



Cause Because
The mainstream medium for everything alternative

What does it take to be *really* sustainable in a rapidly-changing world?

Let's hear it from these dynamic leaders

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Tata Power

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Vistara Airlines

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How human greed leads to pandemics

■ **Mahindra Holidays**
Sustainability done right?

■ **A model project**
Breakthrough



Aditya Birla Group: Making a life changing difference

We work in 7000 villages. Reach out to 9 million people. A glimpse:

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100,000 people trained in skill sets

45,000 women empowered through 4500 SHGs

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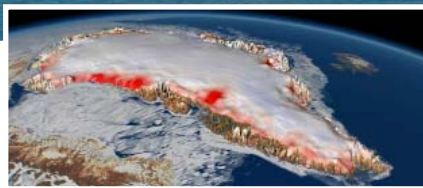
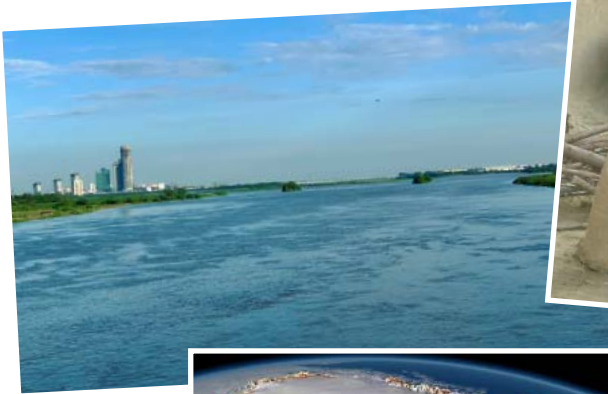
And much more is being done through the Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development, spearheaded by Mrs. Rajashree Birla. Because we care.

**NUMBERS MEAN A LOT
BUT A SMILE MEANS EVERYTHING!**



ADITYA BIRLA GROUP

Engage. Uplift. Empower



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Today, more of us know what only a few among us espoused earlier: which is that individual choices matter and it all adds up. If a hundred days (so to speak) of restrained activities and restrained consumption could help the environment recuperate somewhat, imagine what difference we can make if we make this the only way to be! We all will be better off in the long run and our children will thank us.

Feature Point

**Biodiversity loss and climate change:
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What this novel coronavirus has also revealed is the increasing precariousness of our relations with the environment and thereby with wildlife, drastically increasing our exposure to viruses of all types. It has also driven home the sobering point that unless there are concerted efforts to halt our encroachment of wildlife habitats and protect biodiversity, more pandemics are likely in the future.

The pandemic made 100+ millions poorer. What's the status of those in India? 34

Being a low middle-income country and home to a large percentage of the extremely poor, India of course is one of the most vulnerable countries. The worrisome reality for the government as well as the development sector is that for the first time in a generation the quest to end poverty in the country has suffered its worst setback.

Viewpoint

Artificial intelligence can make communities 'anti-fragile' 38

Most natural disasters are a direct result of the rapid rate and magnitude of climate change. We cannot beat the occurrences that nature throws at us, but we can make our communities anti-fragile. The human intellect and ability to innovate through hardship is the silver lining in an increasingly gloomy sky.

Can we make sustainable animal farming possible? 40

The world population is predicted to reach 9.7 billion by 2050. What does this mean from a nutritional perspective? Experts say this increase in population will lead to a 70%–80% increase in demand for animal-based food – this will place significant pressure on our planet's natural resources.

**What can we do (or not do) to keep air pollution down:
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One, don't go out as much. This isn't always very easy, but you anyway have to do this, and it does help with pollution. Two, if smoke is coming from your car, it means two things: your car is on fire, or the more likely situation, you are contributing to air pollution.

Corporate Focus

Mahindra Holidays: Sustainability done right? 44

As Mahindra Holidays has stated and shown, science-based targets help keep companies on track since they know what needs to be done in the short and medium term to meet the long-term vision. By committing to specific, time-bound environmental targets, the company is putting its money where its mouth is.

A Model Project

Breakthrough: Reshaping adolescents' attitudes and breaking gender norms 47

There are women and girls who, with their persistence and sheer determination, have been able to change the status quo and set shining examples of transformative social and behavioural change. One such example is that of a bunch of girls hailing from Murailapur, a relatively unknown, nondescript village in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Degrees of indifference, the age of social-media emotions, and other miscellaneous outpourings

In a fair, ideal sort of world, my Facebook post urging people to take an affirmative stand for the cause of good air to breathe will get at least a fourth of the likes/comments/shares conferred on a post celebrating the awesomeness of someone's child's (self-proclaimed) angelic smile/antics, or anniversary of marriages/vacations/other life landmarks. Of course I am all for commemorating life's little and big things and remembering all things past, which is by default golden. Just that I can't help wondering about the present and the future and about the big things – such as air, environment, equality, conscious citizenry, responsible and conscious consumption – that affect the little things that define our lives.

Many of us do. Wonder, I mean. And hence worry too. Having gone through a shift of pandemic proportions (pun clearly intended) in our lives, we have had time and reason to reflect, pause, breathe, think, all of which may have led to some resolutions in our minds about how we would like to be in the future. About how we can be in relation to others, how our actions tie in with those of others, how it is about more than you and I. Some say they will be more kind and empathetic from now on, some say they will become environment warriors, some are sure they won't be going back to the old ways of consuming and discarding, some have felt a pronounced need to slow down, and so it goes. For all of that though, there's no saying how the dynamics of the situation will change, and with that our responses.

That is the thing about the social-media age. There are other things too, but short shelf life and fleeting emotions are on the top of the list, if you ask me. Our emotion of the moment is shaped by the dominant discourse on our social media account timeline. We can't rejoice fully in one thing, because anger and indignation at a contrary point of view may be just around the next refresh button. Nor are we allowed to grieve fully, because distractions come at the rate of 60 check-ins/hour. We adopt a cause only to drop it like a piece of hot potato as soon as the next cause of the moment makes its touchdown.

Somewhere this morning a whole building fell on people. Some died, some are still trapped in the claustrophobic hell of mortar and debris, the others are crying and screaming or are struck dumb with the shock and unfairness of it all. Some of us who read the news are upset. Not for long though. Too much is happening all the time. Our emotions are scattered thin and our indignation and rants need to be distributed evenly enough.

While that building fell, I was asleep. Not like my being awake was going to change anything for those poor souls. But it reiterates the parallelness of our lives. Or our deaths even.

To repeat, our lives are truly parallel. They don't meet at all. We did not need a pandemic to tell us that, but we needed this pandemic to reiterate it, if you know what I mean. We all witnessed poverty in motion, and have been moved by it. Are those images already disappearing though? When the pandemic becomes a memory, will we still remember what we saw? Has something shifted within us? The world is not exactly the same anymore, but are we looking at it in just the same way as we did earlier? But maybe we are looking at a different world slightly differently and find that something has changed. For the good, is what one hopes.

Padma

Cover picture: Team CauseBecause



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Climate change affects right at conception



A new report claims that climate change has adverse effects on pregnant mothers who are more likely to have premature, underweight or stillborn children. The research by JAMA Network Open, part of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, provides evidence that exposure to air pollution and heat exacerbated by climate change may be significantly associated with risk to pregnancy outcomes in the United States.

The report looked at more than 32 million births across 57 studies published since 2007 and found a high likelihood that heat, ozone, or fine particulate matter impact pregnancy outcomes. It also found that African-American mothers and babies have a much higher chance of being affected than the population at large. This adds to the growing consensus that minorities and marginalised groups are disproportionately at higher risk of climate change effects.

The paper examined 10 studies that surveyed the association between heat exposure and outcomes such as preterm birth and low birth weight, with nine of the 10 articles finding a significant association between exposure to heat during pregnancy and such births. Studies also showed that maternal exposure to particulate matter (pollutants) and ozone increases the risk of such outcomes. Racial disparities were one of the key findings: 10 studies reported increased risk of preterm birth among mothers in minority groups, with 8 of the studies noting higher risk for Black mothers. Similar results were seen for low birth weight outcome. Mothers with asthma were at particularly high risk, along with Black mothers. Heat exposure was found to negatively impact births in multiple studies.

Rupa Basu, one of the paper's authors and chief of the air and climate epidemiological section for the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment in California, said that the racial disparities are likely due to several systemic problems such as Black and other minorities living closer to power plants and other sources of air pollution, less likely to afford air conditioning, having less access to healthcare, and not receiving equal levels of treatment. ■

Utilities need to turn over a green leaf

A new study has found that only 1 in 10 of the world's electric utility companies is prioritising clean renewable energy over fossils fuels. The research by the University of Oxford and published in the journal *Nature Energy* states that a majority of the 3,000 utilities under consideration are still persisting with non-renewables and some are even expanding their investment in such energy sources. Three-quarters of the utilities did not expand their energy portfolios, making little change to it over the years.

Of the remaining one-fourth, few companies grew their coal portfolio compared to other assets, while half prioritised gas and the rest focused on renewables growth. Ominously, 60 per cent of the utilities that are actively growing their renewables capacity had not ceased expanding their fossil-fuel portfolio. Only 15 per cent have reduced the latter. Just 10 per cent of the companies are expanding their renewable energy capacity at a faster rate than that for their fossil fuels. This is especially concerning since utilities need to urgently transition to clean energy if the worst of climate change is to be averted. The author of the report, Galina Alova, said the research highlighted 'a worrying gap between what is needed' to tackle the climate crisis and 'what actions are being taken by the utility sector'.



The study used a machine-learning technique to analyse the investment strategies and activities of more than 3,000 companies over the past two decades. It is the first study to investigate electric utilities on a global scale. Many of the industry giants are investing in low-carbon energy and green technologies to replace their fossil fuel power plants. However, evidence suggests that many utilities are still committed to fossil fuels and are yet to embark on meaningful changes to their portfolios.

The report found that 10 per cent of utilities favoured expanding their gas portfolio. Most are US utilities, due to the country's shale gas reserves, followed by Russia and Germany. In some good news, only 2 per cent of utilities are prioritising their coal-fired power capacity ahead of renewables or gas. Many of these are Chinese utilities, which contribute more than 60 per cent, followed by India and Vietnam. A majority of companies that are prioritising renewable energy are based in Europe. ■



The one per cent are occupying the carbon budget

The richest one per cent of the world's population were responsible for more than twice the amount of carbon dioxide emissions as the poorer half of the world from 1990 to 2015, according to a new report by Oxfam and the Stockholm Environment Institute. In fact, while carbon emissions rose by 60 per cent over this period, the total increase in emissions of the one per cent was three times more than that of the poorest 50 per cent. The report was released in time for the annual UN General Assembly that met to discuss global challenges including the climate crisis.

According to the report, 'Confronting Carbon Inequality', rampant overconsumption and the rich world's reliance on high-carbon transport, such as SUVs and flights, are exhausting the world's carbon budget. The carbon budget is the amount of carbon dioxide that can be still added to the atmosphere without causing global temperatures to rise above 1.5 °C – the limit set by the Paris Agreement.

The research found that:

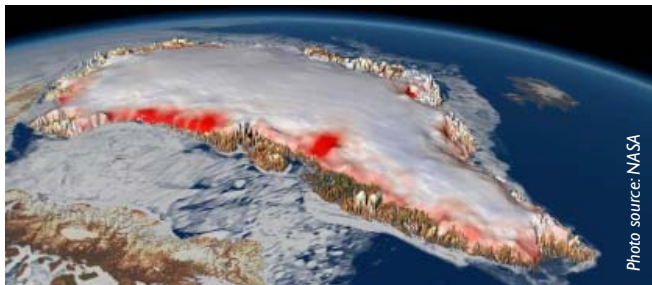
- The richest 10 per cent accounted for over half (52 per cent) of the emissions between that period, with the wealthiest one per cent responsible for 15 per cent of emissions, which is more than twice that of the poorest half of the world's population (7 per cent).
- The richest 10 per cent took up one-third of the remaining global 1.5 °C carbon budget, compared to 4 per cent for the poorest half of the population.
- The richest 5 per cent were responsible for over a third (37 per cent) of the annual emissions growth of 60 per cent between 1990 and 2015.

The report warned that if emissions are not reduced drastically and carbon inequality is left unaddressed, the remaining carbon budget will be spent by 2030. More worryingly, even if all other emissions were cut to zero, the richest 10 per cent would still deplete the carbon budget by 2033 at current rates. It estimates that the per-capita emissions of that group will need to be around 10 times lower by 2030, equivalent to cutting global annual emissions by a third, to avoid a global temperature rise of more than 1.5 °C.

The poorest 50 per cent of the world comprised approximately 3.1 billion people on average between 1990 and 2015, while the richest 10 per cent were 630 million people, the richest 5 per cent 315 million people, and the richest one per cent 63 million people (all approximate figures).

Tim Gore, Head of Climate Policy at Oxfam and author of the report, said: 'The over-consumption of a wealthy minority is fuelling the climate crisis, yet it is poor communities and young people who are paying the price. Such extreme carbon inequality is a direct consequence of our governments' decades-long pursuit of grossly unequal and carbon-intensive economic growth. Governments must curb the emissions of the wealthy through taxes and bans on luxury carbon such as SUVs and frequent flights. Revenues should be invested in public services and low-carbon sectors to create jobs and help end poverty.' ■

Rising sea levels now an inevitability



The Greenland Ice Sheet has melted to a point of no return. In a paper published in *Nature*, researchers at Ohio State University found that even if global warming were to stop today, the sheet would still disintegrate. Greenland's ice sheet releases more than 280 billion metric tons of melting ice into the ocean each year, making it the single greatest contributor to global sea level rise.

The paper, 'Dynamic ice loss from the Greenland Ice Sheet driven by sustained glacier retreat', found that Greenland's glaciers are rapidly shrinking and at this point, the snowfall that replenishes the ice sheet each year is not enough to counterbalance the ice that is flowing into the ocean. Relying on more than three decades of observational data, the study found that the ice sheet is losing mass at accelerated rates. Specifically after 2000, the ice sheet began losing mass permanently. In fact, the amount of ice that has disappeared is so huge that it has caused a noticeable change in the gravitational field over the island.

Michalea King, lead author of the study and a researcher at Ohio State University's Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center, said, 'We've been looking at these remote sensing observations to study how ice discharge and accumulation have varied. And what we've found is that the ice that's discharging into the ocean is far surpassing the snow that's accumulating on the surface of the ice sheet.'

By analysing satellite data from more than 200 large glaciers draining into the ocean around Greenland, researchers could assess how much ice breaks off into icebergs or melts from the glaciers into the ocean, the amount of snowfall each year, and how these glaciers get replenished. The amount of ice being lost each year started increasing steadily around 2000 – estimated to be about 500 gigatons each year. At the same time, snowfall did not increase but the rate of ice loss stayed about the same over the last decade. This means that the ice sheet has been losing ice more rapidly than it's being replenished. It is now at the point of no return – to reiterate, even if global warming were to completely stop, the sheet will still keep shrinking.

The melting ice in Greenland already contributes more than a millimetre rise to sea level every year and this will only increase with a gradually warming planet. Sea levels are projected to rise by more than 3 feet by the end of the century which will mean that many coastal cities and low-lying island nations are likely to go underwater. It should be noted that Greenland is the largest ice sheet on the planet after Antarctica. ■

The biggest cities in the world unite for a green cause

On 22nd September, 12 cities pledged to divest from fossil fuel companies and advocate for greater sustainable investment, as part of their commitment to accelerating a green and just recovery from Covid-19. Part of the C40, which is a 'network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change,' this declaration represents over 36 million city residents. Signatories pledged to use their financial resources to promote a just and clean energy transition through concrete actions at the city, national and international levels.

C40's declaration, 'Divesting from Fossil Fuels, Investing in a Sustainable Future,' brings together mayors of some of the world's largest and most influential cities such as New York, London, Berlin, Cape Town, Durban, Milan and Vancouver. The declaration is: 'Now is the time to divest from fossil fuel companies and undertake investment and policy change that prioritises public and planetary health, building back a more equal society and addressing this climate emergency.'

The mayors have pledged to take one or more actions to increase green investments and divest from fossil fuels. Some of these actions include increasing investments in the green economy and encouraging the city pension fund to develop a policy to divest from fossil fuel companies and to invest in climate solutions.

Earlier this year, C40 mayors called on national governments to end public investments in fossil fuels in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the C40 World Mayors Summit in Copenhagen in October last year, the Global Green New Deal was announced which committed to protecting the environment, strengthening the economy, and building more equitable communities through inclusive climate action. ■



Plastic plastic everywhere, no water to drink



A new study has found that about 14 million tonnes of microplastic reside on the ocean floor. This conservative estimate was reached by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, or C.S.I.R.O., Australia's national science agency. This estimate ranges from 9.25 million to 15.87 million tons of microplastics or 8.4 to 14.4 million tonnes. Microplastics are fragments of plastic measuring between five millimetres and one micrometre and have received less attention than single-use plastic products even though they can be equally toxic.

The estimates are far more than those for plastic on the ocean's surface and equivalent to 18–24 shopping bags full of small plastic fragments for every foot of coastline on every continent except for Antarctica. Millions of tons of plastic enter the world's water bodies with numbers ranging from 4.4 million to 8.8 million tons annually.

Microplastics find their way to the ocean floors and due to their size, are often ingested by plankton and fish which can then end up in the human food chain. The study aimed to find out the extent of microplastic pollution in deeper areas of the oceans since 'this knowledge is imperative for predicting the distribution and potential impacts of global plastic pollution.'

The researchers quantified microplastics in deep-sea sediments from the Great Australian Bight using an adapted density separation and dye fluorescence technique, analysing sediment cores from six locations, ranging from 288 to 356 km from the Australian coastline. They found substantially higher microplastic counts than recorded in other similar analyses of deep-sea sediments, with the number of such fragments increasing as surface plastic counts increased, and as the seafloor slope angle increased.

The presence of microplastics in deep-sea locations underscore the fact that plastic pollution in the marine environment is a bigger problem than previously estimated. ■

Clean green, clean better

Unilever has pledged to eliminate fossil fuel-based ingredients from its cleaning products by 2030. As part of a €1 billion Clean Future initiative that also aims to help the company cut the use of virgin plastic in half, the company plans to replace all of the fossil fuel-based carbon in its cleaning products with renewable or recycled carbon. This is part of the company's commitment to eliminate carbon emissions from its products by 2039 and develop renewable or recycled alternatives to chemicals derived from the oil industry.

Almost half of the carbon footprint of the company's cleaning products is from oil-based ingredients, so by investing in green alternatives, it expects to reduce their environmental impact by up to 20 per cent. The investment in research and development for eco-products is in addition to the €1 bn Unilever has

already committed over the next decade for environmental projects that will improve the 'health of the planet'. It has also pledged to reduce the amount of plastic waste that its products generate. However, the company hasn't set a goal for replacing fossil-based carbon in personal-care products.

The company is using a system which it calls a 'carbon rainbow' to colour-code sources of carbon. Unilever is currently working with a company that makes surfactants, an ingredient used to help wash away dirt, to source it from plastic waste wherein the plastic is broken down into its original components and then reprocessed into a biodegradable surfactant. Other new sources that are being explored include captured carbon which the company is beginning to use as a source of soda ash (another ingredient in detergent) and palm oil-



based chemicals. Other ingredients will come from plants, algae and bacteria.

Peter ter Kulve, Unilever's president of home care, says, 'We've heard time and time again that people want more affordable sustainable products that are just as good as conventional ones. Rapid developments in science and technology are allowing us to do this, with the promise of exciting new benefits for the people who use our products, from ultra-mild cleaning ingredients to self-cleaning clothes and surfaces.' ■

DSM launches an initiative to make animal farming sustainable, in line with SDGs

The initiative, called We Make it Possible, will lead a 'robust and achievable transformation' worldwide in sustainable animal protein production, and accelerate solutions that will foster a brighter future, as per the official press release issued by DSM Animal Nutrition and Health.

As the world's population grows, demand for animal protein will continue to rise. Over time, this need for ever-increasing quantities of animal protein, which is already placing tremendous pressure on our planet's finite natural resources, will lead to significant environmental strain, and take our food systems well beyond the planet's boundaries. The need to provide enough animal protein for a growing population, while reducing the environmental costs of farming will require smart science and innovative solutions. And DSM's initiative means to rise to this challenge.

Stating that 'the agriculture industry can transform itself from within,' DSM's Animal Nutrition and Health President Ivo Lansbergen articulates: 'For too long, sustainability has been someone else's problem, a problem for tomorrow. But it is not an impossible challenge. We believe we can make animal farming sustainable. Our need is to be providing a decent living for farmers and affordable proteins to the world population, all while reducing the footprint of animal farming. We Make it Possible is a commitment to tangible and actionable solutions that cater to the customers we care most about: people and planet earth.'

'This strategic initiative reflects our commitment not only to be part of the value chain but to be a change agent,

steering the global conversations, connecting the various stakeholders of the farming ecosystem, thinking ahead, generating ideas and new ways of working. If not now, when?'

Aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and wellbeing), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action), and 14 (life below water), the initiative is driven by six sustainability platforms that will address the major challenges facing the animal farming industry. These are:

- Improving the lifetime performance of farm animals
- Improving the quality of food (i.e., meat, milk, fish, eggs), while reducing food loss and waste
 - Reducing emissions from livestock
 - Making efficient use of natural resources
 - Reducing the reliance on marine resources
 - Helping tackle antimicrobial resistance

'By applying our science, innovation and sustainability leadership behind these key areas, we believe we can make a substantial difference to the sustainability of the animal protein industry,' says David Nickell, VP of Sustainability & Business Solutions at DSM Animal Nutrition and Health. 'At DSM, we are taking responsibility for our own role in protecting the planet, and have and continue to develop business solutions that enable the industry to make affordable and measurable improvements in the sustainability of animal protein, and we hope that many others will follow suit.' ■



Cognizant and Grundfos: On a mission to restore Chennai's Sembakkam Lake



Cognizant and Grundfos have announced funding support for the restoration of the Sembakkam Lake in Chennai. While Cognizant, one of the world's leading professional services companies, will contribute over INR 2.7 crores (approx. USD 360,000), Grundfos will contribute INR 1.7 crores (approx. USD 230,000) and up to INR 7.5 lakhs (approx. USD 10,000) in kind for civil works, wastewater treatment, and landscaping to rejuvenate the 100-acre lake that flows into the Pallikaranai wetland, one of South India's last remaining natural marshlands.

The two companies will collaborate with the India chapter of The Nature Conservancy, one of the world's largest conservation organisations, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, and Chennai-based Care Earth Trust, a non-governmental organisation that works in the area of biodiversity conservation.

Expected to be completed in 2021, the work will involve cleaning the inlets and outlets, improving the lake's connectivity with upstream and downstream water bodies, building an ecofriendly wastewater-treatment system, and constructing walkways and green buffer zones along the lake.

The project will help clear the lake of solid wastes, silt and invasive plant

species, improve the lake's storage capacity by 50 per cent, enhance groundwater recharge, and improve water quality. It is expected to benefit over 10,000 households living around the lake and conserve the local biodiversity consisting of around 180 plant species (including 11 aquatic species) and more than 65 bird species. One of the goals of the project is to provide a natural recreational space to the local community and involve them in the maintenance of the water body.

In addition, after the Covid-19 situation improves, volunteers from Cognizant Outreach, Cognizant's employee-led volunteering programme, and Grundfos, together with project partners, will organise community engagement and awareness initiatives, expert talks, lake festivals and tree-planting drives to ensure long-term impact of the restoration project.

Poul Due Jensen, group executive vice president, CSO, Grundfos, said, 'We are also committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals #6 (Water and Sanitation) and we have set very ambitious and concrete goals for ourselves. By 2030, Grundfos will save 50 billion cubic metres of fresh water through efficiency and treatment and will have contributed to providing safely managed drinking water to 300 million

people in need. Our support towards the restoration of the Sembakkam Lake is aligned with delivering on these objectives. By restoring this lake, we are not only strengthening its ecosystem, but also the connection between people and nature by providing a platform to connect them with the waterbody and its habitat.'

Muthu Kumaran, global head of delivery for Cognizant Digital Business and the head of Cognizant's Chennai operations, said, 'We are pleased to be a part of this much-needed lake rejuvenation project as part of our commitment to a greener, healthier, more sustainable environment. The Sembakkam Lake is one of Chennai's 54 interconnected lakes of the Pallikaranai watershed basin that are critical to the city's water security and resilience to floods and droughts. We believe this initiative has the potential to become an inspiring example of how the coming together of various stakeholders for a rejuvenation project of this scale can redefine the future sustainability of urban ecology.'

As per Seema Paul, managing director of The Nature Conservancy's India Program, the project will deploy 'science-based and nature-led solutions using constructed wetland systems that use minimal energy, require zero chemical additives, and are inexpensive for wastewater treatment at the lake.' ■

Blue Dart: Greening up the Kanha–Pench Corridor

Blue Dart Express Ltd, one of India's leading express logistics service providers and part of the Deutsche Post DHL Group (DPDHL), has announced that it will plant 111,000 trees on the Kanha-Pench Corridor in CY 2020. This will be done in collaboration with Grow-Trees.

The 111,000 trees are expected to offset 2,222,000 kg of carbon per year on maturity (*maturity of trees varies from species to species; usually for forestry species it is 7–8 years and depends on various factors like soil condition, climatic variations, etc.*). The trees being planted include indigenous species like tamarind, shisham (North Indian rosewood), siras (frywood), teak wood, karanj (Indian beech), custard apple, ber (Indian plum), kateswari (red silk cotton), kashid (yellow cassia), wood apple, and amla (Indian gooseberry).

Preserving the ecosystem around the corridor, rebuilding wildlife habitats and supporting tribal communities along with

aiding in increasing the forest reserve in the country are some of the objectives of the programme.

Blue Dart had earlier planted 222,000 trees in the Kanha-Pench Corridor. The company claims that this has helped revive the biodiversity of the region as well as reduced man-animal conflict while providing direct employment to over 70 families every year, creating around 5,600 workdays during pit digging and planting activities alone.

Commenting on the initiative, Balfour Manuel, MD, Blue Dart Express Ltd, says, 'Our Group-wide environmental protection program GoGreen's main objective is to reduce and/or avoid emissions of greenhouse gases and to protect and preserve our environment. Planting these 111,000 trees is another step in this direction and is our effort to make the logistics sector greener and more sustainable. We will continue to find ways to eradicate waste and retain more value in our products in 2020.'

Bikrant Tiwary, CEO, Grow-Trees.com, is confident that 'the trees planted in the region will provide the resources required to sustain the tiger population in the forests, while also benefitting the rural communities.' He draws attention to how deforestation has led the wildlife in Pench Tiger Reserve to enter villages, often leading to injuries in both animals and villagers as well as disruption in agricultural activities.

The region marked as the Pench Tiger Reserve is home to a significant population of India's tigers and ranked among the world's most important tiger habitats. The purpose of choosing the wildlife corridor between Pench and Kanha National Park for this year's drive was to allow the tiger population residing in the region more mobility, which in turn improves their chances of survival and growth. The trees planted on the periphery of the Pench Tiger Reserve, in and around the Karwahi village, will secure the habitat of the tiger as

well as provide ample forest-based resources to tribal groups living in these areas and dependent on trees for food, fuel and livelihood.

Responding to CauseBecause's query on the strategy for ensuring survivability of the saplings, the spokesperson informs that apart from planting saplings of indigenous (local) species, guidance is also sought from experts who are familiar with the bio-climatic conditions of the area. Also, planting is done only in monsoon for greater survivability. Saplings are at least six months old at the time of planting.

'The whole idea behind the project is to let the saplings grow naturally,' the spokesperson says. The site supervisor along with villagers monitor the saplings for about a year, until the company conducts an external audit. After the audit, the dead saplings are replanted one time and the project is handed over to the gram panchayat for further monitoring. Additionally, in areas of adverse survival conditions, the strategy adopted is of 1+3 planting, wherein one main sapling is planted along with 3 seeds of the local species which have been successful in surviving the given ecological conditions.

As per the audit report (dated 13 September 2019), the survival rate is 98% for the 111,000 trees planted in 2017–18 monsoon. For the saplings planted in the 2019 monsoon, an audit was scheduled this year but has been delayed due to the pandemic. ■



Hindalco: From mud waste to useful cement

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between Hindalco Industries Ltd, one of the global leaders in aluminium and copper, and UltraTech Cement Ltd, India's largest manufacturer of cement, as per which Hindalco will deliver 1.2 million metric tonnes of red mud (also known as bauxite residue) annually to UltraTech's 14 plants located across 7 states. Both companies are part of the Aditya Birla Group.

Hindalco is now the world's first company to achieve 100 per cent red mud utilisation. Hindalco is supplying red mud to UltraTech Cement plants where it has been proved to be an effective substitute for mined materials, successfully replacing up to 3 per cent of clinker raw mix volume. Use of red mud reduces the cement industry's dependence on natural resources. Through this MoU, both companies hope to promote a circular economy.

According to the company, this is a major step in reducing the cement industry's dependence on mined material. Red mud generated in the alumina manufacturing process is rich in iron oxides, along with alumina, silica and alkali. The cement industry has developed the capability to process red mud as a replacement for mined minerals such as laterite and lithomarge in its process.

Hindalco's alumina refineries are currently supplying 250,000 metric tonnes of bauxite residue to 40 cement plants every month, making Hindalco the world's first company to have enabled such large-scale commercial application of bauxite residue. This year, Hindalco aims to achieve 2.5 million metric tonnes of bauxite residue utilisation. Hindalco also supplies to companies such as ACC, Jaypee, Heidelberg Cement, Ambuja Cement, Dalmia Cement, and JSW Cement.

Globally, 160 million metric tonnes of red mud is produced annually and stored in large tracts of land. The current practice for all domestic aluminium producers has been to store red mud in ponds close to the refineries.

As informed by the company spokesperson in response to queries from CauseBecause, Hindalco has invested over five years of time and intensive R&D effort to identify and demonstrate a permanent and sustainable solution for the disposal of bauxite residue, one that can be used by the aluminium industry worldwide. Hindalco has invested in infrastructure and collaborated with cement companies, with UltraTech Cement being a key partner. Last year, UltraTech consumed about 15.73 million metric tonnes of industrial waste as alternate raw material and about 300,000 metric tonnes as alternative fuel in its kilns.

As per the spokesperson, the global cement industry is researching a few other applications of red mud to make a special type of cement. In one case, 10–30 per cent of red mud is being explored to replace the limestone itself, while in another it is being used as a special cementitious material where it will replace fly ash. Both of these are in the initial research phase. Use of bauxite residue in cement making can play an important role in the long-term sustainability of aluminium and cement industries.

In a press release, Satish Pai, managing director at Hindalco, says, 'Hindalco has been working with cement companies to develop high-grade inputs for the construction industry. Hindalco has built a strong customer base and supplies red mud to over 40 cement plants every month. We have achieved 100% red mud utilisation at three of our refineries and our vision is to achieve zero-waste alumina production across our operations. Hindalco's actions underscore our commitment to embracing solutions that have the potential to deliver long-term sustainability impact and transform the future.'

KC Jhanwar, managing director, UltraTech Cement, says that with the annual supply of 1.2 million metric tonnes of red mud from Hindalco, 'we expect to conserve more than 1 million metric tonnes of mined natural resources like laterite in our manufacturing process.' ■





Mahindra Group turns 75

On 2nd October, as the Mahindra Group commemorated its 75th anniversary, its employees pledged to contribute 750,000 hours volunteering to increase the well-being of communities in India and around the world, as part of Mahindra's global celebration of the 'Spirit of Service'.

The campaign 'My Seva' aims to inspire employees to celebrate and devote time in acts of kindness throughout the year. It will provide employees with a platform to share their personal stories of volunteering and will be run along with the company's Employee Social Options (ESOPs) volunteering programme.

Additionally, Mahindra Group is launching the #RiseUpChallenge which is based on the insight that music has been a sanctuary for many people during the ongoing pandemic. The Group is launching a new video film that will focus on its corporate purpose 'Rise' and celebrate the hope and optimism of individuals to win and overcome challenges. This social media-first campaign will challenge people to watch the video, make their own video, and upload it or share it on their social handles with the hashtag #RiseUpChallenge. The idea is to get people to share their #RiseUpChallenge home videos and inspire themselves and others during these difficult times.

In response to CB's queries, a Group spokesperson clarifies that the volunteering hours pledged as part of the campaign will be collated between 2 October 2020 and 2 October 2021.

As communicated by the spokesperson, the Group's ESOPs projects fall in the domain of welfare of girls, youth and farmers, specifically in the areas of education, health and environment. Through the MySeva platform, individual acts by employees across the Group will be recognised, showcased and celebrated.

In a press release shared with CB, Anand Mahindra, chairman, Mahindra Group, said, 'The Mahindra Group has remained resilient and thrived over the past 75 years by staying true to its core values and high standards of corporate governance every single day. These values seek to drive positive change in the lives of our stakeholders and the communities we serve around the world, while ensuring we remain agile and future-ready. I am filled with enthusiasm and gratitude as we make this commitment toward giving back to the community, in a particularly tough year for humanity.' ■

Tata Chemicals: Training the next generation of apprentices

On July 15, Tata Chemicals' flagship Apprenticeship Training School (ATS) in Mithapur observed World Youth Skills Day. Established in 1954, this school has trained lakhs of young people to develop skills that make them employable in any manufacturing industry across sectors. To encourage students, the company offers them stipend during the course as per the Apprenticeship Act.

The company spokesperson informs CauseBecause that the programme is currently offered in Mithapur, location of the company's biggest plant, but students from other parts of the country are eligible to join. The course is offered free of cost to students and placement is provided in industries across the country. The average starting salary of students ranges from INR 2 lakh to 3 lakh per annum, depending on the nature of the industry and place of posting.

According to the company, students who complete their course at ATS are in demand for their skills, securing employment in several leading industries. The ATS strives to empower local youth by ensuring that 75–80 per cent of its students are locals. Currently, the ATS has 187 students in various trades of maintenance and operations. These include boiler attendants, electricians, fitters, instrument technicians and computer operators. The faculty has industry experience so that students can understand the practical requirements.

In a press release shared with CB, R Nanda, chief human resources officer, Tata Chemicals, said, 'In a post-COVID-19 world, as young people are called upon to contribute to the recovery effort, they will need to be equipped with the skills to successfully manage evolving challenges and the resilience to adapt to future disruptions. Initiatives like the our Apprentice Training School will continue to encourage the youth to follow the right direction and give them hope in a world filled with uncertainties. At Tata Chemicals, we have been committed to support the livelihoods of the local community by way of providing skill training for years. It is the reaffirmation of our commitment to train and develop the local youths in the skills required for a resurgent India.' ■



Sightsavers: Helping avoid avoidable blindness

Sightsavers, with the support of Standard Chartered Bank (SCB), has launched an Urban Eye Health Programme called Amrita Drishti in Kanpur and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. The intervention primarily focuses on increasing uptake of eye-health services through vision centres in slum communities, provisioning of eye-health services as part of health systems, and developing a favourable policy environment through engagement of urban local bodies. SCB's participation is under its Seeing is Believing global initiative to tackle avoidable blindness and visual impairment.

Kanpur and Prayagraj are the largest cities covered under the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) by the Government of Uttar Pradesh and are inhabited by many slum dwellers. Sightsavers has been working in these two cities and established a network of partner hospitals and organisations in the area of eye health. The organisation has collaborated with SCB to make eye-care services available for people from the lowest economic strata. A total of 10 vision centres were inaugurated across these two cities in the first week of October.



The overall goal of this project is to contribute to the reduction of avoidable blindness in the urban slums of these two cities in Uttar Pradesh. It will target a population of 637,000 people living in the urban slums of Kanpur and 680,000 people in the urban slums of Prayagraj. The project will work within WHO's health systems framework including human resource development, infrastructure with technological development, health financing, medicines, consumables, health information systems and service delivery. The intervention will address the issues of cataract, refractive error and diabetic retinopathy.

In response to CB's questions, RN Mohanty, CEO, Sightsavers India, informs

that the services in the vision centres are provided at a small subsidised cost. Patients receive free services at the camps organised in the vicinity of the vision centres. The project is planned in a way that it can become self-sustaining after three years of support. There are plans to increase eye-care services and expand the geographical coverage in the cities after a few years.

Mohanty clarifies that while the bank's support is primarily related to funding, the project will provide opportunities for SCB staff to engage in activities related to the cause. For instance, they can participate in community eye screening and surgical support services in the project area. ■

Fujifilm India: Taking on child sexual abuse

Fujifilm India Private Limited, in collaboration with Parwarish Cares Foundation, is running an awareness programme on child sexual abuse through a series of online educational workshops, #AaoBaatKarein. The programme is part of the company's 'Never Stop' philosophy to fight child abuse.

The company claims that the programme educated around 3,500 children in over 20 schools in its first phase. The second phase has commenced this year and the company is reaching out to more number of schools.

According to the company, child sexual abuse is a pressing human rights issue and a public health concern. Despite continuous efforts, children are still devoid of education and consciousness around this issue. The focus of the workshops is on imparting awareness around the difference between safe and unsafe touch and the ways children can communicate with their parents about this issue.

On future expansion plans, Haruto Iwata, managing director, Fujifilm India, informs CauseBecause that the company is

looking to expand and reach more places and schools, the vision being to ultimately reach each child in the country. Since February 2020, there have been 81 sessions (till 12 October 2020). On impact assessment, the company measures it in terms of the number of children impacted, which it claims is 7,031 till now. To evaluate post-workshop awareness, students are made to recap the lessons at the end of the session, and the whole session is made interactive wherein they share their previous knowledge and learnings. ■



Juicy Chemistry, if you are looking for organic, chemical-free cosmetics

Juicy Chemistry claims to be India's first complete product range to be certified as organic by Ecocert (France) in accordance with COSMOS, a globally recognised standard in the cosmetics industry. From product formulation and ingredient sourcing to filling and packaging, every aspect of Juicy Chemistry meets the most stringent criteria stipulated by COSMOS to safeguard consumers' health as well as the health of our planet.

The brand offers products in the following categories:

1. **Face:** Cleansers, toners, moisturisers, facial oils, eye creams and roll-ons, lip care, scrubs, face masks, dusting powders, makeup cleansers
2. **Body:** Gourmet soaps, body wash, body moisturisers, bath and body oils, deodorants, body scrubs, bath salts, dusting powders
3. **Hair:** Oils, masques, shampoos, conditioners
4. **Aromatherapy:** Cold-pressed oils, essential oils, incense sticks
5. **Junior care:** Baby body wash, baby butter cream, baby soap, diaper rash balm, baby massage oil



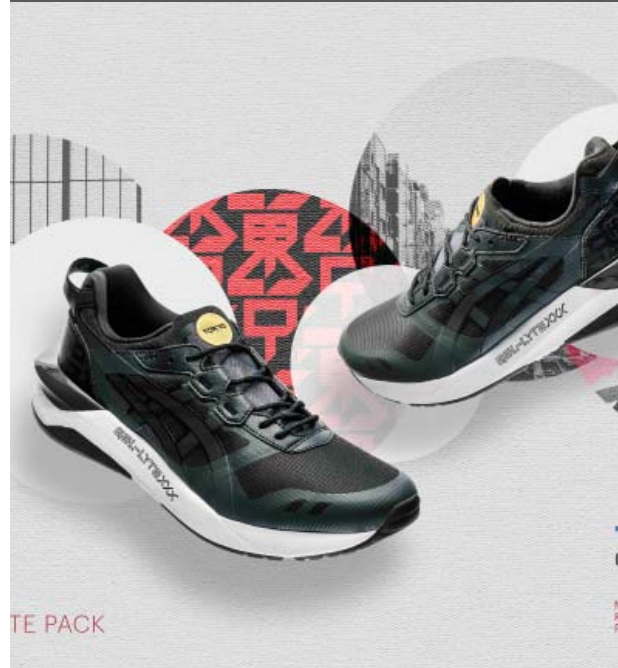
6. **Personal care accessories:** Wooden comb, wooden spoon, soap dish, natural loofah, baby mitt

Intensive research into essential oils and traditional skincare ingredients forms the foundation of Juicy Chemistry's products. The natural and sustainably sourced ingredients are devoid of chemicals or preservatives. As per the spokesperson, the company's manufacturing processes and formulations are designed in a manner that leads to no harm to nature. The products are completely biodegradable. The packaging is minimal, biodegradable, reusable and recyclable.

The company has scouted the world to source various organic produce. For example, it has contract farming agreements with farmers in Bulgaria for organic rosewater, rose essential oil and hazelnut oil; the olive oil comes from Spain, chilli seed oil and fig seed oil from Turkey, green apple water from Serbia, matcha tea from Japan, and lemon from Italy. These are sourced fresh at the start of the season; once the crop is ready, they ship the consignment, never fly them down.

Presently, Juicy Chemistry products can be found on their own website and platforms such as Amazon, Myntra, MyTara, Nykaa, The Green Maven, Vanity Wagon and Purplle. ■

ASICS launches shoes and packaging made of recycled materials



The uppers of the collection's six performance running shoe models and three SportStyle offerings employ recycled polyester fibres made from a total of around 300,000 PET bottles. These items represent the first stage of an ASICS drive to switch to 100% recycled polyester fibres in all of its uppers by 2030 to help combat climate change.

The collection, which the company claims harks back to the ecofriendly practices of early Tokyo, uses 100% recycled-paper shoe boxes with approximately 10% less material than the brand's standard designs. It also marks a switch from oil-based inks to water-based ones, thereby halving ink usage. These sustainable shoe boxes will expand sequentially from September 2020.

All the boxes will be switched in 2021 and approximately 47.5 million pairs/year will be the scope of these shoe-box changes, thereby cutting down ASICS' annual CO2 emissions by about 1,200 metric tons, as per the official press release shared with CauseBecause.

The graphics for the uppers incorporate a combination of two Edo Era lettering styles in a nod to that period's inspiration for the collection. The new range is available at ASICS stores in India and its website www.asics.com. ■



What does it take to be *really* sustainable in a rapidly-changing world?

Let's hear it from these **8** dynamic leaders

By Padma Pegu

That question is more crucial now than ever before, because we have seen what is possible when we don't drive, don't litter, don't crowd markets and malls, don't produce construction dust, etc. Basically, when we lay low during the pandemic-induced lockdown, nature was reclaiming its natural glory. But since we aren't talking about utopia on earth, and need to get real, we have to strike a balance between the act of living and the safeguarding of nature.

How about we think this way: that the Covid-19 pandemic was inevitable and now that it has happened—the worst of it is hopefully behind us—we can use the pause that it brought into our lives for doing different things, or doing things differently. That's it – we can look at it as the opportunity we wouldn't have given ourselves otherwise, caught up as we were in the push and pull of life, in the getting by and getting on, and so on and so forth.

The lockdown period and the many don'ts that we continued to follow subsequently have been an eye-opener, telling us that less is sufficient, and that we had merely got used to excess in most things. Imagine, we had even got used to air pollution! Faced with a stay-home-or-risk-your-life situation, many of us fell back on what we had all but forgotten – our creativity and our instinct to find joys in the little things. Sure, there was restlessness, worry and fear, but these happened alongside a different sort of unravelling of our minds which made us see things we had forgotten to notice. Rainbows for example, or rivers and blue skies. The music that happens in nature when the sound of traffic dies out. There were reports of sightings of animals in our otherwise urban jungles.

Maybe these were signs that it wasn't too late yet. Too late for what, some may be wondering. Well, too late to turn back the clock on an environmental disaster that has been in the making through the decades of decadence and will someday choke us human beings out of existence. Sure it's not going to be you and me or even our children, but what about their children and their children's children? Does the possibility of their existence in a cold world not disturb us, or does it sound dystopian, the stuff of science fiction?

But do we need more proofs than the increasingly erratic weather events that have been occurring in various parts of the world? What more proofs though? Will the sinking of the major coastal cities be proof that's good enough? Or will it have to be worse, like irreversible global warming? *(Ever wondered why the Paris Agreement has kept the global temperature rise this century at well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels? Why is 2 degrees C the tipping point? Because beyond this point, as scientific studies suggest, we 'lock the climate' into a state of continuing loss of warm season Arctic Sea ice, sea-level rise, more intense wildfire activity, and many other anomalies in nature.)*

Let's talk about this new normal

The events of 2020 contain several lessons for us, if we will see them. One thing is clear – that we have to do more than what we have been doing. Less complacency, more actions, by more and more of us!

Do you know this?

Humans have never inhabited the planet 2 degrees C warmer than pre-industrial-age temperatures.

Whether or not we acknowledge the situation, fact is that the pandemic has shown that we can change our ways of working, living, travelling and thinking – and this may very well be a game changer so far as saving our planet is concerned.

It's not as if disruptions have not happened earlier—one can think of any number of them, and of any scale, be it the World Wars and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the Holocaust and other genocides, the Great Depression, and so on—but what makes the 2020 disruption unique is that as a human race we had never reached this stage of advancement and therefore the extent of disruption is unprecedented too. Having reached this stage of advancement, we have also been leaving behind a trail of telltale signs – in the form of increased emissions, increased pollution, increased waste (including humongous amounts of e-waste), and what have you.

Basically there is no denying that we have crossed the limits of allowable resource consumption and there is no alternative but to reduce consumption. Which brings us back to the recent lockdown experience. Those months of being shut in and not spending as much led to the realisation that so much of our impulses and behaviour as consumers is about instant gratification. Within the confines of our homes, we mostly ended up engaging in activities that did not end up putting more carbon into the atmosphere.

So, here we are, with the realisation that there are things about quarantine life that are worth preserving. In this new normal, we are buying less, going out less, travelling less, flying less, wasting less (because we are buying less), and so on. Hopefully we will capitalise on this new normal and streamline it further, instead of trying to go back to the old normal.

Today, more of us know what only a few among us espoused earlier: which is that *individual choices matter and it all adds up*. If a hundred days (so to speak) of restrained activities and restrained consumption could help the environment recuperate somewhat, imagine what difference we can make if we make this the only way to be! We all will be better off in the long run and our children will thank us.

Let's not be discouraged by the thought that individual contributions to climate change matter little in the face of the damage caused by fossil fuel companies and heavy industry. We can create positive feedback loops and turn ourselves into a force that will bring about a bigger systemic change.

As we recover from the pandemic, we have a tremendous opportunity to remould/reset our lifestyle patterns. Let's make the best use of it, because there's no knowing if we will have another opportunity like this anytime soon. In any case, none of us could be hoping for another pandemic or lockdown to drive home the point again.



What leaders at India Inc./social organisations are doing towards making a sustainable world a reality

Here's what CauseBecause asked them: *what can you do to make sustainable living a way of life and how do you see your role as individuals as well as leaders in organisations?*

As individuals, it can be about using less plastic, using our private vehicles less, consuming less, wasting less, contributing towards a charity or cause we believe in, persuading others to do the same, and so on. Most of us know all this, so what really can we do to make these actions a part of our lives?

As leaders/decision makers, it can be about 'sustainability-focused' decisions – for example, more locally sourced inputs/raw material/services, less single-use plastic, less packaging, more recycling, etc. – and/or initiating social programmes addressing local social and environmental issues.

Let's hear the eight leaders out in detail as they hold forth on this most timely of topics. We present them here in alphabetical order arranged as per their first names.



Anirban Ghosh
Chief Sustainability Officer,
Mahindra Group

• **As individuals**

While there is increasing awareness among consumers today about climate change, which has led them to reconsider their lifestyle, their behaviour may not always reflect this concern.

Last year, at Mahindra we did a small study called ‘alternativism’ to understand the explanation for this paradox. The research

confirmed that today’s generation is more environmentally conscious than at any time in our long history. It showed that four out of five (80%) respondents are aware of the impact of plastic and waste management. As many as 89% of the respondents said that they would act on climate change if companies offered alternative solutions. However, 88% believe that eco-friendly alternatives are either too expensive or not effective, thus preventing them from being more environmentally considerate.

The reason behind the inconsistency in thought and action is clear: the absence of suitable environment-friendly products and services at an affordable price. Clearly there are two aspects to this: consumers’ willingness to be sustainable, and business’ responsibility to give back to the environment and the society.

Here are some of the things people can practise easily in their daily life to reduce their environmental footprint and make a difference (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

1. LED-fy your home
2. Shift from conventional fans to energy-efficient BLDC fans
3. Change air conditioners that are more than 5 years old to energy-efficient versions
4. Put aerators on all taps to control flow and pressure of water during each use
5. Convert all flushes to dual-flush systems
6. Stop ignoring leaky taps – fix them immediately
7. Stop using plastic bags
8. Give up single-use plastic water bottles
9. Use planet-friendly toiletry
10. Use biodegradable disposable cutlery when disposable cutlery is required
11. Donate or upcycle old clothes/shoes/bags/other items to increase their lifecycle and avoid wastage
12. Switch off engine of bike/scooter/car at traffic signals
13. Use natural sunlight to dry your clothes
14. Buy local – support local businesses
15. Compost organic waste
16. Spread awareness in your network about sustainable ways of living
17. Volunteer at local shelters/soup kitchens/environment action groups, etc.
18. Donate to organisations working on social/environmental causes

At Mahindra Group, we have an ongoing programme called **Making Sustainability Personal**, through which we actively engage with our colleagues to inculcate values of sustainability in their lives. The above-mentioned activities are among the many we have encouraged our colleagues to adopt through this outreach programme. We also periodically organise quiz competitions to increase awareness on environmental

issues, drive activities that encourage employees to reduce their electricity consumption at home, have designed energy-efficient mobile wallpapers (which were downloaded by over 30,000 people internally and externally), and put up green product stalls at our office campus where green entrepreneurs and NGOs working with disadvantaged communities get to sell their environment-friendly products to our colleagues. This year on the occasion of Green Consumer Day, we organised a green product sale where we managed to curate a range of green product vendors to supply affordable and good-quality



environment-friendly alternatives to our employees, such as BLDC fans, LED lights, chemical-free and organic home and self-care products, sustainable menstrual products, and biodegradable cutlery and toothbrushes, among other things.

Resources are aplenty – platforms such as Goodmarkets and Qtrove offer a treasure trove of sustainable daily-use products that are good both for the environment and for our well-being.

The expectations of Indians from the business community are very clear. This is the perfect opportunity for businesses to deliver on the sustainability demand and facilitate the transition into sustainable living. There are two major ways to achieve this, and Mahindra Group has been actively working on both these fronts. One, embed sustainable best practices in your design to the best of your ability. Two, diversify your portfolio and offer consumers innovative, affordable and competitive substitutes for conventional products.

Mahindra's green product portfolio includes mobility and energy solutions, green buildings, micro-irrigation and solar power. Mahindra CERO is India's maiden organized auto shredding venture and vehicle recycling unit, while Mahindra Waste to Energy Solutions Limited converts organic waste into bio-CNG and organic fertiliser and is currently powering the local bus transit network in the city of Indore.

A future boom in planet-friendly alternatives is inevitable. As people become more aware of the impact of their actions, they will expect businesses to do so too. The business community will be increasingly accountable not merely for the products they develop, but also for how they behave.

• **As leaders/decision makers**

What will become less going forward? Among other things, business travel will (and can) be curtailed to a great extent.

A few things that we can focus on as we transition into the 'new normal' are using recyclable paper in offices, eliminating single-use plastic completely (something which Mahindra Group has been successful in achieving in many of its locations), and conducting online virtual meetings as opposed to personal meetings.

Cutting down on some of the common ways of working and operating will benefit the business as much as it will benefit the environment and people at large. These measures are cost-effective and enable efficiency because they save time and maximise output. Over a period of five years, Mahindra Group implemented about 1,900 energy-efficiency projects – with savings of 730 million Indian rupees (\$9.9 million) on an investment of 550 million Indian rupees (\$7.4 million).

As far as their environmental impact is concerned, carbon footprint for a person taking a flight, say, from Mumbai to Delhi would be approximately 300 kg CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent). It takes 70% less water to recycle paper compared

to what you would consume to create new paper from scratch. According to a report by NRDC, just 10 rivers carry 93% of the world's total amount of plastic that enters the oceans via rivers each year – thus making the impetus to avoid plastic quite evident.

Has the company recently made any 'sustainability-focused' decisions?

Mahindra Group has announced its commitment to become carbon-neutral by 2040, a full 10 years ahead of the climate goals set by the Paris Agreement. Mahindra will focus on energy efficiency and the use of renewable power to achieve this target. Residual emissions will be addressed through carbon sinks.

As of today, 20 of our locations have been certified as Zero Waste to Landfill (ZWL) by reputed agencies like Intertek, TUV Nord and UL Limited. Getting more locations within this fold is our ongoing goal.

Here are some of the many initiatives that have been undertaken by the Group companies in pursuit of our carbon-neutrality commitment:

- Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd (MHRIL) is committed to reducing Scope 1, 2 and 3 GHG emissions by 88.3% per room night booked, by the 2031. They have signed on RE100 with the Climate Group, have solar power streaming in at 7 of their resorts, and Club Mahindra Kanha is India's first 100% solar-powered resort. MHRIL also signed on EP100 with a commitment to improve energy productivity by halving the energy consumption at their resorts by 2030. In addition, the business has taken up the EP100 cooling challenge, monitoring the efficiencies of the current air-conditioning systems and implementing energy-efficient solutions. The Virajpet resort in Coorg, Karnataka, became India's first ZWL resort in FY19 (99.32% diversion of waste into reusing and recycling). Six of MHRIL's resorts are self-reliant on water.



- Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd is the only real estate company in India to have had their Science-Based Targets (SBT) approved; the business has a 100% green-certified portfolio. 100% of the projects have rainwater-harvesting structures and groundwater-recharge mechanisms. The IAmGreenArmy is a collective of individuals mobilised by the business to actively engage in environmental awareness, sustainable best practices and planting trees periodically.
- Having suppliers and dealers who depend on you for distribution and any other form of customer engagement

gives you the opportunity to create a greater impact and drive leadership in your industry. We have leveraged the opportunity to steer the supply side of our business in the direction of sustainability by articulating the following policies:

Supplier Code of Conduct: <https://supplier.mahindra.com/Pages/CodeOfConduct.aspx>
Sustainable Green Supply Chain Management and Procurement Policy: <https://supplier.mahindra.com/Pages/sustainability.aspx>



Gayatri Divecha
Head – CSR, Godrej Industries and Associate Companies

• **As individuals**

I strongly believe that meaningful change can only happen when three things come together:

1. We engage with others and learn from them, recognising that there is so much out there to learn from.
2. We make habits of small lifestyle changes, instead of restricting ourselves to symbolic, one-off activities.
3. We are encouraged by others, and our organisations, and we in turn encourage others.

At Godrej, we have an annual day of volunteering which gives us the chance to put all these three into action. Every year, thousands of Godrejites from across the world engage in volunteering activities instead of carrying on with their usual workdays. While this day is celebrated as an event, there are activities that run up to it, and afterwards many of our colleagues sign up for ongoing volunteering initiatives. Last year, the theme was plastic waste management and we held cleanliness drives across all our locations globally. In the run up to this, we encouraged employees to measure their plastic footprint, take pledges to eliminate one or two single-use plastic items from their homes, and reduce their dependence on plastic packaging.

I made a habit of storing my food and vegetables in paper bags or steel containers. Because I was shocked at my own plastic footprint score, I felt like I had to take action, and since others were also making pledges, it was easy to identify other ways in which I could reduce my own use of plastic. Since then the habit has stuck on, and I have greatly minimised my plastic packaging even beyond storage of food.

• **As leaders/decision makers**

What will become less going forward?

Working from home and flexi-working are going to continue

for a while. We have learnt that for many roles the work can be done anywhere. We also place a high priority on mental wellness of our employees. We have put in place 1:1 free counselling for all our team members to help them tide over their mental fatigue and anxiety.

Moving forward, I think flexi-work will remain and we will see less meetings and travel, but the challenge will be to recreate meaningful and spontaneous cross-team interaction that otherwise happened organically in the office.

Regarding sustainability-focused decisions for the company, we have started numerous initiatives for sourcing materials locally to help us reduce carbon emissions and our overall carbon footprint. Our FMCG business sources 80% of materials from local suppliers.

We have also set ambitious packaging targets that follow the circular-economy approach whereby we can reuse the waste from our packaging back into our production. Recently we have replaced virgin plastic packaging with recycled plastic for one of our household insecticide products. Going forward, we will be using more recycled plastic packaging without compromising on the quality or product experience.



We consider consumers to be our CSR stakeholders. We recently completed a sustainability materiality study for one of our major businesses and our consumers were a vital part of it. They provided us with useful insights into our work on ground and offered us authentic feedback on our initiatives.

All our consumer communications cover the People, Planet and Product aspects. We have aimed to build a third of our product portfolio to be good and green, 'good' being products that cater to people at the bottom of the

pyramid and 'green' being products that are environmentally sustainable.

For Godrej Properties, our marketing material conveys how homes are built around environmental sustainability and how consumers will be using resources more efficiently in their new homes.

All our social media channels connect directly with our end consumers and have a key focus on highlighting the sustainability aspect of our products – one that resonates and connects with them.

● **As individuals**

The world has undergone much change in the name of development and progress, particularly over the past century. I think it is relevant to understand the fundamentals of the basic existential tenets of life and how 'the self' has come before 'service' or before 'others'.

This thought is directly linked to individual responsibilities, responsibilities towards neighbours and towards the environment, and responsibility towards the businesses and work we are engaged in. I believe that we need to understand the rudiments of responsibility as embodied in the acronym I AM – that is, introspection, adoration and mutual respect.

If we truly 'introspect' on how we can improve the environment around our abode, the realisation will dawn that we have failed in our responsibilities over the years and should earnestly think about 'what' we need to do to change ourselves and our way of life. It is this driver which will lead to inner reflections on our habits and our lifestyles. Appreciation and 'adoration' of what we have and what we see around us will make us realise our responsibility towards preservation and help us to harmonise various actions like responsible consumption, responsible disposal, and responsible mutual understanding. This leads me to the third piece, mutual respect. Mutual respect is not limited to just another individual with whom we interact, but includes the environment as well. If we respect nature, then assuredly the converse will be visible.

There is a perceptible change in attitudes of people, with greater awareness being spread through various media. For example, do we really need to dispose of this, and if so, how? Such questions help us to, firstly, rethink on whether we need to procure a particular item,

which may not be necessary, or if we have to purchase it, how do we optimally use and reuse it before we throw it away? Next, how do we dispose of it in a responsible way? Can we do with a little less and encourage local markets in producing quality products, which may be more expensive yet will have a direct impact on the lives of people through markets and in turn will create a healthier environment?

In sum, individual social responsibility has to flow from within. It is the small things that make a house a home – and our efforts must be on to make it happen, with passion and dedication.

● **As leaders/decision makers**

Leaders can make a significant difference to an institution, an organisation, or any group they represent by sharing their vision on collective responsibility. Firstly, we need to know our working environment, which is a critical component in



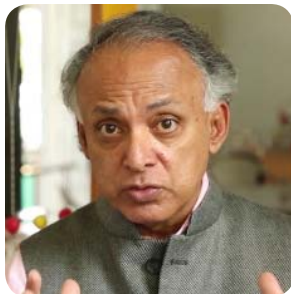
Rajiv Williams
Corporate Head – CSR,
Jindal Stainless Limited Group



decision making, where self-interests must always remain subdued to group interests and interests of all stakeholders. These stakeholders include the employees of the organisation, the supply chain, customers, government, communities, and so on. It is, therefore, important to assess a situation and blend the actions in such a manner that they are acceptable, sustainable, and stakeholder-driven.

A major initiative undertaken by JSL is to do with climate change and introduction of climate-resilient technology, resulting in reduction of carbon emissions. The process is

presently work in progress and various initiatives have since been taken in the areas of reduction in power consumption. In addition, with detailed R&D various initiatives have been taken, like usage of liquid Fe-Cr, which again has facilitated in reducing power consumption, thereby further reducing carbon emissions. As per World Steel Association and International Energy Agency, with the various processes introduced by JSL, the corporation has been able to reduce 25,000 tons of CO₂ emissions in 2018–19, which is a significant step towards CO₂ mitigation. Efforts are on to reach further targets and be a leader in the space of environmental sustainability.



Ramji Raghavan
Founder-Chairperson,
Agastya International Foundation

Many of the problems the world faces today are the result of a lack of cause-effect thinking including the spirit of enquiry, and creative problem finding and solving. Creativity in the face of complexity is the need of the hour. Simply put, most of us are not aware of the consequences of our actions because 1) we do not have the right thinking tools to act creatively, and to understand and believe

that no problem is intractable, and 2) we are not motivated to act creatively and responsibly. To sustain change then, you have to change minds and attitudes fundamentally, which is not possible through our existing teaching-learning methods that rely on chalk-and-talk theory and rote learning.

● **As individuals**

We – that is, 1,600 members of the Agastya team – are triggering fundamental behavioural shifts in millions of students and schoolteachers through experiential learning. These shifts are from: yes to why, looking to learning to

observe, passiveness to learning to explore, textbook-bound to hands-on, and fear to confidence. We are helping children and teachers form questioning, observant, active, caring and confident minds that can help/are helping to build a more sustainable world.

Our experiential learning approach induces critical thinking, creativity and collaborative skills in children and teachers, guiding them to become innovators and problem solvers in their communities. With our holistic learning approaches, our students learn to actively participate and become change agents. They contribute with their actions, instead of being passive citizens.

● **As leaders/decision makers**

We are continuing to build new and visionary models of learning that will increasingly rely on blended learning – that is, blending physical with digital learning. As the world copes with the pandemic, we have found multiple ways to engage with our beneficiaries digitally amidst the lockdown. We are using technology for continuing our work and it has enabled us to reach more beneficiaries at a lower cost per beneficiary.

As early as 2000, when we bought 172 acres of barren wasteland located about two hours away from Bengaluru, we had a vision to create an ecological preserve. That vision has become a reality, with the wasteland transforming into a medicinal park with several hundred endemic, near-extinct and extinct species of plants showing significant growth and enriching the biodiversity of the land. Our campus is self-sustaining and uses renewable energy (solar) as well as farming to meet some of the needs. We also follow the 5 Rs: refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, recycle. Our Art Labs and Science Labs reuse discarded materials in new and innovative ways.

More than anything, the eco regeneration of the campus, which has been documented by a team of scientists from the Indian Institute of Science, is a powerful metaphor for regenerating the mind and creating a new attitude and vision towards living sustainably on earth. The campus example has also spread and triggered the development of eco gardens in many of our science centres.





Rashmi Soni
Vice President & Head, Corporate
Communications & CSR, Vistara

● **As individuals**
Community service is deep-rooted in Vistara's culture and it is reinforced through various volunteering activities. For most of us, it is a way of life to be conscious about community, the environment, and holistic well-being of the society.

We had started a campaign in October 2019, #RethinkSingleUsePlastic,

that aimed at reducing single-use plastic in our own operations, offices and daily lives. We had removed the 200ml plastic water bottles and single-use plastic pouches altogether from meal trays. We invited employees to take action and reduce plastic waste by bringing their own water bottles. The Bring Your Own Bottle (BYOB) drive and the sale of ecofriendly cloth bags at the corporate office encouraged staff to embrace the three Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle). This was complemented by a wider corporate drive that replaced plastic water bottles with glass water carafes, introduced biodegradable plastic waste bags, and eliminated plastic by introducing stainless-steel cutlery in the cafeteria and on-board our flights. Such actions do not just remain restricted to the office or business operations but also become part of our lifestyle.

Additionally, engaging with local communities to help them with basic education, career counselling and skill development, and sensitising them about environment conservation are a few things that everyone can do since all it costs is dedicating a little bit of time.

● **As leaders/decision makers**

As an organisation, working from home (WFH) was not a conventional option for us prior to the pandemic. It is difficult for an airline to switch to the 'work from home' mode, as majority of employees either have to operate flights or are required at the airport for customer management. However, for the staff at our corporate office and others who could work remotely, we modified some of our internal processes to adapt to the new normal. At the same time, we realise that this is not a sustainable solution for most service organisations such as hotels, hospitals and airlines. Also, to travel and meet people are innate needs of human beings and eventually the demand for corporate and



leisure travel will pick up. Having said that, people are increasingly learning to travel in a responsible and sustainable manner.

As part of safety precautions to deal with the pandemic, we distributed 3ply washable and reusable cotton masks to employees and select airport staff sourced from local NGOs, thereby not just preventing single-use plastic from going to a landfill but also financially empowering the women associated with the NGOs.

At Vistara, we strongly believe in giving back to the local communities we operate in. As part of our ongoing efforts, we launched the Vistara Wellness Initiative in April this year. We collaborated with Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) to distribute over 50,000 long shelf-life nutritious food items to the frontline health workers. Since then, we have been able to distribute over 100,000 nutrition and sanitisation items to thousands of people across the country.

During the nationwide lockdown, we supported Government of India's 'Mission Lifeline UDAN' initiative by deploying our newly inducted Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft to transport relief material, medical supplies and essential commercial goods. Between April and June 2020, Vistara carried 27 tonnes of cargo free of cost (FOC) – financially valued at nearly INR 2 million. Vistara continues to carry FOC cargo to transport medical supplies and recently facilitated the transport of 300+ kg of PPE kits from Delhi to Leh for Tibetan Children's Village, a non-profit organisation.

Given our heritage of being a Tata and Singapore Airlines joint venture and a responsible corporate citizen, we at Vistara deeply care about the economic and social development of communities and environmental protection. Sustainability has always been an integral part of our business strategy and we continuously strive to create value for all our stakeholders, including the communities we operate in.

Our key communication objective over the years has been to not just create awareness about our initiatives but also to encourage people towards positive actions. We have strategically leveraged multiple communication channels to initiate conversations and call to action around community service and environment conservation. For instance, as part of the #RethinkSingleUsePlastic campaign, we encouraged our customers to participate and reduce their plastic footprint through simple actions.

Additionally, we regularly inform all stakeholders about our various initiatives and efforts towards the community through regular media outreach, social media communication, newsletters, our in-flight magazine, direct outreach and brand collaterals.

Customers are the most important stakeholders for any brand and their loyalty is mostly a combination of several brand attributes including contribution towards the community and environment. As a socially responsible brand, it is imperative to engage with customers and constantly communicate the brand's purpose and vision with them.

• **As individuals**

A host of sustainable practices can be implemented which will result in reducing carbon emissions to a great deal:

- Switch to alternate and clean sources of energy at home, work and school.
- Avoid the usage and consumption of non-recyclable items like plastic and opt for other sustainable options.
- Make recycling a part of the routine.
- Protect and nurture the trees in the community.
- Educate and increase awareness on climate change and sustainable living through discussions.
- Encourage use of locally-made sustainable products.
- Use rainwater harvesting in communities and cities.
- Increase the use of solar energy through portable solar products like solar battery chargers, solar lamps, solar rooftop at homes, etc.
- Avoid the use of motor vehicles for short distances.

We need to begin by respecting nature. We all need to contribute to protecting the rich biodiversity around us. It is the destruction of this biodiversity that is triggering serious climate disasters like floods and forest fires. The onus of protecting the flora and fauna that are on the verge of extinction is on us. By restoring the wildlife, we will be able to help balance the food chain in our ecosystem.

Our daily lives need to be adapted to incorporate sustainable activities. Small steps like carrying a cloth bag while shopping or switching to metal water bottles will have a cumulative positive impact for future generations.

Let's also remember that the majority of the world population still lives in a rural setup. It is our responsibility to educate them on sustainable practices, with particular focus on providing affordable



healthcare, basic education, and access to clean drinking water. With farming being one of the major occupations in the world, it is the need of the hour to encourage sustainable practices.

• **As leaders/decision makers**

Leaders the world over are doing incredible things to help communities. Covid-19 has dramatically changed the priorities for people. Livelihood and support to healthcare have been key focus areas for many leaders.



Shalini Singh
Chief-Corporate Communication & Sustainability, The Tata Power Company Limited

Covid-19 was an unforeseen event and therefore the changes we are witnessing are also drastic. It has definitely changed life as we knew it and our approach to things. A reduction in carbon emissions is definitely anticipated as a result of the travel restrictions imposed by various countries.

On the other hand, a boost in the local economy can be foreseen due to reduction in our dependence on foreign produce and greater interest in local markets. This can in turn boost the rural market and local entrepreneurs. Under Tata Power's Dhaaga initiative, we have encouraged local self-help groups to produce garments and given them a platform to sell their products. With Maval Dairy, which is Maharashtra's first and India's second all-women dairy farm, Tata Power has had a very positive impact on the lives of these women.

We launched our e-commerce platform, Saheli World, during the lockdown with a focus on Covid essentials like reusable face masks and gloves, sanitisers and immunity boosters. Through Saheli World, we aim to provide a platform for women and rural entrepreneurs to sell their handmade products and other farm produces.

'Care' is one of the important values at Tata Power and is reflected in our efforts towards consumers and the community at large. Our employees across India and abroad clocked more than 1.70 lakh volunteering hours in FY20.

We are a responsible power-producing company, with more than 30% of our power generation coming from clean energy. Tata Power Club Enerji is one of India's largest energy-conservation movements in schools. Through this initiative, we have not only managed to save energy but also organised plastic collection and beach cleaning drives.

All our stakeholder touchpoints and campaigns include our CSR messaging. We also provide volunteering opportunities to our customers and other stakeholders for our afforestation drives, beach-cleaning drives and other CSR-specific events.



Vijay Sethi
Chief Information Officer,
Chief HR Officer, & Head CSR,
Hero MotoCorp

• **As individuals**

To begin with, let me recall some very nice experiences from the lockdown period that reconnected me to nature and reminded me of my early childhood days. Clear blue skies, clean waters in the Yamuna, rare species of birds chirping around our home balcony, peacocks on our rooftop, me and my daughter engaging in stargazing and admiring sunrises, children in the neighbourhood cheering at

the rainbow, almost zero levels of noise pollution... none of these things seemed possible in Delhi, which apparently had one of the worst pollution levels in the world.

Such experiences have inspired many of us to nurture, rather save, the environment—in whatever small and big ways we can. First and foremost, we need to understand our direct connection with nature and ensure that each individual around us—family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, even acquaintances—are on the same page. This can be done by bringing climate change and environment into our everyday conversations, sharing necessary information and updates, and talking more about how each one of us has to do something and take those first few steps rather than thinking it to be someone else's job.

I believe that all kinds of pollution, the carbon emissions that are increasing the Earth's temperature, the plastics and chemicals that are in the food chain, and all such threats to

our wellbeing can be countered by a few individual efforts that may not necessarily be heroic. For example, one can start giving a second thought to the everyday buying decisions. Apart from considering if we really need to buy the thing, we can also start looking at other elements such as the packaging, the material that it is made of, where it usually ends up (both the product and the packaging), and so on. Meanwhile, it will be worth all our while to find out if there are other ecofriendly alternatives. The three Rs—reduce, reuse, recycle—may sound clichéd by now but it is the first principle that each individual must adopt.

Another seemingly minor but very effective change that we all can bring about at our homes is minimising wastage of water, electricity, fuel, cooking gas, etc., through simple efforts like plugging leakages, getting star-rated appliances, switching off lights and appliances when not being used, etc. We also have the choice to cut down on unnecessary travel and drive in a manner that reduces fuel consumption.

Going forward, go out and plant a tree whenever possible—be it a birthday or any other occasion in the family. I believe in the Chinese proverb that says *the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now. Similarly, do nurture plants around your home.*

• **As leaders/decision makers**

Over the years, our platinum-rated green manufacturing facilities and well-planned CSR initiatives have made Hero MotoCorp one of the most sustainable two-wheeler manufacturing companies in the country. Our multiple initiatives across the value chain to reduce energy and carbon, water and waste footprints have been successful in creating and delivering great value.





Cause Because
The mainstream medium for everything alternative



Conversations around sustainability and responsibility

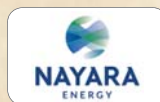
Edition 5.0 | 02 December 2020

— Past presenter —



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Coffee For Cause – Edition 5

Having participated in several webinars and online talks, we know by now that most such events end up being more about generalities – while some talk about their vision without spelling out implementation ideas, some end up talking about implementation issues without underlining the larger vision or goal.

Therefore, the fifth edition of Coffee for Cause, which is going to be a virtual affair this time, will strive to reach conclusive outcomes and ensure learnings and value additions for all stakeholders. The online discussions will focus on, and address, one micro subject/issue at a time.

Team CauseBecause will ensure that the conversations that started online goes on, through multiple mediums including causebecause.com, e-newsletters and the magazine, to enable access to learnings and insights, to facilitate exchange of ideas, and to give a boost to scattered efforts that are for one cause or the other.

Coffee for Cause – Exclusive series



Talk Straight, Talk Sustainability

How socially aware and environmentally responsible is your brand?

Concept

Thanks to greater exposure to discussions and trends, increased awareness levels, and a heightened sense of personal responsibility, consumers are becoming more and more conscious about their choices – including the brands they associate themselves with. They may not be in the vast majority yet, but the clamour for greater accountability and their questions are going to increase.

Talk Straight, Talk Sustainability is a series that will attempt to get such questions answered directly from the country's leading corporate brands – brands that are a part of millions of households and lives across the country.

Participation

Team CauseBecause will reach out to decision makers at corporate brands for one-on-one conversations about their corporate social responsibility and sustainability practices.

The queries will revolve around the brand's environmental impact and initiatives, diversity & inclusion policies, advertising & marketing ethics, and everything else that it takes for a brand to be a conscious corporate citizen.

CauseBecause will collate queries from a cross-section of the brand's consumers and patrons, who constitute an important part of any responsible brand's stakeholders universe.

In the last financial year, the company reduced absolute energy consumption by ~10 per cent, thereby positively impacting carbon emissions, while absolute water consumption was reduced by ~4 per cent. By 2019–20, three of our plants – Dharuhera, Gurgaon and Global Parts Centre in Neemrana – achieved Zero Waste to Landfill (ZWL) certification for diversion rates of more than 99%. Our solar footprint increased to 7.7 MW of installed capacity. Going forward, our long-term vision is to be carbon-neutral by 2030.

Talking of recently made sustainability decisions, the first decision that was a necessity during the lockdown and continues to be the norm is allowing the majority of our workforce to work from home. While we all know the pros from the environmental point of view, we have realised that the decision has increased the overall efficiency and deliverability of employees. All those apprehensions with regard to productivity have been proven wrong. It is now that everybody at Team Hero, regardless of which generation

they belong to, is realising the power of information and communication technology and of course the attendant environmental benefits of the same, and is making optimum use of the same.

Another aspect that we have been focusing on is the state of mental health of all our stakeholders. The coronavirus pandemic has been stressful for everybody and fear and anxiety about the disease as well as the economic meltdown that followed the lockdown have been quite overwhelming. In times like these, strong emotions are quite natural and to tackle the same, a balanced state of mind and positive attitude and energy are a must. In an effort to reach out to all stakeholders and keep them motivated with positive vibes as well as practical solutions, we have had mental health experts conducting sessions on various relevant topics. A mobile application and a support helpline have been made operational and such measures will continue to be a part of the policies that focus on the wellbeing of our employees and other stakeholders.

• **As individuals**

In my opinion, in creating a sustainable planet the role and contribution of the individual is most crucial. The efforts of governments and organisations need to be strongly supplemented by individual action for the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For this purpose, it is essential to create awareness and ownership for bringing about change towards sustainability. At Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), as a part of our sixth challenge of establishing a future society in harmony with nature, our efforts are also targeted towards achieving greater employee involvement and engagement of the community in which we operate.

As part of this effort, TKM runs an employee-volunteering programme called iCARE, in line with its belief that its workforce needs to align with its aim of contributing to the nation and society. Through this programme, our aim is to create awareness about socially relevant causes whilst encouraging people to take ownership and move in that direction. Secondly, employee-volunteering activities also provide a platform for people to work towards objectives that are relevant to the society at large.

Currently, we have about 800 registered volunteers and 100 employees' families participating during various socially relevant iCARE

events organised by TKM. Since its launch in 2017, iCARE has created a massive impact of touching more than 45,000 lives in the community. Besides iCARE, our employees also take part in other regular CSR initiatives. For instance, in recent times over 5,000 TKM employees distributed health and hygiene kits to fight Covid-19 in their neighbourhoods in Bengaluru, overall covering 25,000 families.



Vikram Gulati
Country Head & Senior Vice-President, External Affairs, Public Relations, CSR and Corporate Governance, Toyota Kirloskar Motor



Furthermore, in order to reach out to the community, create passion for the SDGs, and instil appreciation for the benefits of caring for the environment, we have developed the Eco Zone. Located within our plant, the Ecozone hosts 17 environment theme parks spread across 25 acres and have catered to more than 8,000 students since its inception. It is also home to more than 65,000 saplings of 650 native species.

● **As leaders/decision makers**

With the overarching aim of securing and protecting our planet, all member states of the United Nations came together in 2015 to adopt the SDGs. The SDGs provide a roadmap for achieving a better and more sustainable future for humankind. They address the global challenges humanity faces – poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation and lack of peace and justice.

Governments alone cannot do enough. It should be a collective effort where everyone – organisations as well as individuals – contributes. At TKM, both employees and the company are strongly committed to the SDGs.

In 2015, Toyota announced its six Environment Challenges – these are co-linked to the SDGs and continue to be the guiding light for all Toyota affiliates to bring about positive change to the world. Three of these six challenges seek to eliminate carbon emissions not only from the vehicles that we manufacture – ‘zero new vehicle carbon emission’ and the carbon emissions from our manufacturing activities – but also from beyond the boundaries of our factories by taking ownership and challenging ourselves to realise zero ‘life-cycle carbon emissions’ from our products. This means working to eliminate carbon emissions across our entire value chain from the raw-materials side to the ‘end of life’ of our products – that is, from cradle to grave for the cars that we manufacture. The other three challenges focus on minimising and optimising the use of water, establishing a recycling-based society and systems, and the challenge of establishing a future society in harmony with nature.

It is indeed a matter of immense satisfaction that TKM has made good progress in respect of these challenges. This has already helped us attain a high degree of sustainability in our operations. At the plant level (manufacturing), 93.35 per cent of our total energy requirement is currently met through renewable sources, which helped in reducing CO₂ emissions by 43,500 tons in FY 2019–20.

Further, the utilisation of renewable energy has contributed to a cumulative reduction of 2.06 lakh tons of CO₂ emissions till FY 19–20. We also strive to bring down our freshwater consumption by adopting recycling, rainwater harvesting and promoting Kaizen (continuous improvement) to reduce specific water consumption. Through these initiatives, we have reduced our freshwater utilisation by 92.5 per cent

for manufacturing. Cumulatively, we could reduce 26,395m³ of freshwater during the year 2019. We have established effective waste-management practices through which we have enhanced the recyclability of our waste to 96 per cent.

In respect of our products, Toyota is one of the pioneers in the shift towards electrification – a family of technologies that includes battery electric vehicles, hybrid and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, and hydrogen vehicles. Globally, Toyota has sold over 15 million electrified vehicles that has helped in reducing 125 million tons of CO₂ emission and resulted in saving 47 million kilolitres of gasoline.

In India, TKM introduced hybrid-electric vehicles like Camry Hybrid and Lexus. It is essential to point out here that the fuel efficiency of the Camry Hybrid electric vehicle is 48 per cent better than the comparative petrol version and its emissions of PM 2.5 is 1/10th of the BS VI-mandated levels. The extremely high fuel efficiency of hybrid vehicles is because it has both a conventional petrol and a pure electric power-train that allows the vehicle to run on an average 60% of the distance and 40% of the time as an electric vehicle with the petrol engine shut off.

We are also enabling eco-initiatives across our value chain. For instance, all our dealers are mandated to implement ECO dealership guidelines and implement a waterless wash that helps in reducing water consumption. For our suppliers, we have green purchasing guidelines to guide the suppliers on the management of environmental aspects such as water management, CO₂ reduction and chemical management.

For expanding our SDG efforts to the community, most of our CSR initiatives are also correlated to the SDGs. For this we focus on five areas for our CSR programmes – education, health and hygiene, road safety, environment, and skill development. These five focus areas are also linked to national priorities like National Education Policy 2016, National Health Policy 2017, Road Transport and Safety Bill 2014, National Environment Policy 2006, and National Skill Development Mission, respectively.

At TKM, we firmly believe that caring for the environment and operating in a responsible, sustainable manner is at the core of creating a sustainable business. Furthermore, companies must actively involve themselves in partnering with the community and governments to solve socially relevant issues. The participation of the private sector can lead to more innovation, efficiency and scale of impact. To achieve the SDGs, companies should choose fewer and more specific goals, adopt meaningful near-term targets (short- to mid-term), and reallocate resources (exclusive workforce for CSR). More importantly, they must ensure transparency and accountability in addressing social problems and collaborate with partners for better impact. ■

Biodiversity loss and climate change: How human greed leads to pandemics

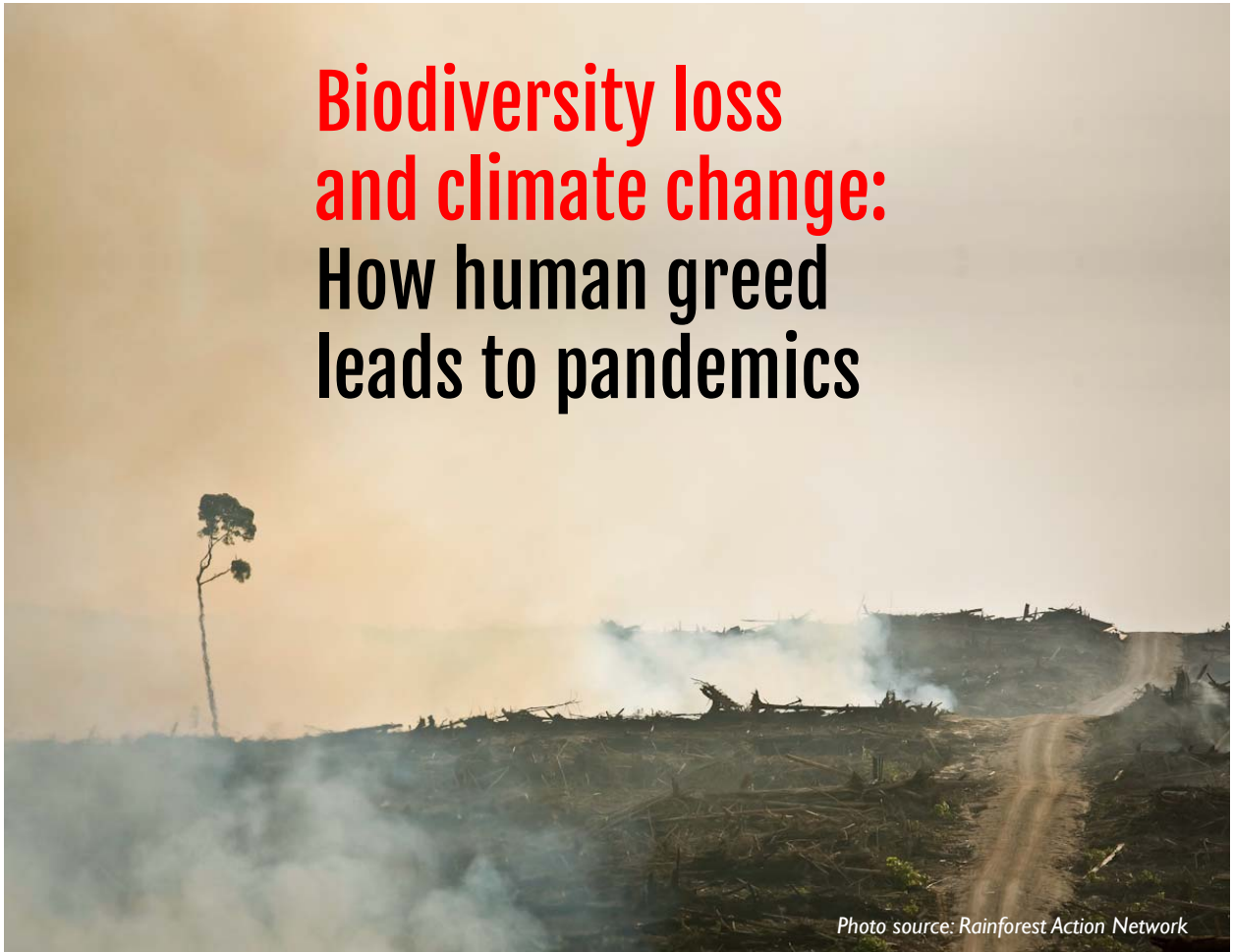


Photo source: Rainforest Action Network

Covid-19 has changed the world, mostly for the worse. The pandemic has resulted in hundreds and thousands of deaths, millions of infections, global lockdowns resulting in a recession whose effects we are yet to see or even comprehend, millions losing their jobs and incomes, and with no vaccine yet, a bleak and uncertain future.

What this novel coronavirus has also revealed is the increasing precariousness of our relations with the environment and thereby with wildlife, drastically increasing our exposure to viruses of all types, novel and otherwise. It has also driven home the sobering point that unless there are concerted efforts to halt our encroachment of wildlife habitats and protect biodiversity, more pandemics are likely in the future. And at a time when humanity is rapidly running out of time to beat the climate change ticking clock and combat growing income and social inequalities, it simply cannot afford another pandemic. If there's a sliver of silver lining to this disastrous series of events, it could be that people may finally start realising the catastrophic and cascading consequences of their 'benign' actions that are actually rooted in the exploitation of nature and end up harming each one of us.

What are zoonotic diseases?

According to the CDC website, more than 6 out of 10 known infectious diseases in people can be spread from animals, and 3 out of 4 new or emerging infectious diseases in people originate in animals.

Zoonotic diseases (diseases spread by animals who carry the harmful germs) spread when germs are transmitted between animals and people. This is how:

- **Direct contact:** Coming into contact with the saliva, blood, urine, faeces, or other body fluids of an infected animal or through petting, handling, getting scratched
- **Indirect contact:** Coming into contact with areas where animals live and roam, or objects or surfaces that have been in contact with infected animals, such as aquarium tank, pet habitats, chicken coops, barns, food dishes, etc.
- **Vector-borne:** Through insects that act as vectors for the disease-causing agent. For instance, being bitten by a tick or an insect

Feature Point ▶

- **Foodborne:** Eating or drinking contaminated food or water, such as unpasteurised milk, undercooked meat, or raw, unwashed fruits and vegetables that are contaminated with faeces from an infected animal
- **Waterborne:** Drinking or coming in contact with water that has been contaminated with faeces from an infected animal

A paper by Roger Frutos and his colleagues in *Frontiers in Medicine* lays out the three conditions that leads to the emergence of an infectious disease: the pathogen causing the outbreak must be compatible with humans, while the other two conditions are anthropogenic – there must be contact between humans and the pathogen carrier and a human-to-human urban cycle must be possible. Covid-19 fulfils all three conditions.

Most of the important human pathogens are either zoonotic or originated as such before adapting to human beings, and more than three-quarters of emerging infectious diseases are directly transmitted. A review conducted by the Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity and WHO found that one of the major risks driven by biodiversity loss is infectious diseases transmitted from wildlife to humans.

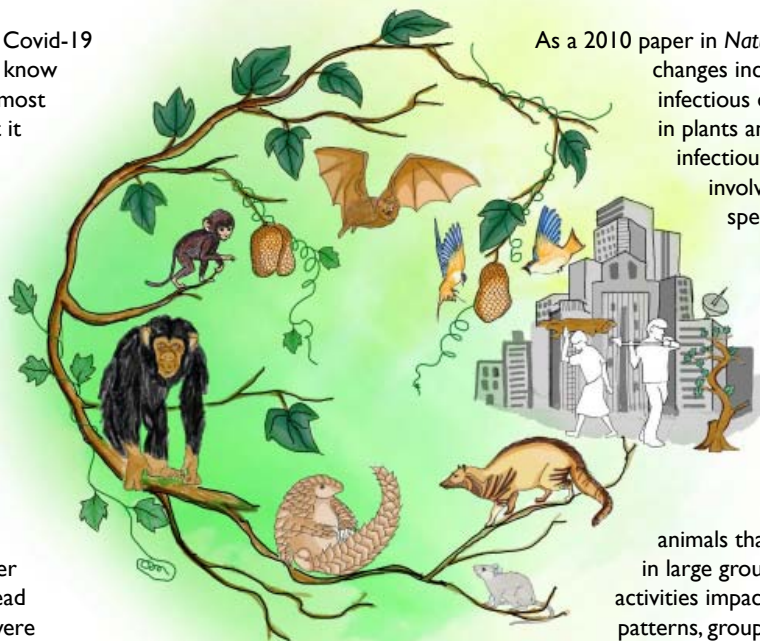
While the exact origin of Covid-19 is still murky, what we do know is that it is zoonotic. The most popular hypothesis is that it spread into humans from an intermediate host that carried the virus from bats and then (most likely) to a wholesale market in Wuhan, China. WHO suggests that this market was the source of the outbreak or played a role in amplifying it. From there, the rest is history and our unfortunate present. Other deadly coronaviruses spread in a similar way – civets were intermediaries for the spread of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) that originated in bats. For Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), also a coronavirus disease, it was camels that infected humans and other animals around them.

Biodiversity affects us and We affect it

What is the relation between infectious disease and wildlife? The concept of planetary health is useful to grasp the

interconnectedness of human activity, biodiversity, and climate change. As stated in a paper published in *The Lancet*, 'planetary health is based on the understanding that human health and human civilisation depend on flourishing natural systems and the wise stewardship of those natural systems.' However, the Anthropocene Age is increasingly marked by rampant exploitation of Earth's natural resources with scant regard for the environment, biodiversity, or even people themselves. This has enormous and often ominous implications for every living being on this planet, including health effects. Disease outbreaks, like the one the world is going through right now, will become increasingly more common with rapid environmental degradation.

A 2006 WHO report estimated that about a quarter of the global disease burden and more than a third of the burden in children was due to modifiable environmental factors. Other reports by reputed organisations such as IPCC have repeatedly stressed on the fact that changes in the global environment will have adverse impact on human health. As The Lancet report points out, zoonotic disease outbreaks were predicted by several studies which reported an increased risk of such disease transmission in disturbed and degraded habitats. In other words, when biodiversity doesn't thrive, diseases survive.



As a 2010 paper in *Nature* states, biodiversity changes increase the risk of infectious disease exposure in plants and animals because infectious diseases, by definition, involve interactions among species. Deforestation, land-cover change, changes in the local ecosystems, and resource depletion mean that animals are forced to adapt. For example, fruit bats are the likely host of the Ebola virus. They are social animals that often congregate in large groups. Anthropogenic activities impact their migratory patterns, group size, and resource availability, leading to unnatural and unpredictable changes in their behaviour.

Often this can bring about increased animal-to-human contact, leading to novel diseases and global crises.

Bats naturally host many viruses but in the wild this isn't a problem as species tend to specialise within distinct patterns, and interactions with other species is well-established and contained. But with changes in land use, such viruses are more likely to be transferred by them to humans or animals

if they live in ecosystems that have been disturbed by human activities, such as recently cleared forests or swamps drained for farmland. Many studies show that the density and variety of bat-borne viruses is higher near human habitation.

The same *Nature* paper found that between 1940 and 2005, almost half of the global zoonotic infectious diseases in humans were driven by changes in land use, agricultural and other food production practices, or through wildlife hunting. This means that the emergence of such diseases is due to increased contact rates between humans and other animals. The highest-risk areas are where human population growth is high, the ecology is disrupted due to human developments, and human and wildlife populations overlap substantially.

Biodiversity can serve as protection against transmission and help reduce exposure to infectious agents. However, with the rapid degradation of ecosystems exacerbated by climate change, the number of invasive species is slated to increase, causing significant impacts on human health including 'diseases or infections, exposing humans to bites and stings, causing allergic reactions, and facilitating the spread of pathogens.' Environmental changes have meant that such diseases emerge and re-emerge at higher rates.

Climate change has made such pandemics a matter of when and not if. The rapid warming of the planet and shifting climate zones are causing wildlife to migrate to new places including



those where humans reside in significant numbers, putting them in close contact with species they haven't previously encountered and breeding new forms of diseases. Then there's the rampant air pollution that increases our vulnerability to such diseases.

The status quo won't hold

If the many documented effects of climate change were not enough – all of which are disastrous at best and catastrophic at worst – pandemics such as the Covid-19 should force governments, corporations, and people to wake up and take stock of what's at stake if we continue to take mild action against planetary plunder. After all, the evidence and prognosis are clear – pandemics are not the fault of wildlife, it is human activity that is facilitating and enabling the emergence and spread of such diseases. If biodiversity were preserved and animal habitats left as it is, coronaviruses would not cause mayhem and deaths.

When humans disrupt the ecological balance, mindlessly and ruthlessly exploiting land and its resources, deadly consequences will naturally follow, many of which will spiral out of control. It is our hubris that blinds us to the physical law of action and reaction. To ignore the cumulative effect of global warming, deforestation, pollution, and rampant destruction of the natural world is to be caught flat-footed and napping when pandemics like this one hits because science and technology can only do so much. Other phenomena like frequent droughts, cyclones, floods, unpredictable weather patterns, and extreme weather events are already happening, and yet meaningful action is yet to be even discussed, forget implemented.

If Covid-19 should teach us anything, it is to learn its harsh lessons and adopt long-term solutions to combat recurrences. This includes preserving biodiversity and the fragile ecological balance of our planet, taking drastic action against climate change to limit the global temperature rise to 2 °C at a minimum, limiting human activities and land use in areas that are the habitats of animals, and protecting wildlife. It also means tackling healthcare inequalities and guaranteeing basic, liveable income to every human on this planet so that an unknown disease doesn't wreak havoc on the lives of the most underprivileged of us. The migrant-worker crisis in India precipitated by the lockdown has shown the complete lack of social security and human dignity provided by the state when that is their main responsibility.

The disease may have been generated in China but the abysmal handling of the pandemic here raises questions as to what kind of society we live in and what kind of society we want to be. What is clear is that the world can ill-afford another pandemic and it definitely cannot afford to degrade the environment any further. The key question remains: *is it too late for an unprecedented global action to save the planet?* Without being overly fatalistic, the answer is inching towards a yes. ■



In the last nine years, we have planted over 2.9 million (mostly) fruit trees that have rejuvenated the country's lungs and at the same time helped alleviate hunger and poverty. From Sundarbans in West Bengal to the plains of Haryana and the mountains of Uttarakhand, spanning 12 states in all, our green footprint has been increasing steadily.

In the process, SGI has also created sustainable livelihood opportunities for thousands of women and small farmers from marginalised and indigenous communities.

This is a journey that has been tremendously fulfilling and enriching, and we have been fortunate to have had the unstinting support of various organizations, who made it all possible.

Our gratitude to

Hero MotoCorp | Indigo | L&T | IndusInd Bank | Ola Cabs | NIIT Technologies
Max India Foundation | Earth Day Network | One Tree Planted | Ecosia

www.greening.in | trees@greening.in

The pandemic made 100+ millions poorer. What's the status of those in India?

Highlights from Dalberg's report from the grassroots



It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.
~ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*

In early October, media houses across the globe received an official release from World Bank (WB) claiming that extreme poverty is expected to rise globally in 2020 for the first time in over 20 years as the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic compounds the forces of conflict and climate change, which were already slowing poverty-reduction progress. As per WB's report, the pandemic is estimated to push an additional 88 million to 115 million people into extreme poverty this year, with the total rising to as many as 150 million by 2021, depending on the severity of the economic contraction.

'...in order to reverse this serious setback to development progress and poverty reduction, countries will need

to prepare for a different economy by allowing capital, labor, skills, and innovation to move into new businesses and sectors. World Bank Group support will help developing countries resume growth and respond to the health, social, and economic impacts of Covid-19 as they work toward a sustainable and inclusive recovery,' stated David Malpass, president, World Bank Group.

The new poor, as mentioned in the report, will be in countries that already have high poverty rates. A number of middle-income countries will see significant numbers of people slip below the extreme poverty line – about 82 per cent of the total will be in middle-income countries.

Being a low middle-income country and home to a large percentage of the extremely poor, India of course is one of the most vulnerable countries. The worrisome reality for the government as well as the development sector is that for the first time in a generation the quest to end poverty in the country has suffered its worst setback.

Alarmed by the WB report and looking at the state of the most vulnerable communities, Team CauseBecause tried finding some reliable data to get a grasp of the reality at the grassroots. The idea was to get data-backed answers to questions that could help the country's development sector (apparently the largest in the world in terms of number of non-profit entities as well as

professionals involved) in re-strategising their programme implementation processes and finding solutions and making decisions during this time of crisis. Eventually we reached out to Dalberg, to understand the findings of one of their studies that captured the cumulative efficacy of government entitlements in helping low-income families navigate the financial impacts of Covid-19.

Titled *Efficacy of Government Entitlements for Low-Income Families during Covid-19*, the study attempts to answer some important questions and some of the findings are discussed here in brief.

1. The extent of financial impact

The study states that financial outlook for low-income families remains bleak: nearly 3/4 have lost jobs or wages, and 2 in 5 accumulated debt in the crisis, with especially high burdens among the poorest.

Job losses

As of June 3, primary income earners in over half of all low-income households had lost their jobs. Additional findings of the report suggest that urban job/earnings losses were higher (80%) than rural (68%). In urban areas, casual labourers, private salaried individuals and shop/business owners are hit the hardest, with more than 4 out of 5 primary income earners having lost job/wages.

Income drop

Income dropped sharply post-March, and has remained depressed throughout the lockdown, with average income being ~40% of pre-crisis levels. Also, 23 per cent of low-income families continued to make no income at all until May, and only 8 per cent of families had received private external support from remittances, non-profits, religious institutions, etc.

The income losses varied across states, with households in Maharashtra (43 per cent), Odisha (34 per cent), Bihar (30 per cent), and Gujarat (24 per cent) losing over three quarters of pre-crisis income.

Debt accumulation

Forty per cent of the surveyed families had accumulated debt in the crisis. The average debt burden is 2/3 of pre-crisis

Who's poor?

Extreme, deep, abject, absolute and many such adjectives precede poverty to describe an individual or household's condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs such as drinking water, food, shelter, health, sanitation facilities, education and information. The United Nations in its report on the World Summit for Social Development 1995 stated that the most severe type of poverty depends not only on income but also on access to services.

Extreme poverty is widely applied to the ones with income below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day (in 2011 prices, equivalent to \$2.16 in 2019), set by World Bank. In October 2015, the World Bank updated the international poverty line, a global absolute minimum, to \$1.90 (approximately Rs 140) a day. Yes, this is where the expression living on less than a dollar a day originated.

However, there are the other poor too. As per World Bank estimates, over 24 per cent of the world lived on less than \$3.20 (Rs 237) a day and 43.6 per cent on less than \$5.50 (Rs 407) until 2017. They all are poor, yet not extremely, and do not technically fall below the poverty line.

monthly income, but 100 per cent among the poorest families.

The report states that 58 per cent families in Assam, 53 per cent in Bihar, and 52 per cent in West Bengal took on debt due to the crisis, versus 40 per cent of the usual average.

Families in 7 of the 15 states have borrowed the equivalent of at least two-thirds of their pre-crisis income. For example, families in Haryana borrowed 100 per cent of pre-crisis income, while Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh borrowed 75 per cent of the same, followed by Odisha where families borrowed about 71 per cent of their pre-crisis income.

2. Optimism levels with regard to job/work

Workers in Kerala and Odisha with 91 per cent positive responses, followed by Kerala with 79 per cent, feel most optimistic about returning to their prior jobs or starting the same work/enterprise. However, only 42 per cent in Uttar Pradesh and 44 per cent in Bihar seem quite certain, while others fear that they do not seem to be going back to work for another two months or so.

It is the migrant workers who are less optimistic about future job prospects and are increasingly averse to leaving their homes for work, as compared to non-migrants.

3. Awareness about entitlements

The report states that the knowledge or the awareness levels of low-income households with regard to eligibility for entitlements had improved since April, but lagged in a few states, especially where delivery had been slow. As per the study, the self-reported awareness of eligibility for various schemes increased significantly in Bihar (+25 percentage points) and UP (+11 percentage points) compared to April.

Low awareness in West Bengal may have been further compounded (-22 percentage points) by cyclone Amphan, whereas small reductions in awareness for Assam and Madhya Pradesh could have been due to the changes in sample and are statistically insignificant states.

4. Coverage of PDS and cash vis-à-vis access and use

Public distribution scheme (PDS) and cash coverage are strong, including for marginalised castes. However, there remains room to close the gap and to boost alternative mechanisms for those left uncovered. The research also noted that despite enrolment drives for returning migrants, the registrations under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) were low.

It was reported that although 9 per cent of the households were not covered under PDS, 48 per cent of them still

received free or subsidised PDS ration. Also, 9 per cent of households overall had accessed community kitchens in April or May at least once, including 7 per cent of those not covered by PDS.

Overall, Kerala, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra have PDS coverage above 95%. The highest share of unregistered households is in Bihar at 36 per cent, followed by Jharkhand at 22 per cent and Uttar Pradesh at 13 per cent.

As for cash delivery, Rajasthan leads with 97 per cent coverage while less than 80 per cent were covered in West Bengal and Kerala.

Talking of MGNREGS, 73 per cent of rural households in West Bengal, 72 per cent in Assam, and 70 per cent in Rajasthan have the highest coverage, while Gujarat and Maharashtra have less than 25 per cent coverage

Access & use

PDS delivery has steadily broadened, providing grains to 9 in 10 households, and pulses to half. However, 14 per cent of registered households reported that they had not yet received cash. Also, 2 in 5 reportedly had not tried to withdraw it, largely citing the lockdown.

The report also covered the top difficulties for households that did not visit a ration shop. While some 22 per cent reported stockouts, about 32 per cent cited problems with ration card/



'Government entitlements have been a critical lifeline during this crisis. It is therefore essential to seek the voice of residents in truly understanding the reach and efficacy of the government machinery. Understanding who got entitlements versus who should have gotten them and who needed them most are the type of feedback loops often missing from government. It has been great to see the high level of engagement by bureaucrats from across the country in understanding this data and identifying ways to improve the system.'

– **Gaurav Gupta**, Partner and Regional Director for Asia, Dalberg

Aadhaar card and 21 per cent reported that the ration shops were shut.

The report goes on to underline recommendations and suggestions for the government as well as other social entities to extend support in improving access to ongoing schemes, creating livelihood opportunities, and facilitating low-cost credit that may help the vulnerable millions to tide over the current crisis.

CauseBecause queries to Team Dalberg

Who are the primary recipients of the report and how has it been received by the stakeholders?

Our intention was to help policymakers make timely and informed decisions about entitlements during the early months of the Covid-19 crisis. We aimed to provide intel to enable them both to make further improvements on entitlements that BPL households received and to imagine, where relevant, other means of meeting their needs. This strategic intention guided our dissemination strategy among government decision-makers.

The study gained significant traction among policymakers – we held several dozen tailored presentations with senior government officials, such as in the Empowered Group of secretaries for Covid-19 response and Niti Aayog at the Centre, as well as CMO offices of states covered in the survey and a range of departments concerned with

Covid-19 response, such as on food and civil supplies, agriculture, labour, social welfare, finance, urban and rural development, Panchayati Raj, and others. We also shared findings with key global influencers. For example, the World Bank Social Protection Group used our data as an input into their USD 1 billion loan package, and we shared inputs with a team at the Asian Development Bank responsible for their USD 1.5 billion Covid-19 response package to India.

Has the report been able to meet its objective? Has state or central government/policy decision-makers acknowledged the report and referred to its findings?

For us, the highest form of recognition was in policymakers' invitations to present subsequent rounds of findings to their wider teams and colleagues—even during the height of the crisis, with intensive pressures on their time. One such relationship was with the Empowered Group on economy and welfare led by the Department of Economic Affairs, with whom we shared findings on a near biweekly basis.

Further, a number of policymakers sought our recommendations in addition to the survey analyses, and we were glad to see a number of macro and micro policy changes in the jurisdictions our survey covered. Most significantly, we were heartened to see the central Government extending free rations to November 2020, an important move for families across the country, which multiple research organisations including ourselves had advocated for. Elsewhere, findings from our quantitative and qualitative work inspired government collaboration with public sector banks to scale up mobile cash withdrawal, and to improve distribution of menstrual hygiene kits, among others.

The report 'Efficacy of Government Entitlements for Low-Income Families during Covid-19' presents findings from a study of 47,000 low-income households across India conducted between 5 April 2020 and 3 June 2020.

The study was supported by Omidyar India Network and Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies. ■



Friends Union For Energising Lives [FUEL]



FUEL B - SCHOOL & FUTURE SKILLS INSTITUTE (FFSI) Center Of Excellence (CoE)



Ketan Deshpande And Santosh Huralikoppi From FUEL Have Been Awarded As "Champions Of Change" By Hon'ble PM Of India Shri. Narendra Modi



Hon'ble President Of India Appreciation To FUEL Team CEO Ketan Deshpande & Chief Mentor Santosh Huralikoppi (FUEL)

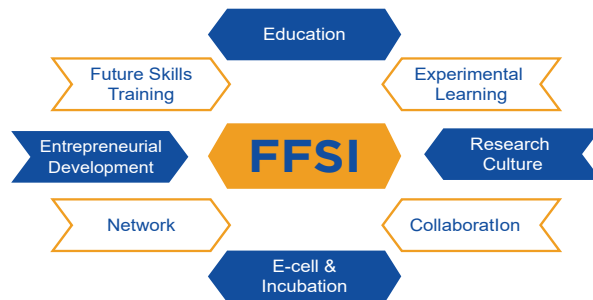
FUEL is proud to announce on its 14th anniversary, the launch of FUEL B- School & FUEL Future Skills Institute (FFSI) with Center of Excellence (COE) at Bhugaon, Pune.

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- Future Skills Training Center (AI/ IOT/ 3D printing / Digital Marketing)
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- As a placement and Volunteering Partner



Artificial intelligence can make communities 'anti-fragile'

By Kashti Mishra

Most natural disasters come upon us in an unprecedented tone. It becomes awfully difficult to come to terms with the damage that natural disasters cause to human lives and resources. And if you put a pandemic into the mix, like it happened this year, the means and resilience to deal with the fallout will be stretched to their limits.

In May and June this year, even as India was in the thick of a survival battle against Covid-19, Cyclone Amphan and Cyclone Nisarga hit its eastern and western coasts. Cyclone Amphan made landfall in the eastern coastal regions of West Bengal and Odisha, leaving trails of immense damage. The local residents were deprived of the most basic necessities for survival. Medical facilities were inaccessible due to flooded streets and zero means of connectivity.

Situations like these highlight the immediate need for preparedness to

prevent post-disaster consequences. There is a strong need to rise from this sense of vulnerability and make our communities anti-fragile.

In urban locations, substitute for energy supplies is made available or the system is restored quickly enough. Unfortunately, for many of the rural areas that are dependent on easily disrupted supply chains, it takes a considerable amount of time before the same is restored. A deliberate process of usability, availability, and security needs to be brought into the scenario.

Utilities in today's times are at a higher risk of extreme weather events. Consider 2017's Hurricane Irma; it made a disastrous landfall in the Caribbean and then in Florida. It was estimated that Irma left damages of over \$50 billion in its wake. The risk of such hurricanes has been on a constant rise in recent times, and with that the risk to utilities. Reportedly, 44 power plants were in flooded areas in Hurricane Irene and 69 were in flooded areas in Hurricane Sandy. When Hurricane Harvey struck in Houston, more than 6,200 distribution poles and 850 transmission structures were damaged. These numbers are very concerning and we need better solutions to prevent further damage. This article reflects on how artificial intelligence is a viable option that will potentially prevent massive loss of lives and resources while at the same time make rescue efforts efficient.

Many of these natural disasters are a direct result of the rapid rate and magnitude of climate change, to a large degree brought on through the environmental degradation that human activities have caused. We cannot beat the occurrences that nature throws at us, but we can make our communities anti-fragile. The human intellect and ability to innovate through hardship is the silver lining in an increasingly gloomy sky. Technology has an important role to play in providing the necessary situational awareness that then shapes crucial, practical, and life-saving decisions for effective crisis management.

With a mission to make our communities anti-fragile, Dr Sayonsom Chanda invented a patent-pending technology that can predict how much time those at risk and electric utility companies have before a cyclone hits and knocks the lights out. For electric utility companies, this data is critical so they can keep their repair crew and inventory at strategic locations, which in turn will enable them to quickly facilitate the repairs and reduce the hours of darkness.

Dr Chanda believes that the same technology can help everyone make plans for storing water, getting candles and emergency lamps, charging up phones, and so on. In the poorest parts of the country, the predicted data can inform NGOs or disaster-relief organisations about how many phone

chargers, emergency lamps, etc., will be needed for distribution. It can also help villages and block development offices by delivering a proper plan to supply generators to poor nursing homes and emergency homes in remote areas, and diesel-operated pumps to keep their crucial agricultural activities on schedule.

It was this belief that led Dr Chanda to set up Sync Energy, a company he co-founded with Robert Kabera, a Stanford University graduate and Forbes 30-under-30 entrepreneur from Rwanda, Africa. Summing up the philosophy underlying their journey to make the world a safer and more secure place, Dr Chanda articulates: 'If the roof is to fall on our heads, we need to know when and how – that way we can either fix it or buy the right helmets.'

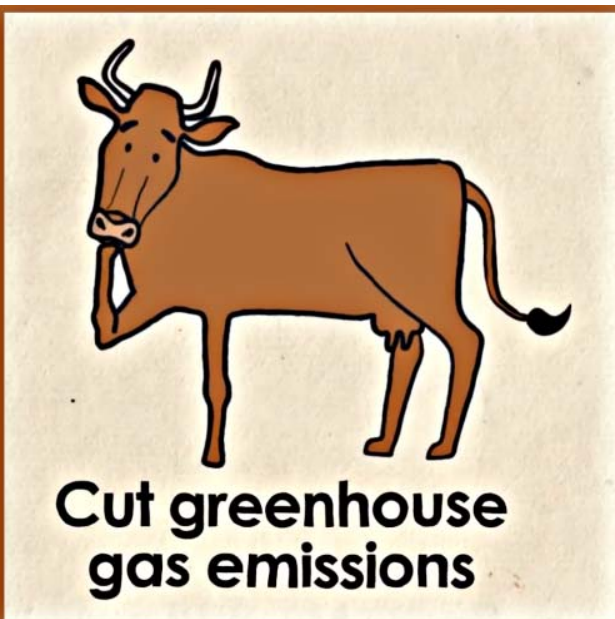
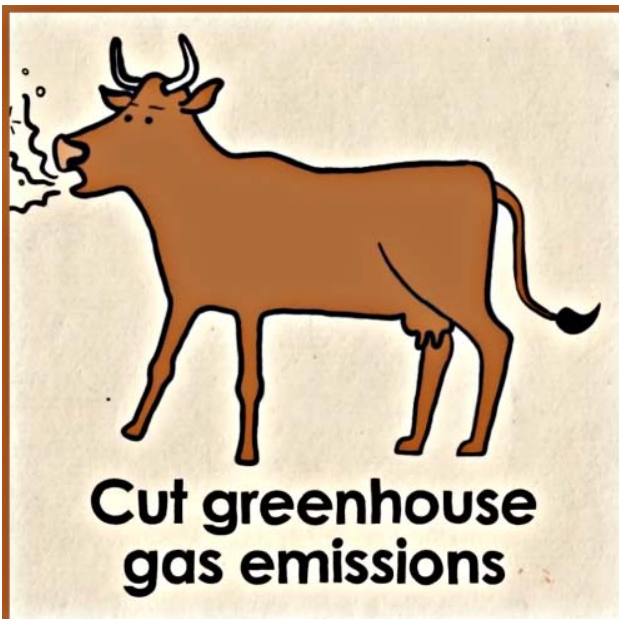
Robert, who had survived the infamous 1994 genocide, is acutely aware of the many problems of the changing world order. Reiterating the 'anti-fragile' aspect, he says: 'Anti-fragility: that's our theme song for survival in the 21st century. We need to tell ourselves we are not weak and we will not be wiped away. At the very core, Sync Energy is solving the pain point of electricity disconnection due to disaster events, before the incidents occur. Our AI and ML platform seeks to make the electric grid anti-fragile and its operators proactive.'

There is no denying the point that with predictive technologies we can be prepared to save lives and resources when natural disasters strike. We cannot fight nature but being prepared can shield us from the full extent of its wrath. For this we need to leverage as much data and artificial intelligence as possible to prepare efficiently. ■



Kashti Mishra is an Indian author who writes primarily about current environmental and political affairs along with lifestyle blogs. She holds strong opinions and beliefs about the functions around us.

You can reach out to her at kashtimishra8100@gmail.com



Can we make sustainable animal farming possible?



Head – Animal Nutrition and Health, DSM India/South Asia

The world population is predicted to reach 9.7 billion by 2050. What does this mean from a nutritional perspective? Experts say this increase in population will lead to a 70%–80% increase in demand for animal-based food – this will place significant pressure on our planet’s natural resources.

Animal-based proteins are highly nutritious and play a key role in a balanced, healthy diet. Its consumption is also central to many cultures. However, if animal food production continues with its current methods of production, its emissions will account for 81% of humanity’s emissions budget, which is obviously unsustainable in the long term.

Innovative science-based solutions will be needed to help provide enough animal protein for a growing population while, at the same time, reducing the environmental costs of farming.

DSM’s *We Make It Possible* initiative addresses these challenges and will create value across three dimensions simultaneously: namely People, Planet and Profit. The mission of *We Make It Possible* is to lead a robust and achievable transformation worldwide in sustainable animal protein production, and to accelerate solutions that will foster a brighter future.

This initiative reflects our commitment to not only

be part of the value chain, but to actually be a change agent – to thinking ahead and generating ideas and new ways of working. It demonstrates our vision – how we see the future of the farming industry and the role we want to play – and also supports the development of a sustainable global animal production industry.

As an example, one core tenet of *We Make It Possible* is to meet the increasing



demand for animal protein as a result of our growing population. Over time, this need for ever-increasing quantities of animal protein will place tremendous pressure on our planet's finite natural resources, leading to significant environmental strain. The time to change strategy is now – and it is not an impossible challenge.

DSM is centred on a purpose-led strategy driven by sustainable solutions for a better world. We believe that the livestock industry can transform itself from within to be part of the solution to the world's sustainability challenge.

Aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3, 12, 13, and 14, the initiative is driven by six sustainability platforms that will help address the major challenges facing the animal farming industry:

• **Improving the lifetime performance of farm animals at every stage of life**

- Optimising the health of livestock is essential for improving animal performance and overall production efficiency, thereby helping to drive more sustainable animal production.
- *Health issues reduce the performance of an animal over its lifetime, decreasing livestock production efficiency by as much as 33%. At DSM, we design species-specific smart nutritional plans that improve animal health, welfare and overall performance across the lifetime of the animal. For example, in cows our nutritional solutions help optimise skeletal development and health, nutrient utilisation and fertility, while combating ketosis, mastitis and lameness.*

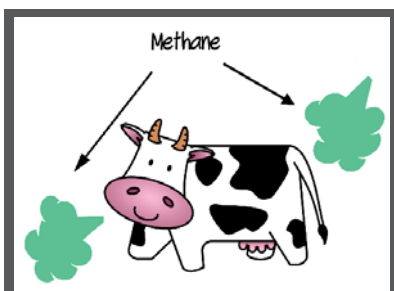
• **Improving the quality of food (i.e., meat, milk, fish, eggs), while reducing food loss and waste**

- *Approximately one-third of food derived from animal protein production is currently lost or wasted.*
- By focusing on Optimum Vitamin Nutrition™ (OVN)™, we can help reduce food loss and waste in animal protein value chains.

- We apply our unique understanding of vitamin D to layer nutrition to help hens lay robust and nutritious eggs, leading to significantly less egg breakages and subsequent food loss.
- Vitamin E is one of nature's most powerful antioxidants and is essential for maintaining the integrity of muscle cells. Feeding optimal levels of vitamin E during the growing phase of animal production ensures that sufficient vitamin E is deposited in the muscle cell membranes, thereby improving the quality of the meat.

• **Reducing emissions from livestock**

- *Animal farming accounts for 14.5% of all human-derived GHG emissions.* This figure needs to be rapidly reduced to help limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 °C by 2050.
- Improving feed digestibility and reducing feed conversion ratio is one of the major levers of sustainable animal production. It lessens the strain on land use, and reduces the indirect GHG emissions associated with animal production.
- Feed enzymes improve feed digestibility. By unlocking the nutrient potential of feed raw materials, we can get more out of less feed.



The beef and dairy cattle industry is one of the main contributors to global greenhouse gases. Methane, mainly produced by enteric fermentation and manure storage, makes up about half of the total greenhouse gases this sector emits. Methane is a gas which has an effect on global warming 28 times higher than carbon dioxide.



• **Making efficient use of natural resources**

- Growth in animal production places tremendous demands on the world's natural resources.
- Feed enzymes can offer tangible, measurable means to achieve these objectives.
- Improve feed ingredient digestibility. They substantially reduce the amount of feed needed to meet the world's growing demand for animal protein. They also enable the greater use of alternative, local feed ingredients and byproducts, thereby reducing our reliance on soy and other major crops.

• **Reducing the reliance on marine resources**

- We help reduce the aquaculture industry's reliance on marine resources through our Veramaris® technology and nutritional solutions that allow alternative raw material use in aquaculture diets. We are cultivating marine algae that naturally produce omega 3, so we can help reduce the reliance on wild fish stocks and enable the aquaculture industry to grow.

• **Helping tackle antimicrobial resistance**

- We are focusing on developing novel nutritional solutions which increase the resilience of animals to stress and pathogens, thereby limiting antibiotic use. *Essentially, we need to replace antibiotic growth promoters and switch to antibiotic-free diets.*
- Innovative feed additives such as eubiotics and enzymes along with optimum vitamin nutrition are proven nutritional solutions that improve gut health, robustness and growth of farm animals. ■

What can we do (or not do) to keep air pollution down

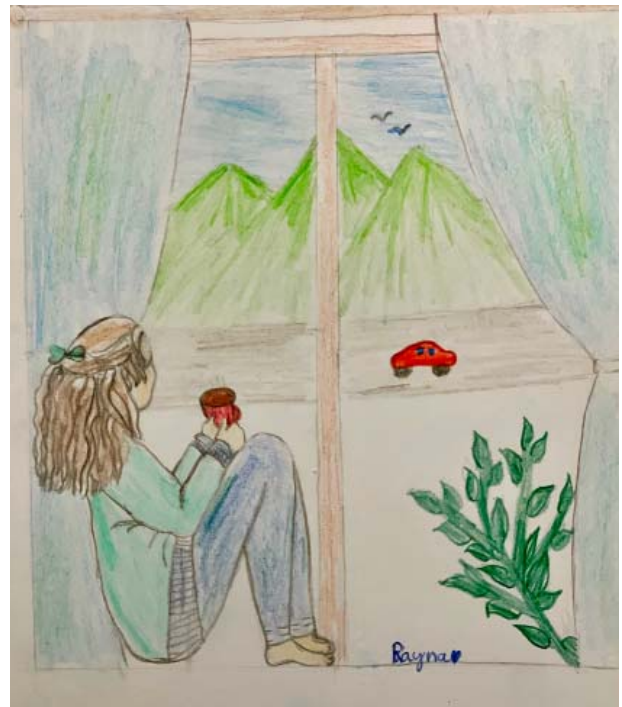
Ideas from a 10-year-old

By Rayna

Air pollution is ghastly, but there certainly is a lot of it. Everywhere in the world, there is a bit—in some places it's more, some have it less. When the whole world had a lockdown period, pollution had decreased a great deal due to there being less people and vehicles around. Vehicles in particular cause a truckload of pollution. The lockdown is now over, even though the coronavirus is still there.

Anyway, how can we keep the pollution levels low? Although the AQI in Delhi is not really going over 60, which is much better compared to the days before lockdown, we have to work to not let it increase. With lockdown over, and mostly everything going back to the same, it looks bound to increase. So now we must go over things to do (or not do), obvious or not.

- Don't go out as much. This isn't always very easy, but you anyway have to do this, and it does help with pollution.
- If smoke is coming from your car, it means two things: your car is on fire, or the more likely situation, you are contributing to air pollution.



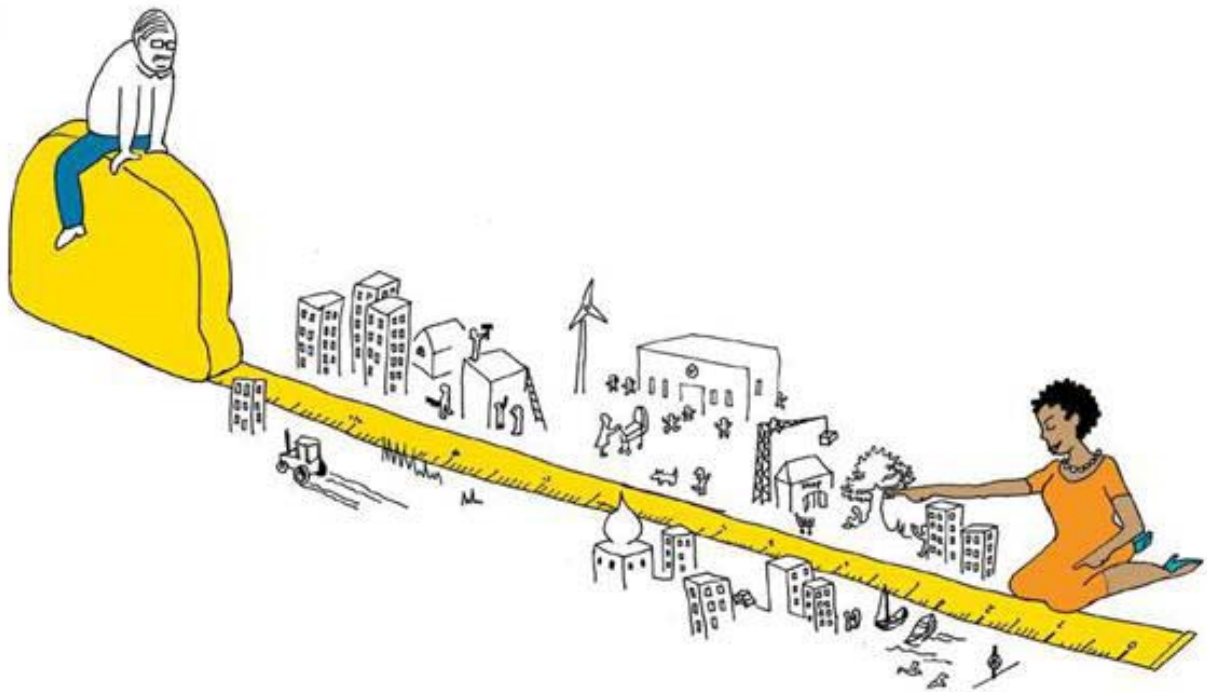
- A huge thing we need to stop is the burning of crops. Do you know just about how much it contributes to the rising pollution levels? Even if you don't, consider it a major part.
- Don't cut down trees! Sure, good things come out of cutting trees, such as paper, furniture, etc., etc., but we definitely need to work on this.

When I usually write things on 'keeping pollution down', I include using public transport. Nowadays it is quite dangerous to do so (owing to the coronavirus), and I am NOT asking you to. But riding a bike or walking is just as effective, and it's something most people can do. If you are wondering how this helps with pollution, riding a bike or walking means not going by car or bus or something. And not going by a vehicle (bicycles don't count) means another one off the road. And that means reducing pollution a bit!

If only one person does these things, you will not see a difference. But if many people come together and follow these points, then you will begin to see the change. Please do so, and if you are still not convinced, look up just what pollution can do to you, and why we have to decrease it. Also, think of your own ways for lessening pollution. And share this with others so that they will start doing these things. The more, the merrier. And in this case it will restrain pollution as well, which is a win-win, isn't it? Well, that's the end of this article, but not the end of pollution. Continue with the ideas!

Ten-year-old Rayna is a reader first, and editor, writer, blogger, observer of nature and animals, painter, mechanic, guitar and harmonica player, etc., during her spare time. She also does duty as young thinker at CauseBecause, participating in crucial meetings and every once in a while pointing out stuff that her older colleagues miss. She blogs at: <https://raynaweb.wordpress.com/> ■

What **social returns** are you getting on your CSR investments?



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Mahindra Holidays Sustainability done right?

The Mahindra Group is a well-known Indian conglomerate and its brand name is ubiquitous in the country and abroad. One of its most recognisable companies is Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd (MHRIL), or Mahindra Holidays, which is part of the leisure and hospitality sector of the Group. Launched in 1996, Mahindra Holidays offers family holidays through vacation ownership memberships with access to 100+ resorts in India and abroad. The company's flagship brand 'Club Mahindra' has over 250,000 members, making it one of the largest holiday clubs.

Mahindra Holidays' CSR policy is aligned with the Mahindra Group's 'Rise for Good' philosophy, with a focus on driving positive change to enable communities around it to Rise. The company's key CSR areas are education, health, skill building and environment, focusing on the well-being of communities around its resorts. Sustainability is another key area, with the company ensuring that its many operating locations implement ecofriendly business practices and activities such as measurement of carbon footprint, conservation of biodiversity, energy conservation, use of renewable sources, water conservation, and waste recycling, as part of its larger initiative of 'Good Living, Happy Families'.

The CSR initiatives of Mahindra Holidays Company are primarily implemented through multiple agencies such as the KC Mahindra Education Trust (KCMET), which works on girl child education through the Nanhi Kali programme and other reputed NGOs. It also takes up projects through its employee volunteering initiative, Employee Social Options Program, where employees can volunteer for social and

environmental causes, in areas close to the company's resorts and locations.

CSR programmes

- As per the company's annual report, the company's core CSR areas are:
- Environmental sustainability
- Education and skill development
- Healthcare
- Protection of national heritage, art and culture
- Rural development
- Disaster relief

Environmental sustainability

Mahindra Holidays undertakes the implementation of various environmental projects with its NGO partners, in areas such as rainwater harvesting, providing clean drinking water, rejuvenating water bodies, and awareness drives. For instance, multiple water-conservation initiatives were rolled out in 2020 in Maharashtra, Goa and Kerala under the Jal Jivan campaign. The initiative focused on implementing water-conservation projects in communities identified as water-stressed. This involved rejuvenation of water bodies, rainwater harvesting, water access, and chlorination and installation of RO water purifiers.

The company also conducts cleanliness drives as part of Swachh Bharat and tree planting under Mahindra Hariyali. In FY 2018, 34,150 trees were planted across 35 resort locations; over 40,000 trees were planted in 30 plus resorts in 2019-20. In total, 384,966 have been planted since the beginning of the project in 2010-11 till FY 2020.

Education

The company supports KCMET and the Naandi Foundation's flagship programme, Nanhi Kali, which works to promote girl-child education. This well-known programme is focused on education of the girl child from underprivileged backgrounds. Mahindra Holidays has been regular donors to it, allocating nearly 50 per cent of its CSR budget to this project. Nanhi Kali is a nationwide programme that provides academic and material support to young girls from poor and marginalised communities through multiple interventions such as extra study class, financial support, providing essential kits (bags, stationery, books, notebooks, hygiene materials etc.), and awareness sessions. Many of these classes are conducted by 'community associates' who are selected from within the community as a local resource to provide mentorship to the children and help forge local engagement to promote quality education. In 2017–18, 4,670 girls were supported by the company under this programme.

The company also provides funding to build and upgrade infrastructure and services at government schools, such as renovating classrooms and buildings and providing books and stationery. Project Gyandeeep is another initiative wherein a mobile bus delivers education programmes for children living on construction sites, said to be reaching an average of 50 children every month.

Skill building

The company collaborated with SEWA Bharat on a three-year partnership and started the SEWA Mahindra National Resource Centre at Mussoorie to enhance employability through skill development and career counselling to women and young people. The centre provides vocational courses in hospitality and housekeeping, beauty and wellness, and garment making. To date, over 1,500 youth have been mobilised and training given to 157 youth in Mussoorie.

Rural Development

The programme for rural development, Gram Vikas, focuses on people living in rural areas, through initiatives for promoting health, providing access to quality sanitation facilities, building infrastructure, and educating people on good hygiene practice. For example, the company collaborated with the Swades Foundation to build household sanitation units for 30 families in Raigad District, Maharashtra.

The company has also taken up constructing new homes for low-income families in Raigad, Maharashtra, and Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Through its partnership with Habitat for Humanity India Trust, it has built new houses as well as repaired and rehabilitated old ones. Under livelihood enhancement, Mahindra Holidays supports rural livelihoods by providing apiculture support to families of Surlabi, Mutlu and Hammiyala villages in Kodagu, Karnataka. In the honeybee farming project, 100 villagers were given pots to initiate beekeeping enterprises to produce wild honey. In 2017–18, the company's rural development projects were implemented in various locations around the country such as Naldehra in Himachal Pradesh, Binsar in Uttarakhand, and Jaisalmer in Rajasthan.

Healthcare

The company operates mobile medical units, takes up projects on nutritional support, and improves hospital infrastructure in multiple locations. Much of this is done through implementing partners.

Mahindra Holidays' ESOP programme spans various initiatives such as Covid-19-related community-relief efforts where its employees distributed dry ration and essential hygiene kits to vulnerable communities, helping over 13,000 individuals as well as supporting frontline health workers and medical staff by providing sanitisers and PPE kits.

As part of Mission S.M.I.L.E.S. (Social Movement to Improve Life Experiences), employees dedicate time and skills towards various initiatives on education, health and environment. For instance, 180 employees and Club Mahindra members devoted a full working day to help improve the infrastructure at Shree Ganesh Vidya Mandir School in Dharavi, Mumbai. Employees participated in activities like wall painting, beautifying the school premises, bench refurbishing, and making creative visual learning charts.



In 2017–18, nearly 5,000 employees volunteered over 17,000 man hours, benefiting over 36,600 people, as per the company's estimates. According to the company, it engages with all relevant stakeholders for successful implementation of its programmes. Direct involvement at the project location also enables constant assessment and monitoring. Tracking and assessments are done through the in-house team and the implementing agency. The typical duration of CSR projects is less than three years.

Sustainability

Mahindra Holidays' green initiatives are aligned with its larger mission of 'Good Living, Happy Families' and aims to reduce the environment footprint caused by its products, processes and people. On the sustainability front, Mahindra Holidays has committed to becoming carbon-neutral. It is India's first hospitality company to sign both RE100 (Renewable Energy) and EPI100 (Energy Productivity), a global campaign led by The Climate Group. One of its main climate commitments is to run on 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050 and to double energy productivity by 2030. The company has also committed to the Science Based Target Initiative, which requires it to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in line with targets necessary to limit global temperature rise to below 1.5 °C.

Mahindra Holidays aims for zero environmental impact in its operations and has set clear targets such as using renewable resources and achieving zero waste for disposal as well as implementing green practices such as measurement of carbon footprint, conservation of biodiversity, energy conservation through steps like solar installation, water conservation, and

waste recycling. The company has committed to reducing Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 GHG emissions by 88.3 percent per room night booked by 2031, with 2016 as the base year. It



Converting wet garbage into manure

has installed solar panels, heat pumps for hot and cold water, biogas plants and organic waste converters, and uses electric vehicles to conserve energy, resulting in a reduction of energy consumption by 8–10 per cent compared to the previous year.

The company's Virajpet resort in Coorg, Karnataka, is India's first Zero Waste to Landfill resort – the resort recycles and reuses 99.32 per cent of its waste, thus preventing it from going into landfills. The company is targeting 10 more of its resorts to be certified under this initiative. It is also planning to expand the EV100 (Electric Vehicles 100) initiative where only electric vehicles will be used within resort premises.

Club Mahindra members are encouraged to participate in green efforts through initiatives such as tree planting, reducing water consumption by reusing towels or by avoiding changing their bed linen, and so on. Other steps taken are reducing plastic usage by providing drinking water in glass bottles, offering ecofriendly toiletries, and including in-house organic food in the menu.

Sustainability plans are approached in a structured manner with a 15 to 20 years roadmap that is broken down into smaller 4 to 5 years plan. The company reviews and measures its performance and annual reports are issued that adheres to GRI standards.

CB view

Mahindra Holidays' commitments and initiatives on sustainability are laudable. By committing to specific, time-bound environmental targets, it is truly putting its money where its mouth is. Its Zero Waste to Landfill initiative is especially remarkable – projects like this are scalable and replicable across locations and industries. Climate change is here and will impact communities and companies—big and small—around the world. It is imperative that more corporations follow its lead, work towards reducing their carbon footprint, and invest in green practices with measurable goals. Abs Mahindra Holidays has stated and shown, science-based targets help keep companies on track since they know what needs to be done in the short and medium term to meet the long-term vision.

However, as the company recognises, sustainability targets face plenty of challenges such as capital cost, space for generating solar power, and identifying suppliers that match business needs and sustainable values.

This is where collaborations and knowledge sharing across companies and sectors can help mitigate some of these issues. One of the company's key learnings is to work towards more scientific solutions for efficiency and efficacy.

Some of Mahindra Holidays' CSR projects tend to be one-off and limited to funding, such as microfinancing support for a sanitary napkin-making enterprise in 2017–18. Part of this is attributable to the fact that the company focuses on communities around its operations and takes up ad hoc projects for their welfare. However, a more medium- to long-term approach may result in better returns on its CSR investments. Additionally, since the beneficiaries live near its operating areas, it is logistically easier for the company to track and assess impact and make quick course corrections when needed. Thus, it makes sense to pursue long-term CSR commitments. Other projects like adopting a music school in Jaisalmer to train children in local folk music and revive local art

and culture are noteworthy efforts. The company provides financial aid to the organisation and supports the day-to-day functioning of the school. Such sustained commitments should become the norm. The next step could be sponsoring gifted students to pursue a career in music.

As Priyanka Gidwani, chief human resource officer, MHRIL, says, 'Our purpose is to be a good corporate citizen and live up to our mission of "Good Living and Happy Families" by keeping CSR and sustainability at the core of our business processes. Through CSR interventions, our vision is to be a responsible business by enriching lives and protecting nature. Our endeavour will be to make the most impact and drive positive change in the communities around the areas we operate in.'

Mahindra Holidays is already setting an example for corporate India on the environment front. It would be equally impressive to see some of that good work and sound strategy being imported to its CSR initiatives. ■

Breakthrough

Reshaping adolescents' attitudes and breaking gender norms



Cricket as a metaphor and more

Discrimination based on gender, caste, creed and ethnicity exists in every society irrespective of the progressive values it upholds. For women and girls, it is always challenging to raise their voice against such inequities because of the socioeconomic and cultural factors controlling their lives. Patriarchy in particular has contributed to making it more difficult for women to demand an equal space in society. However, there are women and girls who, with their persistence and sheer determination, have been able to change the status quo and set shining examples of transformative social and behavioural change. One such example is that of a bunch of girls hailing from Murailapur, a relatively unknown, nondescript village in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Their journey as an example of transformative change and display of courage can bowl over anyone, the pun being totally intended in this case.

These young girls had a deep love for cricket. But it was not an easy dream to pursue or achieve. The men and boys in their village thought cricket was not meant for girls. And they objected to it. 'Because of various reasons, we could not get help from male members in the village to play cricket. They constantly kept reminding us that it was not something we were meant to do, and that we could not do it. This did dampen our spirits but we were not ready to give up,' says one of the girls in the team who is a fast bowler. Add to this the fact that they had to face a lot of gender discrimination, sexist attitudes, and societal constraints. But the girls overcame it all.

'We had to overcome a lot of problems to make our dreams come true. It took our parents and elders in the village a considerable amount of time to understand that girls could also play cricket. It was not easy at all,' recounts another girl, a wicketkeeper.



Much of the credit for helping the girls stand for their rights goes to Sanjana Chauhan, a resident of the village who is a peer educator under the Adolescent Empowerment Programme run by Jan Vikas Sansthan with Breakthrough's support. 'When these girls came up to me and said that they wanted to play cricket but were afraid of taking it up with the village elders, I decided to intervene,' Sanjana recalls. There was a time when girls of this village were overburdened with domestic chores as their training in domesticity was considered to be essential with parents planning their marriage as soon as they reached adolescence.

The winds of change started blowing after the Adolescent Empowerment Programme was launched here a few years back. Breakthrough's gender transformative curriculum – Taaron Ki Toli (TKT) – for students aged 10–14, the Nari Sangh meetings, and other mobilisation activities provided the girls an opportunity to understand their rights and why they needed to be more assertive in the face of injustice.

In Murailapur, Sanjana is a shero who helped these girls fulfil their dream of playing cricket. Breakthrough's TKT programme turned out to have a moving impact on these girls, preparing them for raising their voice. The audio series with fictional characters like Pinky and Pankaj helped the girls break the gender stereotypes.

A journey of 20 years – building gender equality in India

Breakthrough is a Delhi-based women's rights organisation working to create a cultural shift by making discrimination and violence against girls and women unacceptable. Founded by Mallika Dutt, Breakthrough was introduced to the public in 2000 when it released 'Mann ke Manjeere — an Album of Women's Dreams'. The album and its music videos highlighted women's rights and aspirations, and became one of India's top 10 albums for six months. The album generated a great deal of public attention and won numerous awards. Most significantly, it demonstrated that a mass audience could — and would — embrace an album with a social change/human rights message. What began as an experiment to explore the use of popular culture to create a public dialogue about violence against women (VAW) evolved to become the organisation Breakthrough.

Breakthrough challenges individuals to change social attitudes and political and economic structures, and is doing that through its innovations in using cultural tools and popular multimedia platforms. Following the success of *Mann ke Manjeere*, Breakthrough launched two campaigns — *What Kind of Man Are You?* (2005) and *Is This Justice?* (2007), on domestic violence and HIV/AIDS, respectively. These campaigns deepened the organisation's evolution by bringing complex issues into mainstream popular culture in India and promoted male responsibility and condom use to prevent the spread of HIV, and focused public attention on the stigma and discrimination faced by women living with HIV.

Bell Bajao: A path-breaking campaign addressing domestic violence

Bell Bajao! ('Ring the Bell') is Breakthrough's most evolved and sustained campaign to date; it has had the greatest impact, scale and the most comprehensive set of partners.

Bell Bajao! is a cultural and media campaign that calls on men and boys to join efforts to end violence against women. Breakthrough announced the campaign in 2008 and in 2011 it went global.

The campaign's media component was its most prominent and visible feature — a series of television, radio and print ads that were disseminated widely through a partnership with India's Ministry of Women and Child Development. Film actor Boman Irani was the campaign's first male ambassador.

The powerful ads show a man or a boy who hears the screams of a woman being beaten behind the closed door of her home. After a moment of deliberation, the man/boy rings the doorbell of the woman's home. When the abuser comes to the door, the man/boy asks if he can borrow a cup of milk (in one ad) or use the phone or retrieve a lost cricket ball (in others). From the ads, it is clear that the bell ringer is making the request as a pretext: he heard violence committed against the woman and is putting the abuser on notice that the violence will not be tolerated.

Bell Bajao went through the roof — it won close to 20 awards. It reached more than 130 million people via television, mass media and video vans which travelled the country. 'The campaign saw a 49% rise in awareness of the new domestic violence law (Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act) that was passed in 2005, and it raised the demand for services by 15%,' recalls Sohini Bhattacharya, CEO and president at Breakthrough.



Sohini Bhattacharya, CEO and president, Breakthrough

The transition to Taaron Ki Toli

'During the endline/conclusive findings of the Bell Bajao campaign, we realised that women who were married off at a young age were least equipped to combat domestic violence. This made us lower the age of our target group and we started working with adolescents in the 11–18 age group. We started big, working with 18,000 girls and boys across 150 government schools in Haryana, one of the most gender-regressive states in India. Armed with an impact evaluation of this programme by Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-Pal) at MIT, which noted significant changes in behaviour and attitudes not only among girls but also among boys, we are now scaling up our work with adolescents, both in school and out of it to reach 400,000 of them. We have dreams of reaching 1 million by 2023,' Sohini tells CauseBecause.

Today, Breakthrough works in five states: Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand and Delhi. The mission is to reach out to adolescents across the country in an effort to trigger mindset change early on. Currently, the Adolescent Empowerment Programme reaches over 543,000 adolescents in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana, where early marriage and crimes against women are rampant and are at a high rate.



A Model Project ▶

Forging alliances with parents, teachers, health workers, government officials and entire communities, Breakthrough is working to improve the determinants of gender, health and education for both boys and girls. A youth club called Taaron ki Toli has already been launched in hundreds of school campuses in North India to bring gender equity into classrooms at an age when concepts of identity are still being formed. Boys and girls are learning to see life from both sides of the gender divide as they explore personality, personal aspirations, and potential.

The programme's clarion call, 'De Taali – banegi baat saath-saath', asks people to support these young lives by helping them create safe spaces in schools and within their own communities. Under the programme, adolescents receive counselling on gender equity and reproductive rights. Further, they get access to healthcare services irrespective of gender. The aim is to build an ecosystem in which adolescents' voices are heard.

Making an impact

India has the largest population of adolescents in the world with 120 million girls and 133 million boys aged 10–19 years, which is about 21% of the world's adolescent population of 1.2 billion. Adolescents constitute about one-fifth of India's population and young people aged 10–24 years. This large cohort of adolescents represent a great demographic dividend and to realise this potential to the fullest, young people must be healthy, educated and equipped with knowledge, information, skills and confidence that will enable them to contribute to their communities and the country's socioeconomic growth.

Adolescent girls and boys experience multiple layers of vulnerabilities based on sex, age, caste, socioeconomic status and geography. Adolescent girls will face bigger challenges in this transition, as they face multiple deprivations in India. Girls are discriminated against at all stages of the life cycle, the most obvious examples of such discrimination being sex-selective abortions, higher female infant mortality, higher anaemia, lower secondary school completion, and an overall lower investment of household resources for daughters compared to sons. The onset of puberty reduces girls' freedom and mobility, and increases their unpaid care-work in the household. Girls and boys are also conditioned to aspire for different adulthoods, with boys being expected to become self-sufficient and economically productive while girls are expected to become wives and mothers. As families move out of poverty, this leads to one of the lowest female labour-force participation rates in the world. Where girls and boys express aspirations for jobs, they name gender-traditional familiar roles. Boys aspire to be constables and doctors; girls aspire to be nurses and teachers. Caste, religion and geography multiply these gender deprivations, and in some cases, boys are more likely to drop out of secondary school and be recruited into violent local movements. Harmful norms of masculinity can lead to boys developing destructive and harmful behaviours for themselves

and for others, including gender-based violence, recruitment into groups and movements, and a stifling pressure to be sole providers for a large number of dependents.

Millions of children are lost in transition from childhood to adulthood, from school to work; for some of them, it becomes an accelerated transition from childhood to parenthood. The most critical transition tends to occur between ages 15 and 17 – the dropouts at this stage are always due to economic and gender-based expectations from the family and community. Thus, it is critical to address the needs of young people within a continuum of investments.

'Experiences and stories are our tools of choice, as we endeavour to make the subject of gender-based violence mainstream. We speak to our large and diverse audience in a language they can relate to, using mediums they respond to—such as music, new media and popular culture,' Sohini explains.



Tabu, who lives in the town of Muri (located in the eastern state of Jharkhand), stopped the marriage of her elder sister at the age of 15. Her life was very similar to that of everyone else's. She cherished many dreams but was unable to express them. Little did she know that one day her luck would change, and she would be the writer of her own fate. She was 15 when she dared to take on the social norm and ensured her elder sister would not be married off at a very young age. She is now supporting the education of her younger siblings through her job.

This journey of change began when Breakthrough team members performed a play about early marriage, titled Chanda Pukare, at Tabu's school. The play was a part of Breakthrough's campaign 'Nation against Early Marriage'. After essaying the role of Chanda, Tabu's resolve to chase her dreams was strengthened.

Tabu's journey of fulfilling her dreams became a source of inspiration for the entire community and society. And now, her younger sister is the first girl from their village to be studying science. As a matter of fact, many girls in the village are stepping out of their houses and pursuing education and employment. According to the survey and evaluation



conducted by J-PAL, the Taaron ki Toli programme has met its goal of shaping gender-equitable behaviour among school children. The results revealed that the programme led to an improvement in the career-oriented ambition of girls, perceptions of gender, awareness levels of adolescents, and an overall 16 per cent rise in gender-equitable outlooks.

An overall increase of 16% in gender-equitable attitudes has been noted among programme participants across 150 schools in Haryana.

The programme has been successful in boosting the academic aspirations of girls pertaining to their interests in securing college education. Girls who reportedly displayed high aspirations during baseline benefited the most.

The intervention improved mobility for girls – this is linked to the boost in their self-esteem, greater interaction with the opposite sex, and better support from their family members.

- Girls are more aware and have expressed confidence about vocalising against sexual harassment/perpetrators.
- Two years after the conclusion of the programme, boys continue to display gender-equitable attitudes.
- Boys are increasingly participating in household chores, challenging gendered division of labour at home.

- An increase in support for girls' education and women's participation in paid work has been noted among boys.
- Adolescents believe there is going to be greater support from their community to challenge gender norms.

In another story of change, Meera wanted to go to college. But at home, she was not even allowed into the living room to meet visitors. When Meera met the Breakthrough trainers as part of Taaron Ki Toli, she shyly offered to help with the set-up. She learned about health, sanitation, and the services the government provided. She started speaking up at the women's group meetings.

Her Breakthrough moment came when she attended the Partners' Forum, 2018, as a peer educator. In Delhi! 'I sat on a train! Till then, I had not even travelled as far as Lucknow,' she almost exults. Her parents had their doubts, but, as Meera says, 'they trusted the Breakthrough trainer. For five days, I travelled and stayed with other girls from across India. We shared stories.'

Meera's story has lit a spark among young people in the village. Her older sister would often joke that their lives would be wrapped up in cow-dung cakes. Now she, too, wants more. She has applied for a job with the police.

Today, Meera, Tabu and all others have become symbols of change who fought their way out of seemingly impossible situations. And Breakthrough continues to play an important part in these much-needed stories of change. ■

ONE **ACTION** **ALLIANCE**

Launched in 2018–19, **One Action Alliance** (OAA) is a CauseBecause initiative to bring together conscious citizens, responsible corporate groups and non-profit entities to commit to **One Action** whose collective impact can bring about a needed, visible, and emphatic change.

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For partnership queries, write to info@causebecause.com



A skilled population woman has the potential to mitigate poverty, utilise demographic dividend and gradually help in socio-economic empowerment of underprivileged communities. Project Jeevika has been conceptualised against this backdrop.

The larger objectives of the project include addressing the various social challenges and contributing towards the economic inclusion of youth and women from the lower social and economic strata of society.

The project complements Skill India or the National Skills Development Mission managed by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), as well as the Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). Until the last FY, about 30,000 individuals had benefited from Project Jeevika.

For ideas and partnership proposals, write to wecare@heromotocorp.com