, let us accelerate the journey towards a sustainable and resilient future.

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7490329972578877440/>

ESG Transversality Global Awards & Conclave 2027

Join us for the 3rd ESG Transversality Global Awards & Conclave 2027, a two-day conference on ESG Transversality for Enhancing Strategic Coherence by adopting Regulatory Framework & Policy Actions. This landmark event will explore ESG integration, the Water Energy-Health & Environment Nexus, global collaboration, and innovations driving carbon neutrality. Don't miss this convergence of policy, industry, and sustainability leadership.



<https://iwftransversalityconclave.com/>

Website Launch – India Water Future



We are pleased to share our new wing, India Water Future, by the India Water Foundation — a dedicated platform designed to bring together the evolving story of India's water sector in one comprehensive, integrated dashboard.

From developments across industry and business to initiatives by State Governments, the Central Government, international organisations, institutions, policy bodies and other stakeholders, India Water Future will track and connect the developments shaping India's water landscape.

The platform brings together data, developments, stories, insights and emerging trends, helping stakeholders see not just what is happening in the water sector, but how these developments connect across sectors and levels of governance.

One platform. One evolving water story. A clearer view of India's water future. Explore India Water Future and stay connected with the developments shaping India's water-secure journey.

Click here to explore: <https://indiawaterfuture.org/>

Become a Direct Member!

At the India Water Foundation (IWF), we're more than just a network—we're a movement for sustainability and resilience. By becoming a member, you become part of a community of individuals, organizations, and institutions committed to environmental conservation, policy advocacy, and transformative change.

Why Join Us?

As a member, you'll gain opportunities to:

- Shape Policies with us – Participate in advocacy initiatives that influence sustainable development strategies.
- Learn and Grow Together – Access exclusive workshops, training programs, and thought-leadership events.
- Connect with Change-makers – Collaborate with a global network of experts, innovators, and leaders.
- Make a Grassroots Impact – Support and engage in community-driven projects that enhance resource efficiency and resilience.

- **Be Recognized for Your Efforts** – Get featured, awarded, and celebrated for your contributions at IWF events.

Who Can Join?

Membership is open to:

- **Organizations** – Companies, institutions, NGOs, government bodies, and intergovernmental organizations.
- **Individuals** – From young professionals to experienced leaders and retirees—anyone passionate about sustainability.

Whether you're a policymaker, innovator, or community advocate, there's a place for you here at IWF. Together, let's shape a sustainable and inclusive future.

Apply Now - <https://indiawaterfoundation.org/direct-membership/>

Become a Jal Mitra – Join the Social Outreach Membership

Be part of a people-powered movement dedicated to water conservation, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable living. The Jal Mitra Outreach Program is a mass initiative of the India Water Foundation (IWF) that seeks to inspire awareness, nurture grassroots action, and foster behavioural change for a more sustainable future across India and the Global South.

Why Become a Jal Mitra?

By joining, you:

- **Support Sustainability** – Play your role in reducing ecological footprints and advancing national and global sustainability goals.
- **Drive Action on the Ground** – Participate in plantation drives, cleanup campaigns, and community awareness programs.
- **Be Part of a Movement** – Join a vibrant network of individuals committed to water conservation, climate action, and ecosystem resilience.

Membership Benefits (Free of Cost)

As a Jal Mitra, you will:

- Receive regular updates on IWF's activities and impact.
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FRIDAY BLOGS

When Will the Spiral of Inflation and Conflict Break?

In a separate briefing on the Middle East, DG-FAO, stressed that “peace is a prerequisite for food security” as escalating hostilities in Gaza and its neighbourhood push 1.84 million people into extremely critical levels of acute food insecurity and threaten to spill over into agrifood systems across the wider region. With climate action dwarfed by the scale of the crisis and by entrenched fossil-fuel and geopolitical interests. Together, these assessments underline a stark reality: today’s wars are not only claiming lives and destroying infrastructure; they are deeply entangled with the triple planetary emergency of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and are driving a cascading crisis of food insecurity and inflation.....Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/when-will-the-spiral-of-inflation-and-conflict-break/>

Rethinking Atomic Power for Civil Energy Security?

he planetary crisis remains deeply rooted in a fossil-fuel-dominated system, with coal, oil, and gas accounting for about 86.5% of global primary energy use in 2025 and roughly 61% of electricity generation—despite record growth in clean energy. This dependence not only locks in nearly 81% of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions but also embeds systemic risk into the global economy. As the Russia–Ukraine War or today’s intensifying US–Israel–Iran war around the Strait of Hormuz have shown, energy systems reliant on fossil supply chains are acutely vulnerable to geopolitical shocks. Disruptions to tanker traffic, surging war-risk premiums, and shutdowns of critical Gulf energy infrastructure have driven price volatility, revealing that what is often termed “energy security” is, in reality, a fragile dependence on uninterrupted and conflict-exposed fossil fuel logistics.....Read more

<https://focusglobalreporter.org/rethinking-atomic-power-for-civil-energy-security/>

COP 31 at the Crossroads

In an age of record heat and widening inequality, my greatest concern would be if we simply settled into complacency, UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen has warned, stressing that countries must “do much more, move much faster, and stretch our collective ambition even further.” UN Secretary-General António Guterres has been equally blunt, cautioning that “climate chaos is rewriting the rules of weather” and that each warmer year will “hammer economies, deepen inequalities and impact developing countries hardest even though they did least to cause it.” These warnings frame the political and ethical landscape in which COP31 will convene in Türkiye, following a fragile but important outcome at COP30 in Belém and against a backdrop of geopolitical turbulence that is reshaping climate multilateralism. Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/cop-31-at-the-crossroads/>

Sustainable Rethinking for an Unsustainable World!

The numbers tell a story of progress but also of contradiction. According to IRENA, global renewable power capacity reached about 4,448 GW in 2025, with a record 585 GW added in a single year. Solar alone now accounts for roughly 42% of total renewable capacity, signalling a structural energy transition. Alongside, the IEA estimates that since 2020, governments have committed nearly USD 2 trillion in direct clean energy investment support, alongside additional short-term affordability measures. Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/sustainable-rethinking-for-an-unsustainable-world/>

Reimagining the War-Economics in the Contemporary World

The story began, of course, with the pandemic, which shattered supply chains and forced governments into massive fiscal expansions, leaving them with swollen debt, constrained policy space and electorates exhausted by austerity. As the health crisis ebbed, economic scarring and inflation remained, and the centre of the system entered a period of contradictory signals: headline growth surprised on the upside in 2024, but the IMF still sees US growth decelerating to around 2.2% in 2026 as high interest rates, a cooling labour market and policy uncertainty weigh on consumption and investment. That uncertainty is amplified by a visible retreat from multilateralism: withdrawal from dozens of international organisations and 32 UN-linked agencies, moves that UN leaders describe as “deeply disappointing” and “contradicting the fundamental principles of multilateralism”. When the system’s anchor power simultaneously weaponizes tariffs and walks away from rule-making tables, it is hardly surprising that the World Trade Policy Uncertainty Index has hit record highs and that small exporters in developing economies are forced to absorb the greatest shocks. Read more

<https://focusglobalreporter.org/reimagining-the-war-economics-in-the-contemporary-world/>

El Niño: Reweighing the Anatomy of Climate Crisis

At the global level, the framing is no longer in doubt. UNEP’s Executive Director has warned that triple planetary crisis “threatens the well-being and survival of millions of people”, while the UN Secretary-General uses almost identical language to insist that this is a systemic threat, not an environmental sidebar. In this framing, El Niño 2026 is not an isolated event; it is a flashpoint inside a larger structural breakdown.....

Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/el-nino-reweighing-the-anatomy-of-climate-crisis/>

Recalibrating the mirage of India’s biofuel paradox

But beneath this appeal lies an uncomfortable question: has the decision been made too hastily, and at what ecological cost? When examined beyond the rhetoric of green growth, India’s biofuel push appears less of an environmental triumph and more of an ecological gamble one

that could unravel hard-won water security, deepen agrarian distress, and strain biodiversity systems already fraying at the edges.....

Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/recalibrating-the-mirage-of-indias-biofuel-paradox/>

How to reset local action for global impact?

Biodiversity, the variability among living organisms across terrestrial, marine, and freshwater ecosystems, underpins all life on Earth. It includes diversity within species, between species, and across ecosystems, sustaining the ecological processes that support food security, climate stability, water systems, soil fertility, and human well-being. Far from being merely an environmental concern, biodiversity is the living infrastructure of civilisation itself.....Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/how-to-reset-local-action-for-global-impact/>

Reconsidering Ecosystem Restoration for Our Urban Future!

The 13th World Urban Forum (WUF13), held in Baku, anchored by the theme Housing the World: Safe and Resilient Cities and Communities, the Forum surfaced a hard consensus: the world's housing and climate crises are no longer separable. The Forum concluded with the Baku Call to Action, a stakeholder-led outcome framework linking housing to climate resilience, inclusive finance, and ecosystem-based restoration.....Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/reconsidering-ecosystem-restoration-for-our-urban-future/>

Is India recalibrating itself as a strategic anchor in the Indo-Pacific?

The global context makes Quad and BRICS more salient for India as they come at a moment when supply shocks and climate issues directly affect India's economy and security. Quad discussions are now shifting from broad talk to concrete agendas on energy and maritime security, given the recent disruptions in West Asia. For example, Quad ministers agreed to a new "Critical Minerals" framework and an Indo-Pacific Energy Security initiative, reflecting India's interest in securing raw materials and resilient energy supplies. Australia's foreign minister Penny Wong even hailed the Quad as a "vital partnership" for peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Hosting the meeting allowed India to spotlight issues like undersea connectivity and Pacific-island resilience. Overall, New Delhi's active role in Quad events signals its determination to shape a rules-based regional order, even as it seeks tangible deliverables to protect trade and security.....Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/is-india-recalibrating-itself-as-a-strategic-anchor-in-the-indo-pacific/>

El Niño: Reweighing the Anatomy of Climate Crisis

At the global level, the framing is no longer in doubt. UNEP's Executive Director has warned that triple planetary crisis "threatens the well-being and survival of millions of people", while the UN Secretary-General uses almost identical language to insist that this is a systemic threat, not an environmental sidebar. In this framing, El Niño 2026 is not an isolated event; it is a flashpoint inside a larger structural breakdown.....Read More <https://focusglobalreporter.org/el-nino-reweighing-the-anatomy-of-climate-crisis/>

Does India Need to Recalibrate Its Trade Stance in the New World Order?

India has been a steadfast advocate for a fair, inclusive, and development-oriented multilateral trading system at the World Trade Organization (WTO). It champions the interests of developing countries by prioritising food security, public stockholding, fisheries, agricultural reform, and special and differential treatment, while increasingly engaging on digital trade, services, sustainability, and WTO reform. Its engagement with the WTO is a high-stakes balancing act, navigating a complex web of challenges while championing the cause of the Global South..... Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/does-india-need-to-recalibrate-its-trade-stance-in-the-new-world-order/>

Charting the Course to COP31 From Bonn to Antalya

B64 was no routine intersessional meeting. As UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell framed it, this was a moment demanding "maximum progress." Against a backdrop of growing geopolitical instability, heightened concerns over global energy security, and extreme heatwaves sweeping Europe, India, and parts of Asia with severe droughts now affecting 40% of global landmass the talks unfolded under the shadow of a physical reality that infused an unusual urgency into the negotiating rooms.....Read more

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AI Faceoff for the Next Generation!

The artificial intelligence revolution is no longer confined to generating text, images, or videos. AI is rapidly evolving into a foundational infrastructure layer of the global economy, reshaping how societies produce food, deliver healthcare, manage resources, secure national borders, govern cities, and respond to climate change. According to recent estimates, nearly 88% of organizations worldwide now use AI in at least one business function, while more than 72% have moved AI applications from experimentation to real-world deployment.....Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/ai-faceoff-for-the-next-generation/>

Reweighing Strategic Opening for India at G7 in a Turbulent World!

Against the backdrop of escalating global conflicts and deepening geopolitical fault lines, India will participate in the G7 Summit at Évian-les-Bains, France, from June 15–17, 2026. France’s own diplomatic briefings have called the current situation a moment where “there have never been so many armed conflicts since World War II.” The Russia-Ukraine war grinds into its fifth year with no durable peace architecture in sight. The US-Israel military campaign against Iran and the ensuing Iranian blockade of the Strait of Hormuz through which 20% of the world’s energy trade flows has produced the most severe energy price shock since the 1970s oil crisis. French President Emmanuel Macron, who holds the G7 chair this year, has been unambiguous: “The great risk of the times we are living in is the risk of seeing the ‘might is right’ mentality prevail.” This is the turbulent theatre into which India now walks not as a spectator, but as a confirmed invited partner described as an “acceleration for partnership.”.....read more

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Is this the point of no return, or just a bad summer?

Climate change is no longer a future projection; it is unfolding in real time. Europe, often regarded as the world’s fastest-warming continent, has once again become the epicentre of this reality. Following the record-breaking summers of 2023 and 2024, the continent is now grappling with another exceptional heatwave in 2026, with temperatures exceeding 44–46°C across parts of Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and the Balkans. The latest heatwave has once again triggered widespread health alerts across southern Europe. European Commission Executive Vice-President Teresa Ribera described these unprecedented extremes as a “dramatic warning” against climate denial, emphasizing that nature is now delivering unmistakable evidence of a rapidly changing climate. However even as evidence mounts, political responses have been uneven. Some leaders and nations are already retreating into old patterns. A few powerful countries are downplaying climate risks or pulling back from multilateral climate commitments, even as they enjoy short-term economic gains.....Read more

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Reimagining India-Japan Strategic Partnership

The images from Her Excellency Sanae Takaichi’s three-day visit to New Delhi, a ceremonial welcome at Rashtrapati Bhavan, 16th summit outcomes, a decade-spanning investment number will read, on first pass, like the choreography every high-profile bilateral visit produces. That reading undersells what actually happened. The more interesting story of the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit is not the pageantry but what it reveals about how two status-quo powers, both uneasy about the direction the world is taking, have chosen to hedge: by binding themselves

closer together, deliberately and in writing, at a moment when almost every other major relationship in Asia feels less certain than it did a year ago.....Read more

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Reframing the Climate Domino Effect

Global climate data show alarming trends. According to the joint FAO–WMO report, “the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme heat events have risen sharply over the past half century”. Models project each extra 1 °C of warming could slash yields of staples like maize and wheat by roughly 4–10 %. In fact, a single extreme heatwave can cut farm output in the affected area by nearly 50 %. Meanwhile, crop productivity which did increase over decades has already been slowed by climate trends, especially in mid- and low-latitude regions. Rising temperatures also stress water resources: roughly half the world’s population now faces severe water scarcity for at least part of each year. The net result is severe: an estimated 1.23 billion people live under conditions where extreme heat threatens their food systems. OECD-FAO projections show world agricultural production expanding ~13% by 2035 but at high cost. Modelled data indicate that direct agricultural greenhouse gas emissions will rise by about 6%, and price or supply shocks could still cause a one-in-four chance of a 3% drop in farm incomes by 2035.....Read more

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Are We Witnessing the Dawn of Another Hormuz?

The numbers suggest precisely that. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute recorded a record US\$679 billion in revenue for the world’s hundred largest arms manufacturers in 2025. The Quincy Institute has tracked US\$2.4 trillion in Pentagon contracts flowing to private firms between 2020 and 2024, with Lockheed Martin alone reporting an order backlog approaching US\$194 billion. Conflict has become an ecosystem whose profits are measurable long before peace dividends are. Alongside the formal defence industry operates an equally lucrative shadow economy. Contraband has become the informal wing of modern warfare. Claire Jungman, Director of Maritime Risk Intelligence at Vortexa, tracked “dark” tankers, vessels operating without transponders, verified flags or accountable ownership accounting for more than half of all traffic through Hormuz during the recent crisis, peaking above sixty-five percent in May. Built originally to transport sanctioned Russian and Iranian oil, this shadow fleet now functions as a parallel maritime economy that thrives precisely when legitimate commerce is paralysed. Every disruption to legal trade simultaneously creates opportunities for illicit networks, making instability itself commercially valuable.....Read more

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Redefining CSR through the Lens of ESG

For over a decade, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has expanded in scale, but much of it has remained detached from core business strategy often perceived as a statutory obligation under Section 135 of the Companies Act rather than a driver of long-term value. While companies have focused on how much they spend, the more fundamental question is whether those investments create measurable and lasting impact? This is precisely where Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles redefine the conversation by shifting the focus from expenditure to outcomes, accountability, and governance. As Sanda Ojiambo, Assistant Secretary-General and CEO of the UN Global Compact – the world’s largest corporate sustainability platform aptly observed, “ESG is not only about doing good, it is simply good business sense.” Her statement underscores a critical reality: CSR in India can only evolve into a credible instrument of public trust when it is disciplined, structured, measurable, and firmly anchored in ESG.....Read more

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Is BRICS salient for Missing Architecture of the Global South?

The pattern is consistent even where the justification changes. On climate, the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, followed almost immediately by withdrawal from the UNFCCC treaty framework altogether and rather than other wealthy nations stepping into the funding gap, overall development aid fell 7% in 2024 with steeper cuts projected through 2025, even as the obligation to finance developing-world mitigation and adaptation remains written into the Paris text itself. On trade, the 2025 “reciprocal tariff” regime imposed a 10% baseline and rates up to 50% on economies like Lesotho and 47% on Madagascar; least-developed countries with no leverage to negotiate exemptions the way larger partners did. And on governance.....Read more

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Reweighting Circular Water Economy!

The world is living beyond our hydrological means,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned in 2026, the same year a UN-backed scientific assessment formally declared what researchers termed an era of “global water bankruptcy” humanity drawing down glaciers, aquifers and lakes faster than nature can refill them. That single warning captures the argument of this piece: climate change is, at its core, a water crisis, and buried inside that crisis is an unusually solvable problem; the water we have already used once and simply throw away. Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD), the practice of recovering and reusing virtually all industrial and municipal wastewater so that nothing untreated re-enters rivers, soil or sea, has moved from a niche engineering ideal to one of the sharpest tests of whether India can convert a resource crisis into a resource economy.....Read more

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Reckoning India's Food Adulteration Menace

With festivals approaching, authorities from Maharashtra to Uttar Pradesh report alarming finds of expired or fake ingredients flooding our plates. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) teams unearthed a full “synthetic milk” racket: officials say unscrupulous producers are mixing skimmed-milk powder with caustic soda, detergents and even shampoo to mimic real milk. The sheer brazenness of these schemes has led critics to warn that profiteering has turned food into “poison”. Recent raids nationwide have seized tainted milk, cheese and sweets – underscoring that adulteration is more than a local issue, it’s a nationwide public-health crisis.....Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/reckoning-indias-food-adulteration-menace/>

Is Climate Emergency the New Normal Now?

Nowhere is the climate emergency more consequential than in the way it is beginning to unsettle the foundations of development itself. Rising temperatures, increasingly volatile precipitation, intensifying floods and droughts, accelerating urbanisation, declining freshwater security and mounting pressure on ecosystems are no longer isolated environmental concerns; they are converging into a systemic challenge for economies, infrastructure, food systems, public health and human security. The latest evidence is stark: 2015–2025 were the eleven hottest years on record, while the global water cycle is becoming increasingly erratic, oscillating between too much water and too little. Yet the world’s capacity to adapt remains markedly behind the pace of physical change. UNEP estimates that developing countries alone could require US\$310–365 billion annually for adaptation by 2035, while international public adaptation finance stood at only US\$26 billion in 2023.....Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/is-climate-emergency-the-new-normal-now/>

Charting a New Era in Global Ocean Governance

The scale of what the BBNJ Agreement governs is hard to overstate. The high seas constitute roughly two-thirds of the world’s oceans, covering more than 40% of the planet’s surface and over 90% of Earth’s marine habitat by volume. These waters are home to deep trenches, seamount chains, vast midwater ecosystems, and life forms from microscopic plankton to migratory whales that play central roles in nutrient cycling, climate regulation, and global biodiversity. Yet prior to this treaty, less than 1.5% of these areas were formally protected, and human pressures such as overfishing, shipping, deep-sea mining exploration, and climate-driven change were advancing faster than the rules governing their impacts.....Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/charting-a-new-era-in-global-ocean-governance/>

Mother of all Agreements, will it be a Blockbuster?

The proposed India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is unprecedented in scale and ambition. Over its implementation period, the European Union is expected to eliminate import duties on roughly 99.5% of traded goods from India, while both partners together will liberalise 96–99% of their mutual goods trade. European exporters stand to save billions of euros annually, while Indian firms would gain preferential access across a wide range of sectors, including textiles, apparel, leather, chemicals, engineering goods, base metals, gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals and food products. If India’s growth trajectory materialises as projected, this agreement could underpin a free-trade space accounting for nearly a quarter of global GDP and close to a third of world trade within the next decade.....Read more

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Heralding Indo-America Relations in New Perspective

Barely a year after the United States imposed a punishing 50% tariff wall on Indian exports, India has negotiated its way out of what many described as Washington’s trade penalty box. The tariff reduction to 18% lower than what some Asian competitors face is being celebrated in New Delhi as a diplomatic and economic breakthrough. It is also a notable retreat from the harsher 26% reciprocal rate that had earlier been floated under US President Donald Trump’s protectionist trade push. On the surface, this is a public relations victory for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reinforcing his government’s narrative that strategic patience and diplomatic engagement can deliver results.Read more <https://focusglobalreporter.org/heralding-indo-america-relations-in-new-perspective/>

Is It Time to Rethink Planetary Health Diplomacy Through a Nexus Approach?

The age of treating climate and health as separate policy silos is rapidly ending. From overcrowded emergency wards during heatwaves to vector-borne diseases expanding into new geographies, the evidence is clear: the climate crisis is fundamentally a health crisis. WHO estimates that 3.6 billion people currently live in areas highly susceptible to climate change, and between 2030 and 2050, climate impacts could cause an additional 250,000 deaths annually from undernutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, and heat stress. Direct health damages alone are projected to cost between 2 and 4 billion US dollars annually by 2030, excluding losses linked to agriculture, water security, and livelihoods. As WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has repeatedly emphasised, the most urgent reasons for climate action lie not in distant projections but in immediate and escalating health consequences.....Read more

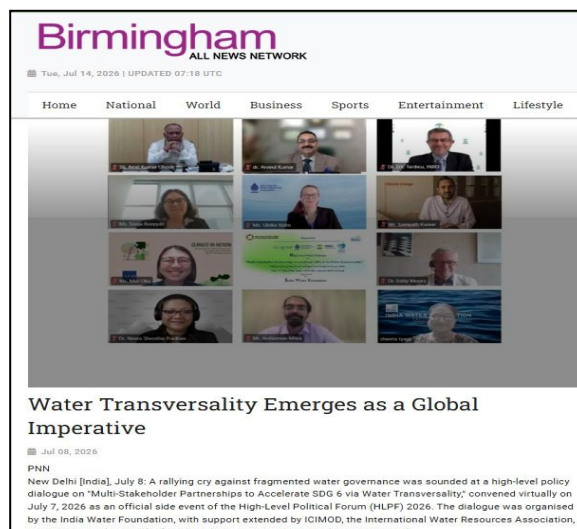
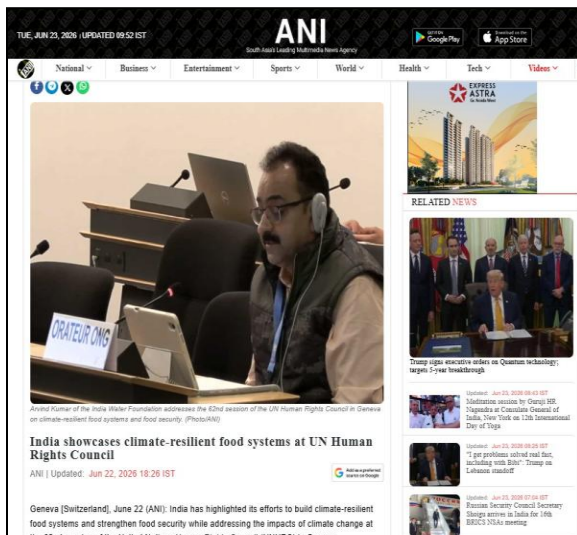
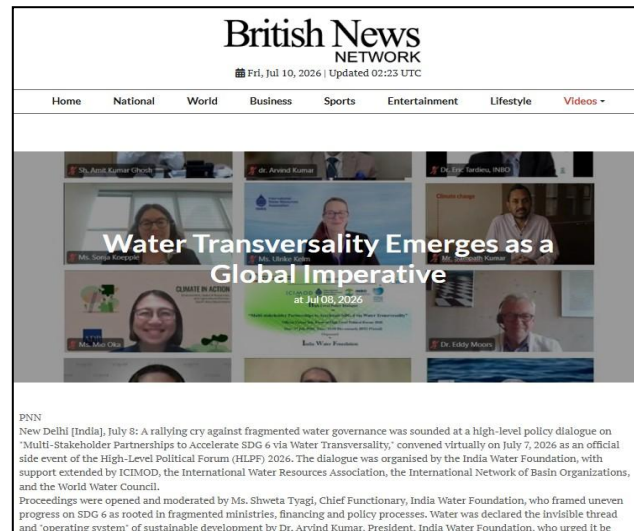
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Recalibrating ESG-Aligned Finance & Governance to Combat Greenwashing

In an era where sustainability has moved from boardroom rhetoric to regulatory mandate, the battle against greenwashing has become one of the defining challenges of global finance and governance. As corporations, financial institutions, and governments pledge their allegiance to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, the gap between promise and practice has never been more scrutinized. Leaders of major international organizations have been vocal in their call to end greenwashing. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has been particularly forthright, “We must have zero tolerance for net-zero greenwashing. It is rank deception. This toxic cover-up could push our world over the climate cliff. The sham must end”.....Read more

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Placing Water Transversality in Global Climate Action for Resilience at SB64 Bonn

Jun 20, 2026

PNN

Bonn [Germany], June 20: As an official side event of the 64th Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB64) at the World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB), Germany, India Water Foundation (IWF), in partnership with CICERO (Center for International Climate Research) and AKO Foundation, convened a High-Level Policy Dialogue on 'Cross-Sector Partnerships for Water Security in a Climate Resilient World.'

The Dialogue brought together leading policymakers, scientists, researchers, and development practitioners to address one of the defining challenges of our time: placing water at the centre of climate action, sustainable development, and resilience-building. Distinguished speakers included Dr. Raj Bhushan Chaudhary, Minister of State, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India; Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation; Dr. Satya Tripathi, Secretary General, Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet; Dr. Marianne T. Lund, Research Professor, CICERO; Dr. Bjorn Hallvard Samset, Research Professor, CICERO; Ms. Shweta Tyagi, Chief Functionary, India Water Foundation; Ms. Milloni Doshi, Manager, Global Engagement and Partnerships, Environmental Defense Fund; Ms. Daile (Ina) Zeng, PhD Student, University of British Columbia.

Opening the Dialogue, Dr. Arvind Kumar highlighted the urgent need to move beyond fragmented governance models and embrace integrated approaches. He introduced the concept of 'transversality,' stressing that decisions taken in every sector influence water outcomes and vice versa. Emphasizing the importance of

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India's Climate-Resilient Agriculture Model Resonates at 62 session of UNHRC

by oradim | June 26, 2026 | 92 | 0

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Speaking at the 62nd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation (IWF), underscored that transforming global food systems is fundamental to

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India Water Foundation calls for accessible, grant-based climate finance at UNHRC

ANI

18 Sept 2026, 23:53 GMT+10

Geneva [Switzerland], September 18 (ANI): India Water Foundation President Arvind Kumar has called for practical and predictable pathways to mobilise adequate climate finance, saying that climate change is ultimately a human rights crisis and that vulnerable communities must not bear a disproportionate burden of climate impacts.

Speaking during the 63rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, Kumar said inadequate and inaccessible climate finance constrains countries' ability to advance economic and social rights, particularly for communities most exposed to climate change.

He stressed that adaptation finance should be new, additional, reliable and largely grant-based, while supporting the international goal of tripling adaptation finance by 2035.

Highlighting India's experience in accessing international climate finance, Kumar said India has mobilised USD 1.16 billion through UNFCCC financial mechanisms, including USD 803.9 million from the Green Climate Fund.

He also pointed to India's NDC 3.0 target of reducing emissions intensity by 47 per cent by 2035,

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Water Transversality Emerges as a Global Imperative

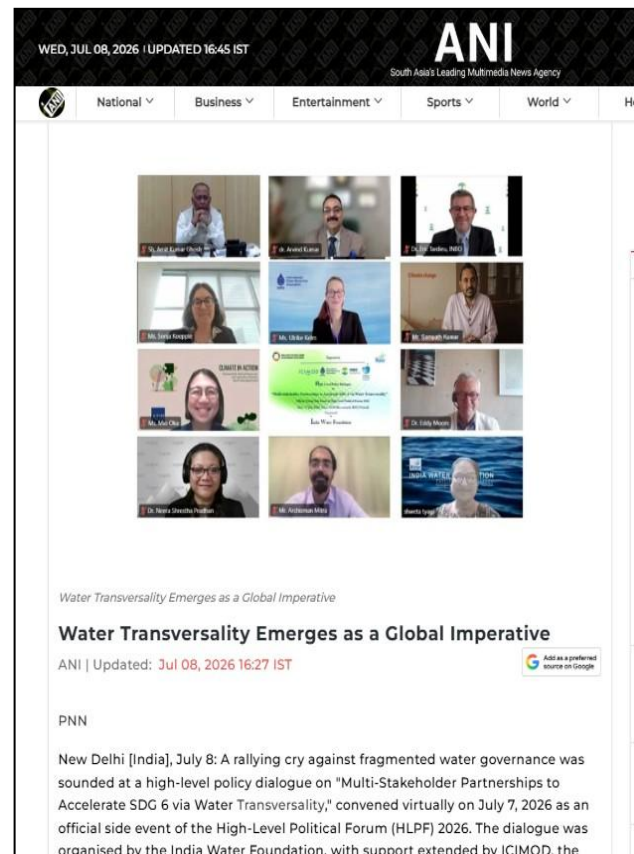
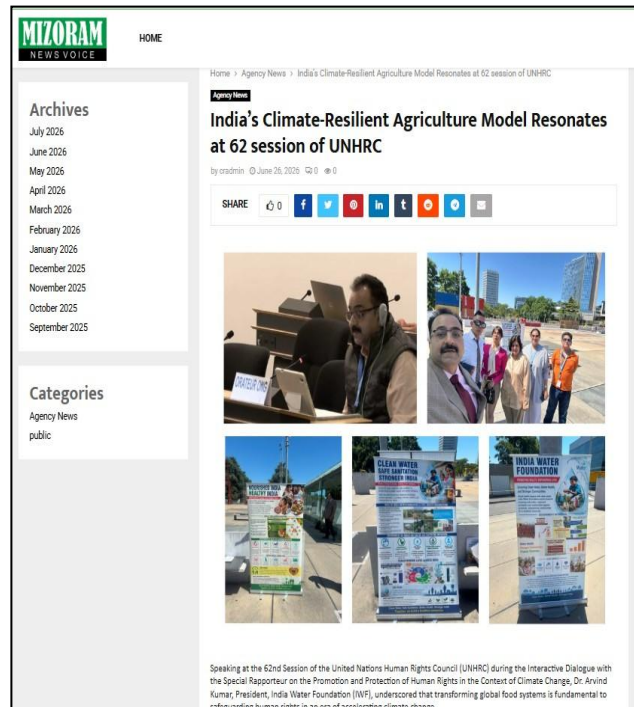
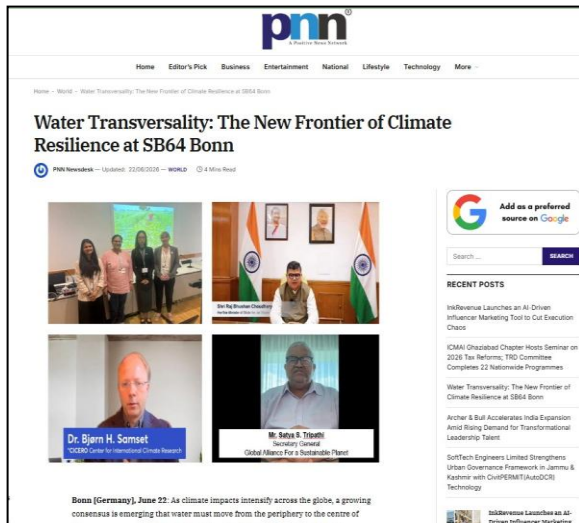
at Jul 08, 2026

PNN

New Delhi [India], July 8: A rallying cry against fragmented water governance was sounded at a high-level policy dialogue on 'Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to Accelerate SDG 6 via Water Transversality,' convened virtually on July 7, 2026 as an official side event of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2026. The dialogue was organised by the India Water Foundation, with support extended by ICIMOD, the International Water Resources Association, the International Network of Basin Organizations, and the World Water Council.

Proceedings were opened and moderated by Ms. Shweta Tyagi, Chief Functionary, India Water Foundation, who framed uneven progress on SDG 6 as rooted in fragmented ministries, financing and policy processes. Water was declared the invisible thread and 'operating system' of sustainable development by Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation, who urged it be reframed as economic infrastructure, a geopolitical bridge, and a matter of social justice.

Water was described as medicine, prevention and dignity by Sh. Amit Kumar Ghosh, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of



MAJOR EVENTS TWEET'S GALLERY

SPEAKER
DR. ARVIND KUMAR
President,
India Water Foundation



The crisis is not merely one of resources. It is a crisis of disconnected thinking. And this where the idea of water transversality becomes transformative. The future cannot be secured through isolated success stories. The scale of climate disruption demands a new governance imagination.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY 2020
#ClimateAction
#SDG15
UN CRIS
SIWI
High Level Policy Dialogue
Water
“Water Transversality for Climate Resilience & Biodiversity Restoration”
Organized by
India Water Foundation
3rd June 2020, 16:00 Hrs onwards (IST), Virtual (Zoom)

SPEAKER
DR. ARVIND KUMAR
President,
India Water Foundation



The defining question of this century may not be whether #humanity can adapt to #climatechange. It may be whether humanity can learn to reconnect the systems it has spent decades separating.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY 2020
#ClimateAction
#SDG15
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High Level Policy Dialogue
Water
“Water Transversality for Climate Resilience & Biodiversity Restoration”
Organized by
India Water Foundation
3rd June 2020, 16:00 Hrs onwards (IST), Virtual (Zoom)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
MR. AMIT GHOSH
Additional Chief Secretary,
Government of Uttar Pradesh, India



Uttar Pradesh is becoming a new model for healthcare services, ensuring advanced medical facilities reach district and tehsil levels. Integrating environmental health into these platforms through water quality monitoring, vector-borne disease surveillance, and climate-sensitive health risk mapping enables evidence-based, proactive interventions.

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Climate action and biodiversity conservation must be driven by systemic transformation anchored in local realities. All the stakeholders must deepen cross-sector collaboration, strengthen data-driven governance, and empower local communities so that our local actions coalesce into global impact for a more sustainable and equitable future.

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SPEAKER
MS. ASTRID SCHOMAKER
Executive Secretary,
Convention on Biological Diversity



Governments which adopted the KMGBF are in the driver's seat for its implementation. But governments cannot do it alone. This must also be an effort of all of us—citizens, businesses, civil society organizations.

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Executive Secretary,
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Implementation depends on action at all levels, global, regional, local efforts. Every local action matters, and every action is worth celebrating because together we can make a difference.

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SPEAKER
Ms. Helena Thybell
Executive Director
Stockholm International Water Institute



Inclusive, just, and equitable governance is not a value statement separate from effectiveness—it is a precondition for it. The communities managing rivers, floodplains, and groundwater are not only the implementation layer that global frameworks depend on; they hold the knowledge and experience essential for understanding local conditions and sustaining ecosystems.

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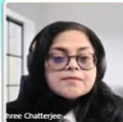
SPEAKER
Ms. Helena Thybell
Executive Director
Stockholm International Water Institute



If we are serious about transversality, we must stop treating water as a sector and start governing it as a system. Transversality in practice means treating water as the organizing thread that links climate, biodiversity, food, and health, and building that connection into the structures of governance itself.

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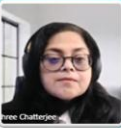
SPEAKER
Ms. Madhushree Chatterjee
Secretary - UN-Water and
Chief, Natural Resources and Inter-
linkages Branch (NRIB), UN DESA



Community-level water governance exerts a direct and measurable influence on ecological balance, resource efficiency, and resilience. Local interventions become global solutions when they are designed, owned, and sustained by the populations whose survival depends on them.

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Ms. Madhushree Chatterjee
 Secretary - UN-Water and
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 linkages Branch (NRIB), UN DESA



Water serves as the connective tissue across climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development frameworks. The challenge before policymakers is ensuring that governance systems, financing mechanisms, and implementation strategies reflect this interconnected reality.

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Organized by India Water Foundation

3rd June 2020, 16:00 Hrs onwards (IST), Virtual (Zoom)

SPEAKER
Prof. Rabi Mohtar
 Governor, World Water Council &
 Director, Texas Water Resources
 Institute, Texas A&M University



The nexus is not suffering from a lack of science. It is suffering from a lack of implementation. We have models, tools, trade-off analyses, hundreds of publications, and successful case studies. What is needed now is the political will and institutional mechanisms to scale them.

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SPEAKER
Prof. Rabi Mohtar
 Governor, World Water Council &
 Director, Texas Water Resources
 Institute, Texas A&M University



Green water, soil, food security, biodiversity, and climate resilience are not separate conversations. They are parts of the same system. The sooner governance, finance, and education reflect that reality, the sooner we can move from dialogue to transformation.

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SPEAKER
Mr. Nilesh Rajadhyaksha
 Country Programme Manager
 UN-HABITAT India, (UN Human
 Settlements Programme)



We must stop treating water as a service and start treating it as the DNA of urban planning. Land-use decisions, building regulations, infrastructure choices, and the relationship between cities and their water bodies will determine how resilient our cities become in a climate-challenged future.

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Mr. Nilesh Rajadhyaksha
 Country Programme Manager
 UN-HABITAT India, (UN Human
 Settlements Programme)



The moment we recognize blue-green infrastructure as real infrastructure, we unlock new possibilities for financing, governance, and long-term management. Nature-based solutions are not aesthetic additions to cities. They are foundational investments in resilience and water security.

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SPEAKER
Ms. Archana Chatterjee
 Programme Manager
 IUCN-India Country Office



All countries aspire to become multi-trillion-dollar economies. Achieving that ambition requires a new economic operating system—one that places nature and biodiversity at its core. The future belongs to development pathways that create prosperity while restoring ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, and strengthening climate resilience.

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SPEAKER
Ms. Archana Chatterjee
 Programme Manager
 IUCN-India Country Office



Urbanization is inevitable. The question is whether we can urbanize in a way that frees land for nature. The cities of the future must integrate biodiversity into their design, ensuring that economic growth, human well-being, and ecological integrity advance together.

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SPEAKER
Dr. Nidhi Nagabhatla
 United Nations University (UNU-CRIS),
 Belgium



Meaningful participation is not just about having people in the room. Those people need to be heard. Their gaps and needs must move from documents into action and from discourse into policy.

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SPEAKER
Dr. Nidhi Nagabhatla
 United Nations University (UNU-CRIS),
 Belgium



The inclusion of SDG 6 elevated the global discourse from water management to water security. Water security is not simply about access to water; it is about climate resilience, peace, political stability, transboundary cooperation, and sustainable development.

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MODERATOR
MS. SHWETA TYAGI
Chief Functionary,
India Water Foundation



Understanding and addressing the converging planetary crises of our time requires a shift from narrow, issue specific interventions to systemic and inclusive approaches. This shift entails acknowledging complex interdependencies, engaging diverse actors, and co-producing knowledge.

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MODERATOR
MS. SHWETA TYAGI
Chief Functionary,
India Water Foundation



Water Transversality provides a practical framework. Water must be recognized not only as a resource to be managed but as a strategic connector that can drive transformative action across the climate-biodiversity-development nexus that reflects the realities of a world in crisis.

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SPEAKER
DR. ARVIND KUMAR
President,
India Water Foundation



The global water crisis is no longer just an environmental challenge; it is an economic, social, and geopolitical imperative. With SDG 6 significantly off track, the path forward lies in collective action that treats water as economic infrastructure, a bridge for international cooperation, and a foundation for social justice. Water is not a problem to solve in isolation; it is the solution that connects every development agenda.

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Official Virtual Side Event of High Level Political Forum 2026
Date: 2nd July 2026, Time: 18:00 Hrs onwards (IST) (Virtual)
Organized by
India Water Foundation

SPEAKER
DR. ARVIND KUMAR
President,
India Water Foundation



As climate risks intensify, resilience will depend on our ability to integrate science, technology, finance, and inclusive decision making around a single reality: water is the operating system of climate resilience.

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SPEAKER
MR. AMIT GHOSH
Additional Chief Secretary,
Government of Uttar Pradesh, India



Water is medicine. Water is prevention. Water is dignity. Water is development. Achieving SDG6 means improving public health, strengthening climate resilience, advancing social equity, and protecting livelihoods. A Water Transversality approach unites water, health, sanitation, environment, and governance to build healthier, more resilient communities.

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MR. AMIT GHOSH
Additional Chief Secretary,
Government of Uttar Pradesh, India



Safe water is the first line of healthcare. From expanding tap water access and WASH services to strengthening disease surveillance, climate resilience, and community-led water governance, integrated action is transforming water into a catalyst for human security. Convergence not fragmentation is the pathway to accelerating SDG6.

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SPEAKER
DR. ERIC TARDIEU
Director General - International Office
of Water, Secretary General - INBO,
Vice President - World Water Council



“River basins are where Transversality becomes reality. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) at the basin scale supported by inclusive governance, shared data, cross-sector collaboration, and transboundary cooperation can accelerate #SDG6 while strengthening climate resilience, food security, and sustainable development.

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of Water, Secretary General - INBO,
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Data sharing is more than a technical exercise; it is the foundation of trust, better decision-making, and effective water governance. From basin organizations exchanging knowledge to integrating wastewater reuse, desalination, and water demand management, collaboration is transforming how the world secures its water future.

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SPEAKER
MR. SAMPATH KUMAR
Additional Chief Secretary,
CEO - MBDA
Government of Meghalaya, India



Climate change has rewritten the water narrative. Meghalaya one of the world's wettest regions is facing water scarcity, proving that rainfall alone does not guarantee water security. Through landscape-based planning, community stewardship. Payment for Ecosystem Services, and cross-sector collaboration, the state is demonstrating how multi-stakeholder partnerships can accelerate #SDG6 while strengthening livelihoods and climate resilience.

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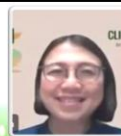


"No single institution can solve a systemic water crisis." Meghalaya's journey shows that lasting water security emerges when governments, communities, indigenous knowledge holders, development partners, and the private sector work together. From protecting living root bridge ecosystems to restoring catchments and creating green livelihoods, partnerships are transforming climate challenges into opportunities for resilient development.



SPEAKER
MS. MIO OKA

**Country Director – India
Asian Development Bank**

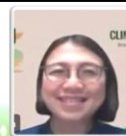


Water is not a standalone sector; it is the foundation of resilient economies, climate action, food security, healthy cities, and thriving ecosystems. Embedding water into agriculture, urban development, nature, and finance transforms water security into a driver of sustainable development.



SPEAKER
MS. MIO OKA

**Country Director – India
Asian Development Bank**



Accelerating SDG6 requires more than infrastructure; it demands innovative finance, integrated planning, and empowered communities. By blending public and private capital, strengthening local ownership, and placing women and vulnerable communities at the heart of water governance, we can build inclusive, climate-resilient development that leaves no one behind.



SPEAKER
MS. SONJA KOEPEL

**Secretary to the UNECE Water
Convention, UN Economic
Commission for Europe**



More than 60% of the world's freshwater crosses national borders, yet only a fraction of shared waters are governed through operational cooperation. Water diplomacy is not just about managing rivers—it is about advancing peace, climate resilience, food and energy security, and sustainable development. Strong institutions and transboundary partnerships are indispensable to accelerating SDG6.



SPEAKER
MS. SONJA KOEPEL

**Secretary to the UNECE Water
Convention, UN Economic
Commission for Europe**



Cooperation is the foundation of sustainable water governance. From transboundary river basins to national policy dialogues, lasting progress on SDG6 depends on inclusive institutions, continuous dialogue, shared data, and partnerships that unite governments, academia, civil society, development partners, and local communities. Water Transversality turns collaboration into action.



SPEAKER
PROF. DR. EDDY J. MOORS

**Former Rector
IHE Delft Institute for Water Education**



Achieving SDG6 is not only about building water infrastructure, it is about building human capacity. Education, public awareness, and continuous professional training are essential to equip societies with the knowledge, skills, and leadership needed to manage water sustainably and strengthen climate resilience.



SPEAKER
PROF. DR. EDDY J. MOORS

**Former Rector
IHE Delft Institute for Water Education**



The greatest investment in water may not be infrastructure alone, it is people. Embedding water, climate, cooperation, and sustainability into education while valuing social impact alongside financial returns can unlock lasting progress on SDG6. Water professionals, educators, and policymakers must shape the next generation of resilient water governance.



SPEAKER
DR. NEERA S. PRADHAN

**Water and DRR Lead
ICIMOD**



Water Transversality is not only horizontal, it is vertical. Every drop flows from glaciers to rivers to oceans, linking upstream ecosystems with downstream economies and communities. Protecting mountains means protecting water, food, energy, biodiversity, and the future of over 2 billion people. Climate resilience begins at the source.



SPEAKER
DR. NEERA S. PRADHAN

**Water and DRR Lead
ICIMOD**



A single glacier lake outburst flood can erase decades of water infrastructure investment. Disaster Risk Reduction must become a core pillar of Water Transversality—not an afterthought. And true inclusion starts by counting mountain and remote communities through disaggregated data, because those who are invisible in data are often invisible in policy.



SPEAKER

MS. ULRIKE KELM
Deputy Executive Director
International Water Resources
Association



Water is not simply another sector, it is the connector that links all Sustainable Development Goals. As climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and growing demand place unprecedented pressure on water resources, accelerating SDG6 requires stronger partnerships that bridge science, policy, practice, and communities. Water Transversality is the pathway from ambition to action.



SPEAKER

MS. ULRIKE KELM
Deputy Executive Director
International Water Resources
Association



The success of the 2026 UN Water Conference will not be measured by commitments alone, but by the partnerships strengthened, the knowledge shared, and the actions delivered afterwards. Governments, researchers, businesses, civil society, and international organizations each have a vital role, because water is our greatest connector.



SPEAKER

MR. ARCHISMAN MITRA
Senior Water Economist
The World Bank



Water is not a sectoral challenge; it is a systems challenge. Pipelines alone will not deliver SDG6. Communities must become decision-makers, public finance must de-risk private capital, and water accounting must become the operating system for every investment and policy decision. The future of water governance is systems thinking in action.



SPEAKER

MR. ARCHISMAN MITRA
Senior Water Economist
The World Bank



You cannot manage what you do not measure. Water accounting is the missing foundation of Integrated Water Resources Management; turning fragmented data into actionable decisions on allocation, investment, and resilience. Better data, stronger institutions, and empowered communities can unlock the transformation needed to accelerate SDG6.



MODERATOR

MS. SHWETA TYAGI
Chief Functionary,
India Water Foundation



SDG6 cannot be achieved through fragmented action. Water must move from being a standalone sector to becoming the foundation of climate action, biodiversity, food, energy, and economic planning. A Water Systems Partnership built on finance, innovation, science, and multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential to accelerate SDG6 and deliver lasting resilience.



MODERATOR

MS. SHWETA TYAGI
Chief Functionary,
India Water Foundation



The future of water governance depends on collaboration, not silos. Governments, development banks, the private sector, philanthropy, academia, and civil society must work together to unlock finance, share knowledge, strengthen institutions, and place water at the heart of climate and development policies. Together, we can transform today's water challenges into tomorrow's sustainable solutions.



SPEAKER

DR. ARVIND KUMAR
President,
India Water Foundation



Resilience depends not only on managing blue water, but also on understanding and governing green water, the water stored in soils, vegetation, and ecosystems that sustains agriculture, regulates rainfall patterns, supports biodiversity, and underpins climate stability.



SPEAKER

DR. ARVIND KUMAR
President,
India Water Foundation



As climate risks intensify, resilience will depend on our ability to integrate science, technology, finance, and inclusive decision making around a single reality: water is the operating system of climate resilience.



CHAIR ADDRESS

DR. RAJ BHUSHAN CHOUDHARY
Hon'ble Minister of State,
Ministry of Jal Shakti,
Government of India



Water is central to both our NDCs and NAPs frameworks. India's first national adaptation plan submitted to the UNFCCC in 2025 integrates water management into national planning designed as a dynamic science-led and community-informed process.



CHAIR ADDRESS
DR. RAJ BHUSHAN CHOUDHARY
 Hon'ble Minister of State,
 Ministry of Jal Shakti,
 Government of India



India's adaptation finance commitment has also grown from 3.7% of GDP in FY16 to 5.6% in FY22. Adaptation investment needs are projected at over 1 trillion dollar between 2015 and 2030 with water being atop priority on the mitigation front.

High Level Policy Dialogue
 "Cross-Sector Partnerships for Water security in a Climate Resilient World"
 (An official side event of the SB 64, UNFCCC)
 Berlin Room, World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB), Bonn, Germany
 Organized by
 India Water Foundation
 In Collaboration with
 Center for International Climate Research & AKO Foundation
 Tuesday, 10th June 2020, 15:00–16:15 CEST

SPEAKER
MR. SATYA TRIPATHI
 Secretary-General,
 Global Alliance for Sustainable Planet



If we truly value climate action, we must move beyond applauding grassroots champions and start rewarding them. The future of sustainability lies not only in innovation and finance, but in creating mechanisms that directly compensate those delivering measurable environmental outcomes on the ground.

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MR. SATYA TRIPATHI
 Secretary-General,
 Global Alliance for Sustainable Planet



The success of community-led natural farming in Andhra Pradesh demonstrates that climate resilience, water conservation, biodiversity restoration, and poverty reduction can advance together. The next frontier is scaling incentives through credible water credits and ecosystem markets that connect global water users with local communities safeguarding natural resources. Reward the champions, and transformation will follow.

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SPEAKER
DR. MARIANNE T. LUND
 Research Group Leader -
 Climate System, CICERO



Climate change is unfolding more rapidly than ever, with water being central. There are many complex human-induced drivers of change to the water cycle. As these change and interact, the future may bring new surprises.

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DR. MARIANNE T. LUND
 Research Group Leader -
 Climate System, CICERO



The knowledge basis and strategies for regional adaptation must be built on solid and comprehensive process understanding and collaboration and partnerships across sectors.

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SPEAKER
DR. BJØRN H. SAMSET
 Research Professor
 CICERO



Science is advancing rapidly in understanding how greenhouse gases, air pollution, and land use changes are reshaping the hydrological cycle. The next challenge is ensuring that this knowledge reaches policymakers and local communities in forms that drive effective adaptation and resilience.

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DR. BJØRN H. SAMSET
 Research Professor
 CICERO



The cross sector partnership that we really want to advocate at this time is a stronger link between science and the tools that we are now developing for translating our new knowledge about the patterns of the water cycle change and society.

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SPEAKER
MS. DAILE (IRIS) ZENG
 PhD Student, Faculty of Forestry and
 Environmental Stewardship,
 University of British Columbia;
 Intern, Mitigation Division, UNFCCC



Water security needs to be addressed at the watershed level, not only through infrastructure, but also through upstream ecosystem protection, monitoring, and emergency planning.

High Level Policy Dialogue
 "Cross-Sector Partnerships for Water security in a Climate Resilient World"
 (An official side event of the SB 64, UNFCCC)
 Berlin Room, World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB), Bonn, Germany
 Organized by
 India Water Foundation
 In Collaboration with
 Center for International Climate Research & AKO Foundation
 Tuesday, 10th June 2020, 15:00–16:15 CEST

MODERATOR
MS. SHWETA TYAGI
 Chief Functionary,
 India Water Foundation

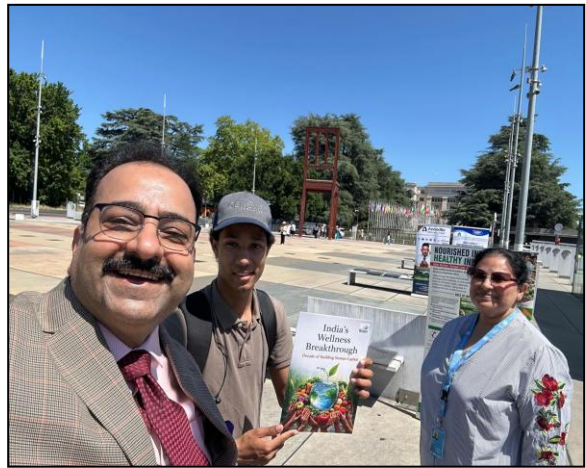
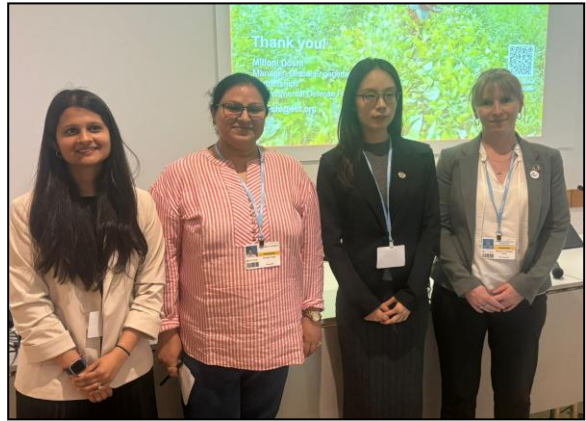


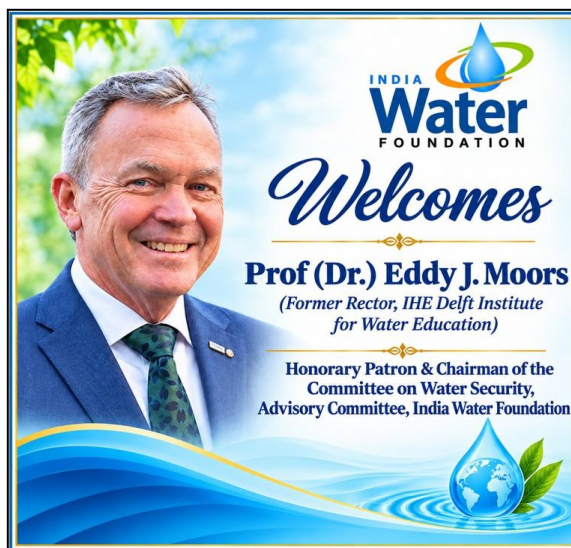
Even the most carefully designed policies and financing models will fall short if partnerships remain symbolic rather than operational. By integrating water, climate, agriculture, energy, health, and finance agendas, cross sector partnerships can mobilize investment, strengthen governance, accelerate innovation, and build resilient societies capable of securing water resources for present and future generations.

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