WRI INDIA

STORIES THAT MATTER

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FOR

PEOPLE, NATURE & CLIMATE

At WRI India, our mission is to move human society to live in ways that protect the environment and its capacity to provide for the needs and aspirations of current and future generations.

As an independent research organization, we leverage data and expertise to catalyze change across systems like food, land and water, energy and cities. This exhibition offers a glimpse of how we engage to achieve impact at scale, as demonstrated by stories of change—led by communities across India.

From bustling cities and remote villages to factory floors, meet entrepreneurs, farmers, small business owners and young changemakers shaping practical, people-centered solutions, and driving change from the ground up.

STORIES THAT MATTER

ENTREPRENEURS AND BUSINESSES DRIVING CLIMATE ACTION

RE-IMAGINING PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Journey through the Thriving Eco City-Regions Initiative

From river valleys to busy city centers, our regions are active, complex systems made up of people, nature, and economies. To build resilience, we need to understand how these parts are connected and work to keep them in balance. By respecting local communities, supporting people's involvement and care, and combining science with traditional knowledge, we can take a place-based approach to create city-regions that support people, nature, and the climate

PLANNING FOR CLIMATE SENSITIVE GEOGRAPHIES

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The Kashmir Valley, cradled by the Himalayas, is home to communities that rely on its rivers, lakes and fertile lands. Srinagar and surrounding towns face growing challenges from floods, changing weather and urban pressures. Planning for this region means protecting natural resources, supporting livelihoods, and guiding growth in ways that respond to its climate-sensitive landscapes.
In Jammu & Kashmir, our work focuses on building ecologically sensitive assessment practices to support the regional development planning process for Srinagar and Jammu Metropolitan Region 2047.

"Food will last as long as forests last".
-Sheikh Noor-ud-din Noorani, Sufi Poet from Kashmir

BUILDING LADDERS TO A GREENER FUTURE

"What does Zankla mean? In Bodo, it actually means ladder. So it's about uplifting the community. It is helping the community climb the ladder and move to the next level."
-Biplab, Intern at Zankhla Studio

BODOLAND

In Bodoland, we are co-creating a regional spatial strategy rooted in local voices to shape a shared vision of resilience, renewal and inclusive growth. Grassroots champions are blending tradition with innovation. Kirat Brahma's Zankla Studio crafts eco-friendly toys that preserve Bodo culture while generating local jobs. Conservationist Rustom Basumatary protects Manas National Park through eco-tourism that empowers youth. Farmers Akbar Ali and Sarbeswar Basumatary show how curiosity transforms livelihoods — Akbar shifted from traditional farming to dragon fruit, while Padma Shri awardee Sarbeswar pioneered inter-cropping, filling his fields with diverse produce.

EMPOWERING YOUNG LEADERS FOR GROWING CITIES

Central to the *doab* (two rivers) region, Jalandhar has long been central to Punjab's water and agriculture. Like many growing city regions in India, it now faces urgent challenges, from solid waste management to water pollution. Losing this critical infrastructure is not just a water challenge but is linked to urban densities and waste generation. To address this challenge, we worked with the Municipal Corporation of Jalandhar to skill young professionals passionate about tackling urban issues and shaped their contributions towards improving connected blue-green networks through the city.

PUNJAB

"During my work in Jalandhar, I came to understand how green spaces and water bodies are a critical feature of Punjab's landscape, shaping both water management and urban life. This experience has given me insights I can now apply directly in my design and planning work."
-Mohnish, Jalandhar Eco City-region Fellow

INFORMING THE PERI-URBAN SHIFT

TAMIL NADU

"In the current planning frameworks, environmental safeguards — like conserving wetlands, water, and energy — are encouraged rather than enforced."
-Selvaraj, Urban Planning Professional from Tamil Nadu

Urban transition is not just concrete replacing fields — it is ecosystems and dependent livelihoods being irrevocably impacted. Fishing families, rice farmers and women collecting clamshells from wetlands now navigate a changing world. As regions urbanize, along with rising levels of pollution and biodiversity loss, we are seeing an erosion of ecosystem services that have supported communities' way of life for generations. In Tamil Nadu, we are exploring the nuances behind this peri-urban transition to create insights into sustainable ways of managing this transformation.

EMPOWERING SMALL CITIES, STRONG ROOTS

UTTAR PRADESH

India's small cities, with populations under 100,000, are quietly shaping the future of urban India. The Aspirational Cities Program in Uttar Pradesh, launched in 2023, supports 100 such towns through smart planning and community collaboration. In Achalganj, a nursery growing native trees like sheesham offers seasonal work to women, who plant over 1,600 saplings annually to green public spaces. Nearby, self-help groups craft moonj grass products, blending tradition with economic empowerment. Providing services that are rooted in their context can empower these transitioning cities.

"In small cities we need a forward-looking roadmap that includes local-level practices, techniques for solid and waste water management for more resilient futures."
-Avantika, Akankshi Nagar Yojana Fellow

THRIVING ECO CITY - REGIONS

WRI India's journey of transitioning city-regions along the continuum of regenerative development is supported by Rainmatter Foundation by Zerodha.

RESTORING LANDS AND LIVELIHOODS FOR PEOPLE, NATURE AND CLIMATE

Across central India, restoration champions are showing us how communities thrive when landscapes are restored. From smallholder farmers to social enterprises, the "restoration economy" is taking root — reviving ecosystems and creating livelihood opportunities.

Over 100 million hectares of land, in India, offers the potential for forest protection and landscape restoration. Realizing this potential can generate wide-ranging benefits for people, nature and climate — restoring soil health, strengthening food and nutrition security, sequestering carbon, creating sustainable livelihoods and conserving biodiversity.

SIDHI LEADS THE WAY

MADHYA PRADESH

Sudarshan Singh in Sidhi talks to us while pointing to an earthen dam built under a four-year Sidhi landscape restoration project. The small earthen dam is a lifeline that has transformed both land and livelihoods, like several other watershed interventions, such as sunken ponds, farm ponds and dug wells, undertaken in the district by Sidhi District Administration in collaboration with WRI India and Action for Social Advancement.

In Dandi village in Sidhi, **Shakuntala Singh** shares, "With healthier land and better yields, we are able to send our children to school," evidence of how restoration is fostering dignity and resilience.

Farmers used to leave for cities to work as day labourers; now, farmers won't have to leave their homes as they can easily grow crops year-round.

With healthier land and better yields, we are able to send our children to school, provide fodder for our cattle, use crops for our consumption, and also sell crops for festivities like weddings and other celebrations.

INNOVATING FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

In Maharashtra, AgrowSure Products and Innovations Pvt. Ltd. — a member of WRI India's Land Accelerator South Asia (LASA) cohort 2023 — is empowering drought-prone farming communities in Akola. By designing gender-friendly, affordable farm equipment, the enterprise has helped farmers cut cultivation costs by up to 40% and reduce chemical fertilizer use by nearly half.

"Being part of the LASA cohort helped us immensely in scaling our operations," says **Akshay Kanwale**, co-founder, AgrowSure Products and Innovations, highlighting how mentorship enabled them to refine their model and reach more farmers with climate-friendly solutions.

We were looking for ways to increase production and reduce cost. We saw this machine at an agriculture exhibition. It is small, easy to use and effective. Many other women from our local self-help group have also purchased this machine for farming.

WHERE POLICY MEETS ASPIRATIONS

In Raipur, Chhattisgarh, the spirit of local leadership echoed through the Restoration Policy Dialogues, convened by the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, in collaboration with WRI India and Transform Rural India. These dialogues conducted in 2024, offered a platform where policy, governance and community aspirations converged to advance restoration across the state.

"Eighty-two percent of farmers in Chhattisgarh are small and marginal, often forced to work as laborers due to irrigation challenges. Landscape restoration can create year-round livelihood opportunities for them," opined **Dr. K. Subramanyam**, IFS(Rtd), emphasizing the significant impact of landscape restoration on farmers.

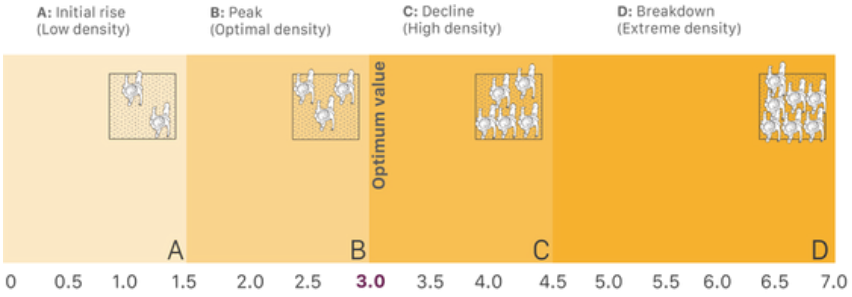
We received training that brought about a shift in cultivation techniques. This improved soil health and yield on my farm!

FROM OVERCROWDING TO ORDER

Reimagining Safety and Access in Varanasi

120 million tourists visited Varanasi in 2023 – that is more than 40 times the city's current population.

Believed to be the oldest living city in the world, Varanasi, or Banaras, has a complex urban fabric with many historic structures and a dense network of narrow lanes. A large part of the city's floating population consists of religious tourists, with the elderly and other vulnerable groups facing severe accessibility challenges, coupled with rising concerns about safety. As a part of the Sustainable Cities Challenge led by Toyota Mobility Foundation and WRI India, a cohort of five companies – The Urbanizer, VogicAI, CityData.ai, Prameya Consulting and Arcadis – is using a combination of technology and human-centered design to pilot solutions to help the city better manage crowds, and improve accessibility and safety of spaces in the old city that witness very high densities. Success from these experiments will be scaled across the city over the next 12 months of the Challenge.



SCAN TO KNOW MORE

Extensive community engagement, citizen interviews and crowd observation are resulting in ground up solutions that can improve efficiencies in crowd movement and make public spaces in Varanasi more accessible to all.

CREATING BEHAVIORAL NUDGES

The Ganga Aarti is a daily evening ritual held along the banks of the Ganges that is witnessed by large crowds at the Dashashwamedh ghat. Shopkeepers along the ghats pour water to discourage crowds from sitting in front of their establishments.

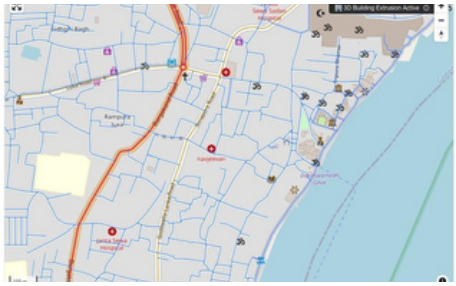
The Urbanizer used coloured tape to demarcate seating areas and walking corridors, allowing people to comfortably experience the Ganga Aarti. With clear visual demarcation, customers could easily access shops, improving business flow and reducing the shopkeepers' daily hassle of crowd management.

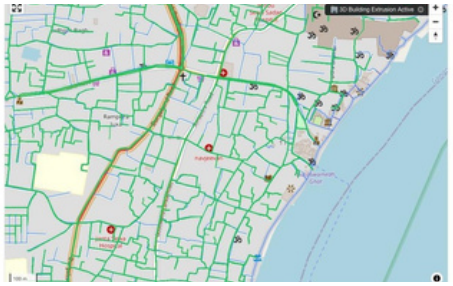
Source: The Urbanizer

> ***"I witnessed the Ganga Aarti for the first time. From what we heard, we expected a lot of crowd and chaos at the ghat. But the marks that you have laid out to demarcate sitting and moving areas really helped. We did not have to get up to make way for people constantly; there was no pushing. The signages in our language also helped us find the ghat easily."***
>
> -Priya Rastogi, first-time tourist in Varanasi

UNLOCKING LOCAL WISDOM

Large crowds of religious tourists pour into the main corridors – Gyanvapi Road to visit Kashi Vishwanath temple and the Dashashwamedh Road to visit the ghat. Locals, however, move differently using a dense network of bylanes. While alternate routes exist these are not accessible to all. VogicAI conducted detailed interactions with local guides who take groups through small lanes, hotel staff who point guests to lesser-known turns, and shopkeepers who give directions. They used this information to develop a nuanced map that unlocks the city's local wisdom in navigation.





Source: VogicAI

> ***"I know the lanes of Banaras like the back of my hand. The bylanes of Banaras are not crowded and have small temples and shops that people generally don't visit. I know which lanes go to the Kashi Vishwanath temple and other places tourists want to reach. I take tourists – especially elderly citizens – through lanes that are not crowded and comfortable to navigate."***
>
> -Amol Chaurasia, local tour guide of eight years.

DESIGNING FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND COMFORT

Interactions with Varanasi's diverse user groups, including international and domestic tourists, residents and business owners, revealed several concerns. Lack of accessibility, inclusive and safe public spaces, as well as confusing signages emerged as recurring themes. Prameya Consulting addressed these challenges at Dashashwamedh Plaza (near the ghat) by creating gently sloped ramps paired with public seating and a tactile map. Public response was almost immediate. Cyclists and wheelchair users began using the ramp. Informal wheelchair vendors appropriated its edge as a waiting zone. The plaza-facing bench became a resting zone and a photo vantage point

Source: Prameya Consulting

RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISES

Empowering MSMEs and Workers for a Just Transition to a Low-Carbon Future

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are critical to India's economy — generating jobs, driving industrial growth and supporting livelihoods. But they are also highly vulnerable to climate change.

From extreme heat, flooding and increased financial risks to regulatory uncertainties, market fluctuations and supply chain disruptions, these enterprises face growing risks, that threaten their operations. While the shift to a low-carbon future offers new opportunities, it also poses risks to businesses and MSME workers – especially vulnerable groups like women, migrants and informal workers. Climate action remains a low priority for these enterprises due to limited awareness and access to capital, technology, a skilled workforce and institutional support

A ROOM-BY-ROOM REALITY CHECK

Step inside this MSME, which offers a window into the lived realities of a medium-sized enterprise. Each room captures real scenarios and experiences from the factory floor, highlighting the overlooked challenges that owners and workers face, while also offering opportunities for change.

FROM RISK TO RESILIENCE: AN MSME'S JOURNEY

India's low-carbon future depends on MSMEs — but the journey is complex. From machinery upgrades and climate risks to skilling gaps and policy compliance, entrepreneurs navigate daily hurdles.

Build a Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Enterprise (RISE)

This board game illustrates the journey of a microenterprise owner trying to stay competitive while adapting to climate risks and market pressures. Every step represents a real-world challenge or opportunity.

To this end, WRI India has been conducting the following trainings:

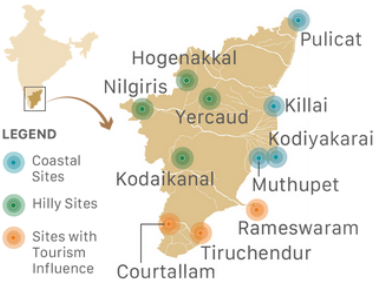
- Boiler, Jet Dyeing and Drum Washing Operations
- Lean Manufacturing
- Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) for MSMEs
- Indoor Heat Assessment
- Owner's Sensitization Workshops
- Walk through Energy Audits
- EV Workshops

STORIES THAT MATTER

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN FOR RESILIENT PLACES

BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE, VILLAGE BY VILLAGE

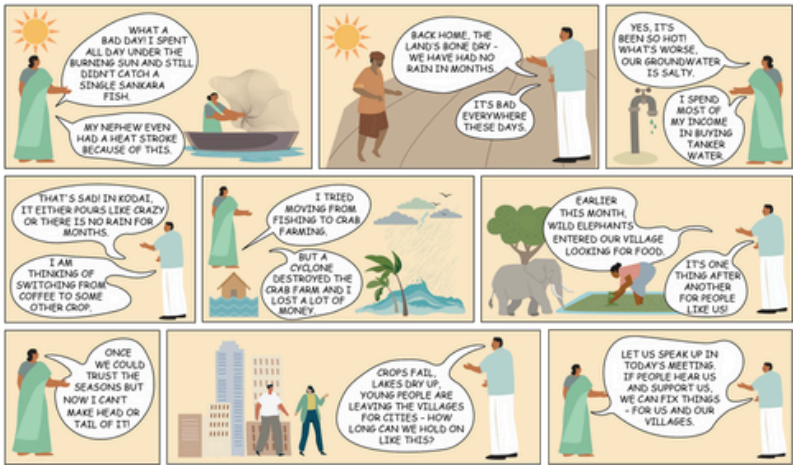
Climate Resilient Villages program



The Climate Resilient Villages program, under the aegis of the Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission (TNCCM), is a path-breaking initiative spanning 11 pilot sites across the state's most climate-vulnerable districts.

This locally led approach seeks to mainstream climate action in development planning through extensive collaboration with line departments, local bodies, communities and sectoral experts, with a focus on needs-based interventions, to address the challenges faced by marginalized communities.

WHEN THE WEATHER TURNS: A RURAL INDIA STORY



FOSTERING LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION

We support resilience-building of rural communities through a systematic place-based approach rooted in the local people, nature and climate.

SCAN TO KNOW MORE

Gowri, from the fishing community of Killai, meets Thomas, a farmer from the hills of Kodai, at an inter-Gram Sabha meeting in Killai.

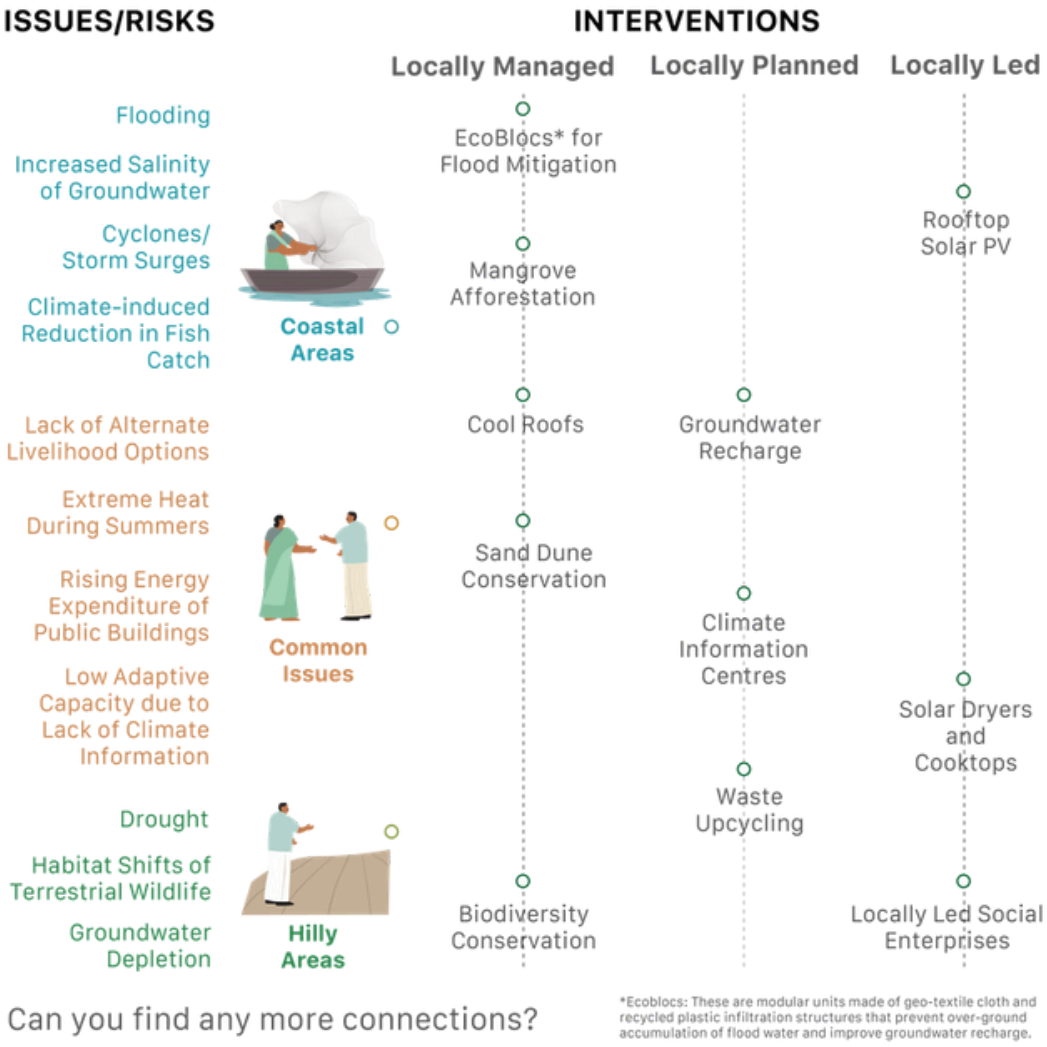
OUR APPROACH

Combining participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques with geospatial insights helps transform the mapping of community needs/resources to identify entry points for rural resilience programs.

*Transect walk: A systematic walk along a defined path (transect) across a project area to observe and analyze local resources, infrastructure and conditions.

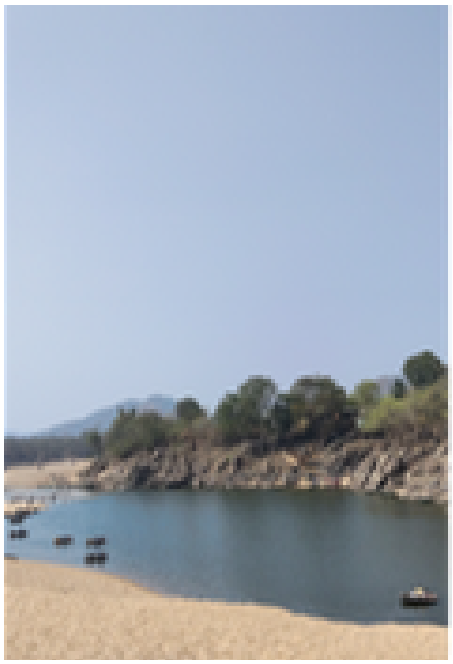
CONNECT THE DOTS

Draw lines between the identified climate risks to possible interventions. Weaving resilience and improved adaptive capacities into the fabric of rural life is key to addressing the impact of climate change.

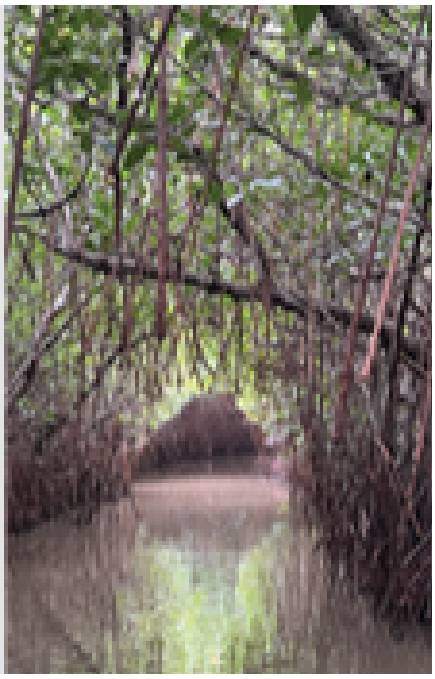


ECOSYSTEMS OF INTEREST

The Climate Resilient Villages program is supporting resilience-building for rural communities across diverse ecosystems.





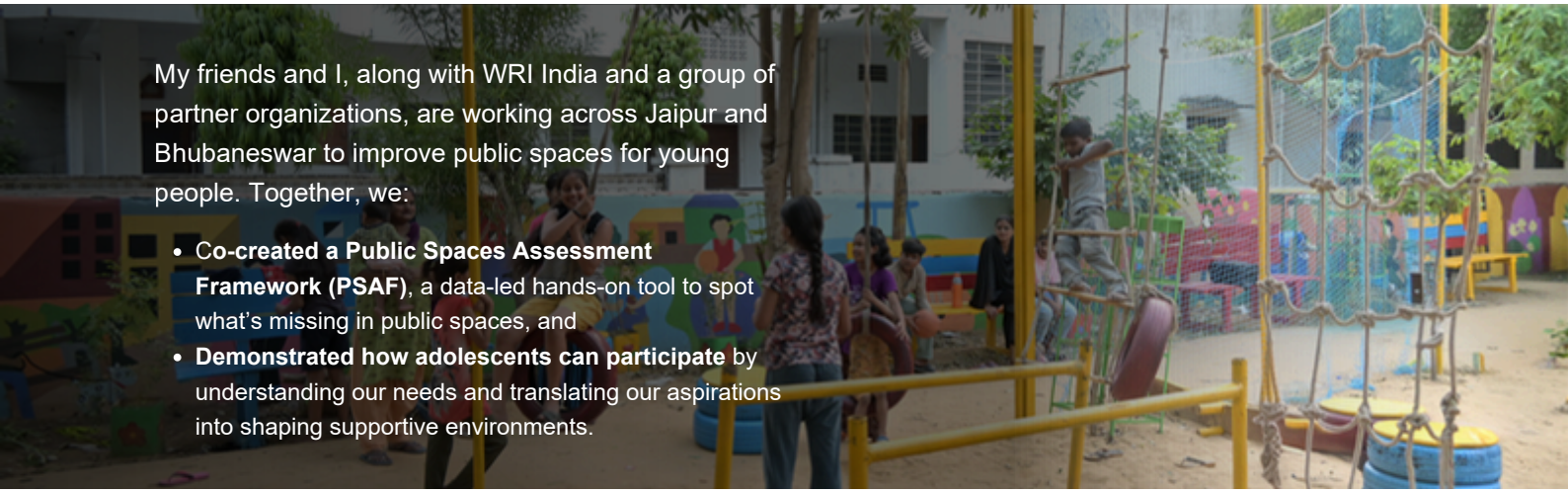



Scan and tell us what can be done to improve rural climate resilience

MAKING SPACE FOR YOUNG VOICES

Creating Safe, Vibrant and Healthy Public Spaces for Adolescents

Hi! I'm Neha. I am 17 years old and I live in Jaipur. Adolescents like me are a big part of India's population – there are 253 million of us!! Yet there are very few public spaces where we feel safe and welcome. No one asked us about the kind of places we want – for play, for learning or simply being ourselves. Until now!



My friends and I, along with WRI India and a group of partner organizations, are working across Jaipur and Bhubaneswar to improve public spaces for young people. Together, we:

- **Co-created a Public Spaces Assessment Framework (PSAF)**, a data-led hands-on tool to spot what's missing in public spaces, and
- **Demonstrated how adolescents can participate** by understanding our needs and translating our aspirations into shaping supportive environments.

We didn't just participate, we took charge by:

1. Talking About It

We talked to our peers, our communities and even city officials to share why adolescent-friendly spaces matter and to bring more voices into the movement.

2. Learning and Sharing

We understood what makes a public space truly inclusive through capacity building workshops, exposure visits, audits and learning exchanges.

3. Making Our Voices Heard

We led workshops, represented our cities in external forums and even joined the project governance council. Yes, we are in the room where decisions are made.

4. Co-Creating the PSAF

We co-designed the PSAF based on our lived realities. It helped us assess public spaces and suggest improvements

5. Shaping Brighter Spaces

Turning ideas into action, we developed solutions and demonstrated it on-ground through a tactical urbanism approach.

So far, we have created **1,200+** Adolescent Public Space Ambassadors and engaged **3,200+** adolescents (*Including* **300+** *adolescents with disabilities*) across these public spaces.

WHAT CHANGED?

CURIOUS WHAT AN ADOLESCENT-FRIENDLY PUBLIC SPACE LOOKS LIKE?

We picked five spaces in Jaipur and Bhubaneswar, assessed them, co-created solutions, developed designs and transformed them through tactical urbanism – quick, low-cost, temporary interventions that serve as a model for creating permanent adolescent-friendly public spaces.

Bhomiya Basti Park, Jaipur

Located within a dense neighbourhood, we navigated gender biases and a lack of community ownership, to create a space that reflected the city's cultural identity which the community could call their own.

Maharana Pratap Park, Jaipur

We helped transform this once-forgotten park into an inclusive, vibrant and multi-functional public space that now serves as a hub for children and adolescents in the community.

Bhima Bhoi Street, Bhubaneswar

We designed this corridor to become a sensory street that engages all five senses, making it inclusive and vibrant – a true celebration of diversity and accessibility.

OUAT Farm Gate, Bhubaneswar

Modeled as an inclusive, taboo-free space on menstrual health, shaped by strong community and local government support, this park is now actively stewarded by the local youth club.

Together, let's build more spaces where adolescents feel seen, safe and empowered.

Healthy Cities for Adolescents | Safe Vibrant and Healthy Public Spaces Bhubaneswar | Jaipur

Reach out to us at: PS4Adolescents@wri.org

Scan to know more

HUMANIZING CITIES THROUGH PUBLIC SPACES

A rapid decline in physical activity and lack of outdoor exposure are widening developmental gaps in children and affecting parental well-being.

With over 37 million children under age 5 living in Indian cities, city planning must prioritize an early childhood and caregiver-centric approach. The Nurturing Neighbourhoods initiative aims to bridge this gap by aligning urban growth with inclusive, child-friendly design to foster healthy development for young children (0–5 years) and enhancing parental well-being. The Nurturing Neighbourhoods program is supported by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in collaboration with the Van Leer Foundation and the technical support of WRI India. The first phase of the program helped to transform over 180 public spaces, improving over 18.5 hectares of public space, thereby positively impacting over 2.3 lakh young children residing in the benefit zone. The program has also trained over 3,000 officials and frontline workers.

Scan to know more

TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SPACES IN CITIES: A COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR

Poovath Street in Kochi Welcomes Play

Dumpyard transformed into play pocket in Warangal

Underutilized flooded open space in Indore transformed into a family-friendly public space

CHAMPIONS DRIVING CHANGE ON GROUND

Mr T K Ashraf,
Ward Councillor & Standing Committee Chairman - Health
Kochi Municipal Corporation

Mobilizing community to take ownership of public spaces for children and women's safety

Smt. Pravinya P,
IAS District Collector,
Sangareddy, Telangana

Incorporating the needs of the most vulnerable in the city's vision

IAnganwadi Teacher, Sanskriti Nagar, Indore Nagar, Indore

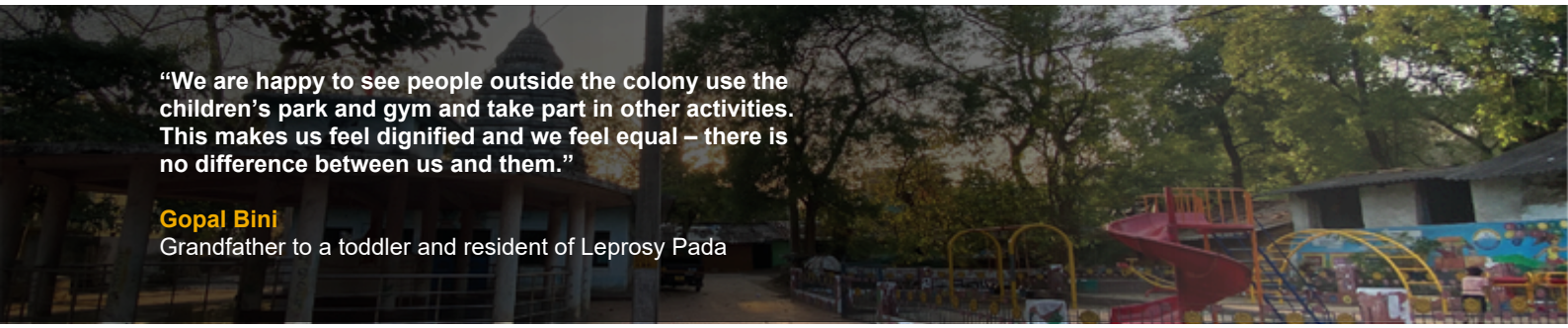
Generating demand for safe and stimulating spaces around Anganwadis for young children

Nurturing Neighbourhoods 2.0

BLURRING BOUNDARIES THROUGH PUBLIC SPACES

The Story of a Leprosy Colony in Odisha

Leprosy Pada, a colony situated on the outskirts of Rourkela, is a transformed neighbourhood. Once cut off from neighbouring communities by a wall, the children of the leprosy-affected residents in the colony, while not infected by the disease, were affected by the stigma around it. A Nurturing Neighbourhoods-led playspace became a catalyst in revitalizing the area which now welcomes all – fostering community interaction and breaking social barriers. Residents feel a renewed sense of belonging, with growing hope for an inclusive future where their children are embraced by the wider urban community.



"We are happy to see people outside the colony use the children's park and gym and take part in other activities. This makes us feel dignified and we feel equal – there is no difference between us and them."

Gopal Bini
Grandfather to a toddler and resident of Leprosy Pada

Children played in unsafe places

Play space actively used by young children

Self-help group meetings are held here

REIMAGINING EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS FOR FAMILIES

Improving Caregiver & Child Access: Lessons from Kochi & Kohima

Kochi and Kohima have successfully created a template for early childhood centers such as Anganwadis and primary health centers to make them more inclusive towards the needs of young children and caregivers. This transformation has breathed new life into these facilities, resulting in these playful public spaces being accessed beyond their operational hours.


Underutilized outdoor space in an Anganwadi in Fort Kochi


Outdoor space transformed into a stimulating play space


Lack of comfortable waiting areas for women and young children


Shaded waiting area and a playful courtyard added in Naga Hospital, Kohima

Testimonials

"Post addition of secure outdoor play space in our Anganwadis, there has been a significant increase in the children's enrollment numbers."

Teacher, Anganwadi 3 & 11, Fort Kochi

"When children come to a hospital, they can only think of injections and feel scared and stressed. But when they see such playful spaces inside the premises, it helps to engage their minds and they feel relaxed."

Dr. Sentimeren Aonok, Managing Director, Naga Hospital, Kohima

GROWING RESILIENCE

Co-Designing Sustainable Landscapes with Gadchiroli's Communities

In Gadchiroli, a predominantly rainfed tribal district of Maharashtra, communities grapple with limited livelihood opportunities, malnutrition and climate stress. Agriculture here is largely restricted to rainfed paddy monocropping, leaving fields fallow after the monsoon.

Taking the landscape approach, WRI India and partners used the adapted Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) to identify interventions for ecosystem restoration, focusing on improving ecosystem conditions through sustainable land management practices and stakeholder collaboration. The women of Bharritola village are leading a quiet transformation as they gather to build their village's first bio-resource center.

We went to the jungle, collected wood and other raw material in a bullock cart, and built this bio-resource center. It was just us — women.

Our only motivation is to restore the health of the soil, which has been deteriorating. Only then can we grow our food.

This collective effort by Gadchiroli's tribal women is a strong demonstration of community-led efforts towards transitioning to sustainable agriculture.

Only 16% of the area in Gadchiroli district is under cultivation, of which over 75% is rainfed

The district faces a multitude of challenges, including soil erosion, monocropping and limited irrigation, leaving both people and land vulnerable to climate risks. In 2022, WRI India and Amhi Amchya Arogyasathi (AAA), along with Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) India, collaborated with the Gadchiroli district administration to launch an initiative on ecosystem restoration and sustainable agriculture.

Using a landscape approach, interventions were identified for agriculture, forest and water resources in the district. These interventions can help bring rice fallows under cultivation, promote crop and income diversification, increase food production and improve farmers' resilience to climate variability.

Additionally, they also enhance the flow of key ecosystem services, such as food, fodder, fuelwood, minor forest produce, soil and water conservation and biodiversity conservation for the local communities.

For residents of Gadchiroli, these efforts go beyond improved crop yields — they promise food and nutrition security, climate resilience, and renewed hope for future generations.

CURRENTS OF CHANGE

Shaping Water Security with Communities

Here's the paradox: Our water taps ran dry, yet our streets would flood! Clogged drains, piling garbage and vanishing open spaces shaped how we lived.

WHO ARE WE, YOU ASK?

We are residents of Delhi, with homes in Bakkarwala and Mubarakpur Dabas. Until a few years ago, one question kept surfacing: even with piped connections, why did we still feel insecure about water access?

OUR EXPERIENCES SPOKE VOLUMES

With irregular piped supply, we relied on tankers. Sometimes they came on alternate days or not at all. We could never be sure...

Our elders and persons with disabilities can't line up for water, while women wait endlessly for their turn — all while managing housework.

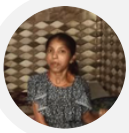
...and when they did come, there was still not enough water. How could we clean our homes and bathe and cook?

DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR? IT'S A STORY THAT PLAYS OUT ACROSS INDIAN CITIES.

What if our stories could spur action?

So we came together and learned, step by step, side by side.

Eco-bricks from waste plastics	Greening	Vector surveillance	Rainwater harvesting
Composting	Waste segregation	Formulating bioenzyme	Water quality testing



"I face many challenges due to my limited mobility. Joining other women in community action groups made me feel empowered. My opinions matter and I feel my voice is now being heard."

-Ms Neetaben, *Resident of Bakkarwala*

"We learnt how to approach officials and if we share our concerns together, they listen. When we presented our water test results, they followed up with their own tests. It felt like a win for all of us."

-Parmila, *Resident of Meet Vihar*

"Earlier, I couldn't bring my tricycle wheelchair to the park. Now, I can enjoy the park morning and evening."

Shyam, Resident of Bakkarwala

The community developed the barrier-free G-block park in Bakkarwala to be accessible, greener and playful.

While we learnt from experts, we shared our knowledge too...

...after all, who knew our water better than us? We mapped, measured and documented data to reshape the system.

We made sure no resident was left out of the decision-making process!

"We're included in decision-making now and approach officials collectively on issues related to our homes."
Women residents of Bakkarwala

Women residents map sites for planting in Mubarakpur Dabas.

"When we found just 8% homes had piped water, we gathered 1,000+ signatures and successfully appealed for new pipelines."

-Sita, *Resident of Bakkarwala*

62 household rainwater harvesting units

2,000+ dustbins distributed for wet and dry waste

1,200 square meter barrier-free park developed

1,000+ residents campaigned and got new water pipelines

2,000+ residents part of trainings and campaigns

The Australia India Water Security Initiative (AIWASI), supported by WRI India, works with two communities in Delhi to transition them toward water security

DRIVING EQUITY THROUGH INCLUSIVE TRANSPORT

Every journey through a city is an opportunity to work, learn, connect and thrive. To unlock these opportunities, mobility must be made more accessible, safe and comfortable — especially for women.

Traditionally, urban transport has prioritized the peak-hour journeys of working men, however, women travel differently. Their trips are often shorter, more frequent, and spread throughout the day, tied to caregiving or informal work.

Our study* of over 2,000 women bus users shows the fare-free bus scheme enabled women to travel farther and to more places of interest. On average, their trip distance increased, expanding their access to jobs from 18% to 33%. This is not just improved mobility. This is expanded opportunity.

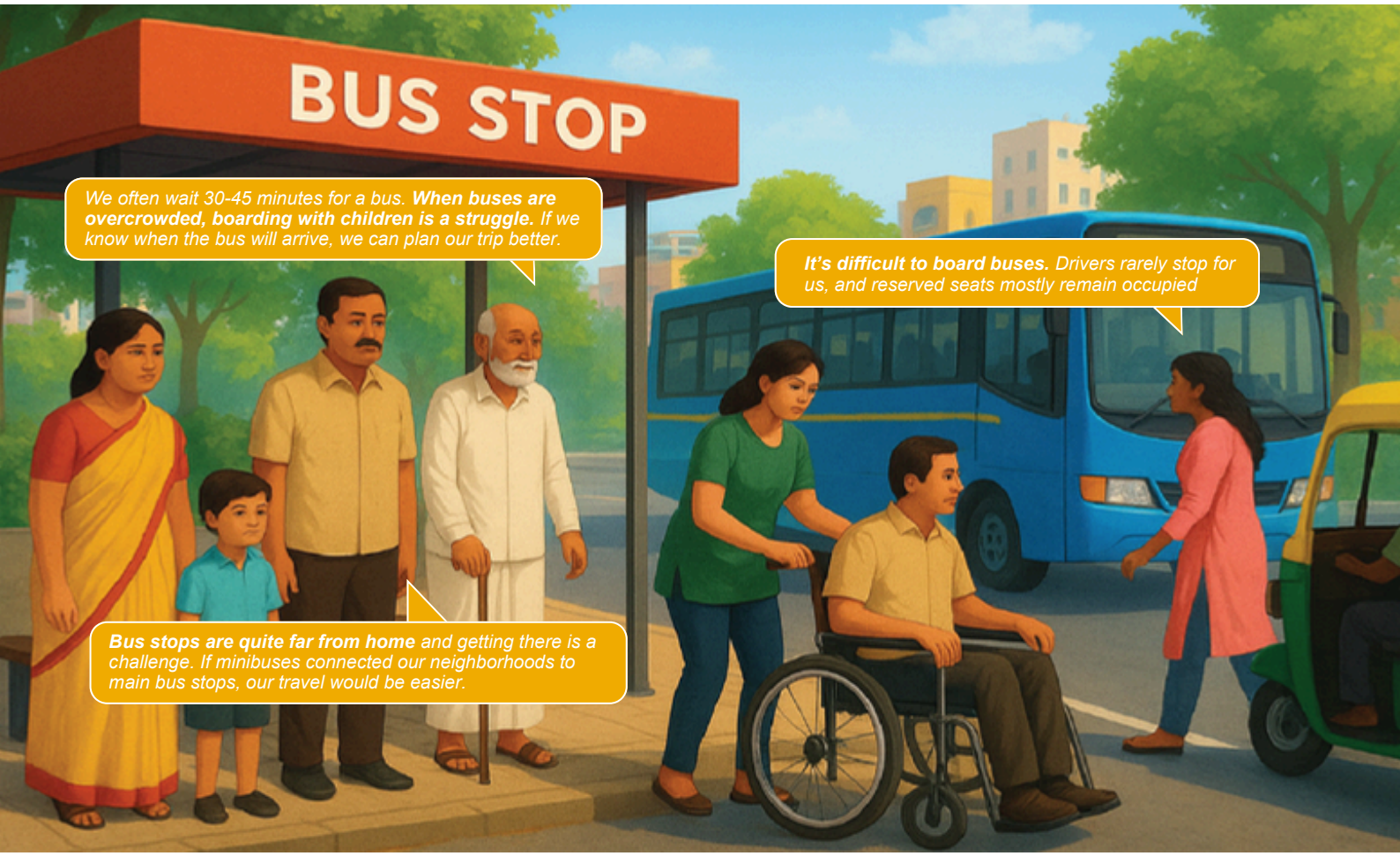
* H. Jamba, A. Devaraj and C. Kanuri. 2025. “Fare-free bus travel scheme for women: Lessons from Delhi.” Working Paper. New Delhi: WRI India. Available online: https://doi.org/10.46830/wriwp.23.00055

Embedding participatory approaches helps move cities toward equity, safety and inclusion.

No one knows a neighborhood better than the people who live there – the shortcut gullies, the crossings to avoid, the challenges of getting to the nearest metro station. Meaningful, lasting change emerges when communities partner in crafting solutions. In 2024, the Bengaluru chapter of the MobiliseHER initiative brought together residents from over eight neighborhoods. Over 300 people — men, women, adolescent boys and girls, transgenders, and people with disabilities — shared their everyday mobility experiences through focused group discussions and participatory urban audits.

MobiliseHER is a three-year project, co-funded by EuropeAid, to enable gender-responsive urban mobility and create more accessible and inclusive infrastructure and services, undertaken in partnership with Urban Electric Mobility Initiative (UEMI), WRI India, CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) and Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) India.

SCAN TO KNOW MORE
mobiliseher-urbanmobility.org



These insights were synthesized and reshared through community ideation workshops. Together, we validated the findings and proposed practical, hyperlocal solutions.

More reliable and connected transit options

Increase the frequency of buses and create more routes that link key destinations and transit hubs. They also stressed the need for feeder services such as smaller minibuses that connect neighborhoods to metro stations and major roads.

Basic amenities for comfort, safety and dignity

People need basic infrastructure such as seating, shelter, clear signage and ramps, as well as clean toilets and drinking water

Safe access to transport systems

Participants spoke of dark streets near bus stops and the need to relocate liquor shops and smoking joints, away from transit areas. They also called for basic street lighting, regular police patrols and the installation of CCTV cameras

Sensitizing staff

Bus staff need to be trained in gender-sensitive behavior, so that respect becomes the norm for passengers and staff alike

STORIES THAT MATTER

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES FOR EVERYDAY RESILIENCE

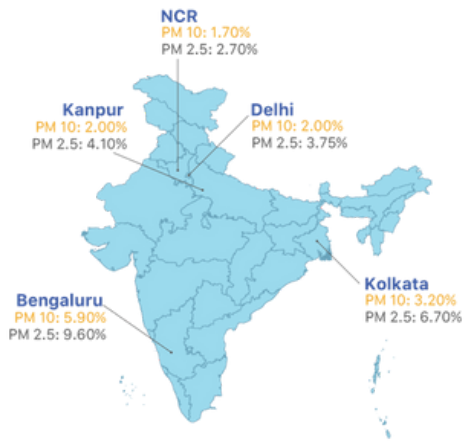
FROM SMOKE TO SOLUTIONS

Turning the Tide on Waste Burning in India

Did you know that open waste burning, driven by inefficient waste management and behavioral problems, constitutes up to 10% of emission contributions in Indian cities?

This exposes people to harmful pollutants linked to respiratory, cardiovascular and other health risks. Given the urgency of this issue, it is essential to leverage data to close knowledge gaps and strengthen waste management practices.

Particulate matter (PM) contribution of Municipal solid waste (MSW) burning



DISCLAIMER: This map is for illustrative purpose and does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WRI, concerning the legal status of any country or territory or concerning the delimitation of frontiers or boundaries.

Data sources
Delhi and NCR: Source Apportionment of PM2.5 & PM10 of Delhi NCR for Identification of Major Sources, TERI & ARAI 2018
Kanpur: Air Quality Assessment, Trend Analysis, Emission, Inventory and Source Apportionment Study in Kanpur city, IIT Kanpur 2022
Bengaluru: Identification of Polluting Sources for Bengaluru, Source Apportionment Study, CSTEP 2022
Kolkata: PM10 and PM2.5 Source Apportionment Study, Kolkata, NEERI 2019

Vadodara is Gujarat's third-largest city and a non-attainment city, under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). Open waste burning is one of the key contributors to its air pollution challenges

WHAT IS A NON-ATTAINMENT CITY?
Cities that fail to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for five years in a row are termed as "non-attainment" cities.

Seasonal field studies (transect methodology), conducted by WRI India, revealed households, shops and small businesses, factories, and Safai Mitras (sanitation workers) often burned waste. In fact, open waste burning is not isolated but systemic, rooted in poor urban waste management, low public awareness and everyday disposal habits.

SAFAI MITRAS: AGENTS OF CHANGE

In collaboration with Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC), WRI India raises awareness and trains Safai Mitras (sanitation workers) who play a critical role in managing waste. To date, nearly 955 Safai Mitras have been trained on the health impacts of waste burning across 19 municipal wards.

Following the sensitization sessions, Safai Mitras actively worked to reduce waste burning incidents. They also became agents of change, discouraging and preventing others from burning waste. In support of these efforts, VMC strengthened its waste management systems and addressed infrastructure and supervision gaps. These measures resulted in up to a 36% decrease in burning incidents in identified hotspots.

"Before the workshop, burning waste was just something I did. We didn't know it was harming us, our families and the air we all breathe. The sensitization workshop helped us understand that every fire lit was adding pollution to the sky. Now, with knowledge and support, I have let go of old habits. I feel proud to be part of the change, knowing that our actions are helping clean the air for everyone."

- Champaben Solanki, VMC sweeper

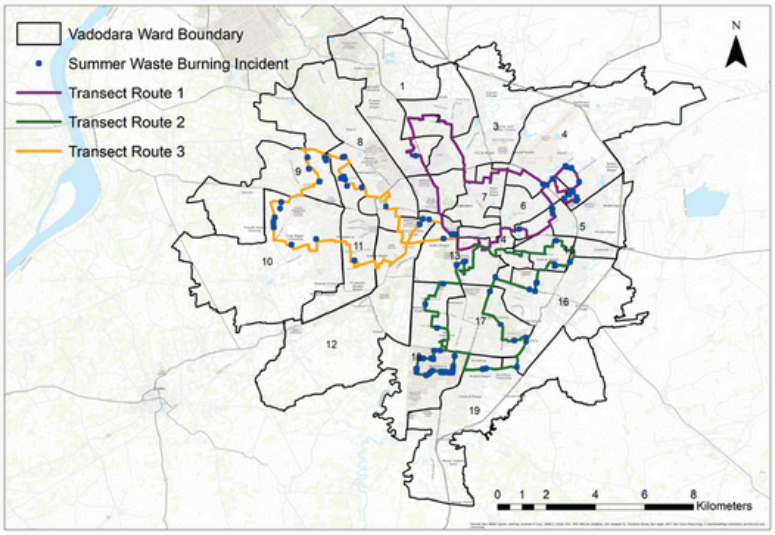
"I never burned garbage myself, but I often saw others—especially shopkeepers—doing it right outside their shops, even after the collection vehicles had passed. I didn't stop them, not because I didn't care, but because I didn't know how harmful it really was. The training changed that. It made me realize that staying silent was also part of the problem. Now, I speak up and request others not to burn waste."

- Rameshbhai Harijan, VMC sanitation worker

HOW TO CONDUCT TRANSECT WALKS

A transect walk is a systematic walk along a defined path (transect) across an area, by a survey team, to observe and assess conditions – in this case the prevalence and distribution of open waste burning.

Municipal solid waste (MSW) burning survey transect routes during summer in 2023.



Transect walk survey map (2023)

The city is divided into zones based on socio-economic status and land use patterns.

Survey routes, called transects, are laid out along streets and roads within selected wards to represent these zones.

Field teams then walk or drive along each of these transect routes during the morning and evening for three consecutive days and are repeated across seasons.

As part of each day's transect sampling, the number of MSW burning incidences are recorded, including latitude and longitude waypoints of each burning incident, rough mass and composition.

This is then geo-tagged and documented, thereby providing spatial and seasonal insights into open burning practices.

CATALYZING COLLABORATIVE ACTION TO REDUCE FOOD LOSS AND FOOD WASTE

Reducing food loss and food waste improves access to affordable nutrition, eases pressure on natural resources, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and ensures better incomes for all stakeholders engaged across the food supply chain.

In India, food loss and food waste account for a considerable loss of farmer income, impacting small and marginal farmers disproportionately, who constitute 86% of India's farming population. In addition, it affects the environment by straining vital resources, such as land and water, and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, while also undermining people's nutritional security.

REDUCING FOOD LOSS AND FOOD WASTE OFFERS A TRIPLE WIN

- Generates economic gains for farmers
- Mitigates greenhouse gas emissions and reduces pressure on land and water resources
- Improves access to nutritious food

The economic value of post-harvest losses was estimated at approximately ₹1,52,790 crore (US$18.5 billion) in 2020-211 . Households waste 78.2 million tonnes of food annually or 55 kg per person per year

Source: 1. NABCONS, 2022 and 2. UNEP, 2024)

FOLLOWING THE TOMATO TRAI

As Sushma and Anil explain, food losses are almost unavoidable in tomato farming — “If we do not sell the tomatoes in time, the tomatoes will end up selling us out.” These challenges extend across the supply chain. Traders and retailers face their own struggles as truckloads of perishable crops spoil before they even reach customers. Losses like these trap farmers push farmers deeper in debt.

In a small, predominantly tribal village in Madhya Pradesh’s Jhabua district, Sushma and her husband Anil toil hard to cultivate tomatoes on their small parcel of land. The income from their crop sustains their household and helps them repay their farming loans. But the risks are high. Weather shifts, pest infestations and falling prices can turn a season of hard work into loss.

BUILDING A RESILIENT PATH: FROM FARM TO MARKET

WRI India is working in Indore and Pune to design strategies that can cut food waste at source. This includes partnering with the respective municipalities and agricultural institutions to improve postharvest practices for crops like onions and garlic. Other initiatives, like the **Friends of Champions 12.3 India Network**, continue to bring together diverse stakeholders, including startups, industry leaders, development institutions, grassroot organization and government bodies, fostering knowledge sharing and innovation to reduce food loss and food waste across the supply chain.

We nurture crops like children and raise them from small to big. When the crop gets ruined, you can imagine how much pain that causes.

TOWARDS A CLIMATE FORWARD BENGALURU

A multi-stakeholder driven collaborative effort, the Bengaluru Climate Action and Resilience Plan (BCAP) was launched in 2023. With WRI India and C40 Cities as technical partners, this comprehensive roadmap features 266 actions across seven sectors:

To facilitate implementation of the plan, BBMP constituted a Climate Action Cell (CAC) in early 2024. The Cell's focus is to drive coordinated climate action, in collaboration with the government, the private sector and communities.

CONNECTING WITH CITIZEN GROUPS

Home to numerous active citizen groups and forums driving local climate solutions, Bengaluru recently celebrated its efforts through the BluGreen Awards, recognizing community-led initiatives that are advancing the city's climate goals.

"The BCAP provides a common language for conversations and collaborations aimed at furthering city-level climate action.We have used the BCAP template to organize multiple campaigns and programs, at the community-level, on energy and water consumption as well as solid waste management. We are now seeing focused results."
Vikram Rai, President, Bangalore Apartments Federation

CREATING STUDENT CHAMPIONS

Empowering young changemakers through education and engagement, this initiative is seeing over 700 schools and colleges joining hands to take collective action against climate change

"By sharply focusing Bengaluru's climate response on energy, biodiversity, solid waste, and water – and empowering every resident to act – we begin to truly own our homes, schools, colleges and workplaces. It's time to move beyond slogans and towards the challenge across everyday actions that build a resilient, greener Bengaluru."

Priya Krishnamurthy, Co-founder and CEO, Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA)

ENGAGING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The Climate Action Cell (CAC), through its fellowship and internship programs, aims to create climate stewards by equipping them with the knowledge and skill sets to facilitate implementation of the BCAP across all levels of the government.

"As a young professional passionate about climate action, being a CAC Fellow has enabled me to work at the intersection of governance and community. It's been an empowering space to localize climate goals into real, grounded actions through ward-level planning and collaboration."

Meghana B, Fellow - Partner Engagement and Cell Coordination, Bengaluru Climate Action Cell

SUPPORTING WARD-LEVEL ACTION

CAC is drawing on the expertise of community-level organizations, civil society groups and resident welfare associations to implement ward-level climate actions.

"This is a promising model for localized climate governance. The co-production of knowledge and action is strengthening local institutions, making climate responses more rooted along with ensuring efforts reflect both science and justice."

Akbar Allahbaksh, Fellow - Partner Engagement and Cell Coordination, Bengaluru Climate Action Cell

UNLOCKING PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Mainstreaming climate actions, and ensuring its long-term sustainability, requires both public and private capital. Towards this end, CAC recently hosted a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) convening focused on aligning corporate efforts with the BCAP.

FOREGROUNDING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Fair Urban Transition (FUT) is a collective of nine organizations building resilience towards climate change by bridging hyperlocal climate realities and community-led action with broader city-level strategies.

"Leveraging the momentum created by BCAP, the FUT collective has created a space for collaboration to address challenges faced by climate impacted marginalized communities and migrant workers to emphasize the importance of inclusive, fair and just climate resilience actions."

Avinash Krishnamurthy, Executive Director, Biome Environmental Trust

CREATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The #BluGreenUru initiative is working to expand green cover, restore lakes, rejuvenate stormwater systems and promote recharge wells. CAC, along with partners WRI India and others, is developing standard operating procedures that will offer practical, metric-driven and science-based guidance to strengthen on-ground coordination and implementation

"It is good the Cell recognizes the importance of civil society collaborators engaging with the city government.This doing-and-learning process will further inform the evolution of the Cell into an effective vehicle of climate action."

Avinash Krishnamurthy, Executive Director, Biome Environmental Trust

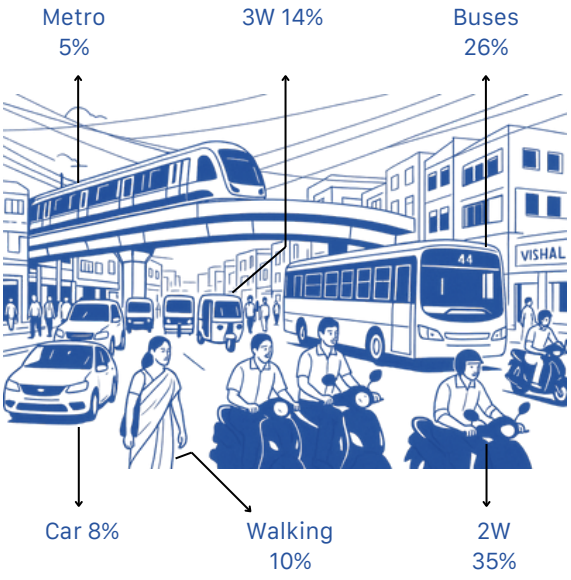
SHIFTING GEARS

How Behavioral Science Nudges Commuters Towards Public Transit

Did you know that open waste burning, driven by inefficient waste management and behavioral problems, constitutes up to 10% of emission contributions in Indian cities?

With more than 1,00,000 personal vehicles being registered every month in Bengaluru, the city's roads are struggling to accommodate the load. Despite significant investments in the metro and bus systems, public transport ridership remains far below the system's capacity.

> ***"The Bengaluru metro is definitely a convenient and reliable option. But I live over 5 kilometers away from the nearest station. With recent fare changes, a round trip can really add up, especially when you include to and fro auto charges. We need better and cheaper public transport connections to metro stations."***
>
> **-Sanjana Bhat,** Metro commuter in Bengaluru

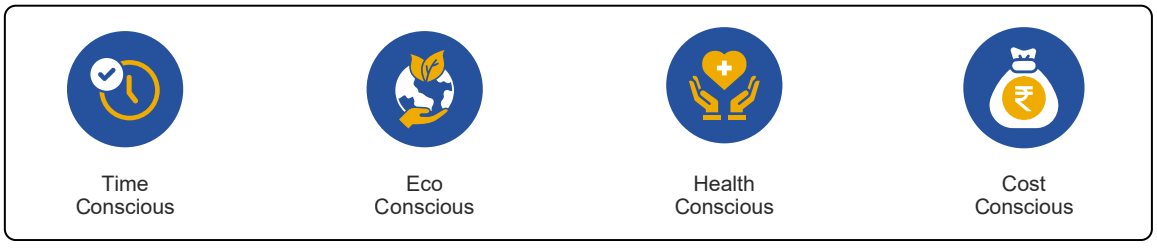


Bengaluru commuters also grapple with higher last-mile costs, as compared to commuters in Nagpur and Delhi, making the metro a less attractive option.

The recently launched Yellow Namma Metro Line connects R.V. Road to Bommasandra traversing through Electronics City – one of Bengaluru's largest employment hubs. The new line brings over 2,00,000 jobs closer to the metro network and improves access between the southern industrial corridor and the rest of the city, opening possibilities for a meaningful shift toward public transport.

Since commuting decisions are not always rational or cost-based, but often shaped by habits, perceptions and social norms, enterprises are now asking the question: can behavioral science-based solutions help nudge more commuters toward shared and sustainable mobility options?

What kind of commuter are you?



To help Bengaluru commuters make the shift from personal to public transportation, Nippon Koei, Tummoc, CommuteQ and Orbit Wallet are participating in the **STAMP: Nudging Commuter Behaviour Challenge**, led by Toyota Mobility Foundation and WRI India. Over the next 10 months, we will work together to leverage behavioral science and build technology-based solutions to help employees in Electronics City shift from personal vehicles to public transport.

MAKING THE METRO MAKE SENSE: HOW SUBTLE SHIFTS CAN DRIVE BIG CHANGE

Large infrastructure projects, like metros, take years to implement, but digital technologies can provide immediate, adaptable solutions to urban congestion, seamlessly evolving with changing needs. Nippon's plan is to support Bengaluru's transition by using a localized mobile application integrated with a suite of digital nudging tools to generate customer personas using their mobility analytics algorithms.

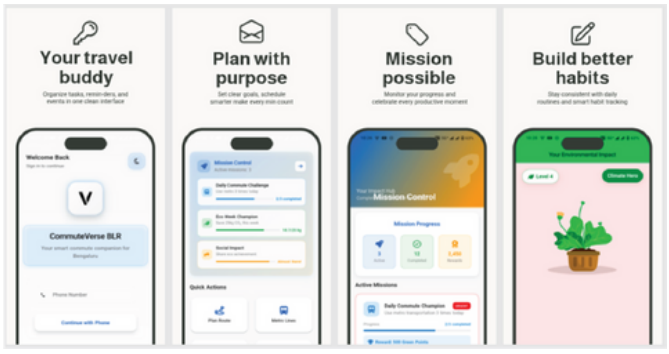
"When you combine long-term transit-oriented development (TOD) vision with scientifically designed nudging, you create sustainable behavioural change that builds truly car-lite, transit-centred communities."
- Kunihiro Uzawa, *General Manager, Nippon Koei*

Meanwhile, Bengaluru-based Monalisha Thakur is working with her team to apply behavioral science to mobility, using well-timed nudges and meaningful rewards to make public transport the natural choice.

"At Tummoc, our vision is to shape sustainable cities through smarter, people-centered mobility, where every commute contributes positively to climate goals. By making commuting seamless and rewarding, we're driving a lasting modal shift and empowering daily routines to align with climate action."

- Monalisha Thakur, *CMO & Co-founder of Tummoc*

Tummoc uses real-time cues and personalized prompts to encourage commuters to shift from private vehicles to public transportation, supporting companies in Electronics City with their Scope 3 emission reduction goals.



"Local ecosystem players – such as ELCIA – become enablers of last-mile solutions and better planning. Additionally, transit agencies get real-time insights into commuter pain points — where is the wait longest, where does the shift to shared mobility need support — enabling targeted interventions instead of top-down guesswork. At its core, CommuteQ is about restoring agency to the commuter and reimagining our cities around the people who move through them every day."

- Dr. Agnivesh Pani,
Founder, CommuteQ

"Our mission is to make urban mobility inclusive and accessible. It's been inspiring to see more commuters choose public transport, using digital payments and feeling empowered."

-Harshavardan Zaveri,
CEO, Orbit Wallet

Orbit Wallet is using technology to lower financial and social barriers by expanding access to tap-and-go travel and digital payments, including for people new to banking and public transportation. The company is working with ELCIA to encourage employees to use public transportation through the National Common Mobility Card, which can be used on metro and bus services in several Indian cities. Each ride earns carbon points that feed into a leaderboard, allowing companies to track the total points accumulated by their employees.

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