

Outcome Document of WSF ‘Climate Change – What Individuals Can do’ Webinar 29 July 2023

The containment of the increase in global temperatures to below 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2030 is at the heart of the SDGs. It is well understood that this is not only a matter of climate science and technology but a fundamental change in lifestyle for individuals, households, communities, economies, and nations – while ending the development deficit in terms of poverty, hunger & malnutrition, ill-health, illiteracy, gender discrimination, basic services and an entire gamut of growth and equity issues and governance challenges.

Sustainability is at the heart of it all. The concept and practices of sustainability are of course grounded in indigenous traditions and scriptures across the globe. Within the Indic civilizational sphere, the relationship between Prakriti and Purusha (Nature and Humanity) is one of mutual sustenance and beneficiation.

The World SDG Forum (WSF) is based on this very understanding and aims to build up a global alliance of SDG interventions (and interventionists), distinct from the exalted circle of policy gurus, experts, national and global agencies, etc.

As a community of practitioners (www.sdginterventions.org), the WSF has its mandate and vision enshrined in the Chitrakoot Declaration, driven by successive International Conferences on SDGs, held at Chitrakoot in April 2022 and February 2023. Under the aegis of the WSF, the webinar series is intended to build up the conversations on how to learn from practice and accelerate the achievement of SDGs.

Under the rubric of the SDGs, three goals focus specifically on environment and ecology – climate change (Goal 13), life under water (Goal 14) and life on land (Goal 15). These three goals are of course related to progress under the social development, and economic growth goals, the targets for climate change action, ocean conservation and protection of land ecosystems (water, forests, and land) have a direct bearing on arresting climate change. These three goals are also the intersection between the Paris Treaty under the UNFCC and the 2030 Agenda under the UNGA Resolution.

“Taking urgent action to combat [climate change](#) and its devastating impacts is therefore imperative to save lives and livelihood, and key to making [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its [17 Goals](#) – the blueprint for a better future – a reality”

Comparatively less attention is given to the role of individuals in tackling climate change. India has taken up the credo of LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) and the High Principles for LiFE under the G20 consultations have indeed amplified the imperative for a new mode of lifestyles.

It is therefore timely and moot to focus on the role of individuals to arrest the spiral of climate change – to reduce the carbon footprint, clean up the oceans and stop the degradation of land, water bodies and forests.

The keynote speakers at the webinar included practitioners of volunteer-based beach cleanup, forest restoration and private sector partnership to remove ocean plastics and practice leaders from UN and international agencies. We also heard from grassroots interventions from the Indian hinterland and an interactive discussion regarding what works and how to obtain a way forward for replication and upscaling.

Nick Anthony, co-founder of SEEK provided insights into removal of microplastics from oceans, mountainsides, and urban gutters. shared his journey towards climate change adaptation working in 25 countries (beginning with Phuket in Thailand) with beach and mountain communities and experience in removing ocean plastic, including in partnership with Health ministries that tend to be stable despite changes in political regime. Individual action against climate change is relevant as it is context specific – across religions, cultures, and countries. In India, plastic waste especially microplastics that last for over 500 years, gets accumulated not only in cities and plains but also at riverheads and riverbanks. It is a moving tapestry. For India, four geography-based (mountain, rural, urban, and coastal) solutions can be found, and individuals triggered to act – from the Himalayas to the Oceans. He stated that sustainable solutions require cohesive communities – and Chitrakoot model for fostering community solidarity can be most suitable.

Sarabjeet Singh Sahota, UNICEF shared his experience with UNICEF working on Behaviour Change communication in urban settings. He spoke on scaling down to scale up – arguing that in the case of climate change the risk is global but resilience has to be local – hence individuals have a key role. The solutions have to be at two levels – changes in individual behaviour and changes in social norms. Mission LiFE focus on 75 behaviours and these must become default behaviours.

Agriculture (and allied industries including animal husbandry) not only accounts for nearly a third of global emissions but also provides employment to more than half the world's population and food and feed for the entire planet (human and animal population in toto).

Dr M Prabhakar (Indian Council of Agricultural Research's Central Institute for Dryland Agriculture/ ICAR-CRIDA) shared perspective as to how farmers as individuals and risk taking entrepreneurs can combat climate change. He explained that farmers can adopt climate resilient technologies on their fields, and that this has already been undertaken under the ICAR project on Climate Resilient Villages – 446 villages in 151 village clusters with demonstrated success of 352 technologies benefiting 183, 752 households. It would now be critical for to understand the process and share it under the umbrella of the World SDG Forum (WSF).

Mayank Gandhi shared his perspectives for SDG interventions based on his experience of very large-scale afforestation. He showed that a sustained collective of individuals drawn from local communities can go well beyond the performance of government agencies. He explained that while climate change seems to be on a roll, individuals can make a big difference as they have a key role in promoting partnerships across civil society organisations as also demanding accountability from large programs and projects.

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Padmashri Umashankar Pandey, a SDG interventionist mentored by Nanaji Deshmukh and Deendayal Research Institute, shared his experience of combating climate change in Banda district, UP. He pointed out that growing up in a water-scarce landscape where daily availability of water was 100 gm – hardly enough to even bathe oneself, he had understood the importance of water conservation and revival of water bodies. The initiative “Medh per Ped” – Tree on Field Boundary – had succeeded on a very large scale and now the focus was also on fruit bearing trees that would totally transform the arid landscape in this part of Bundelkhand.

The Q&A and open discussion at the Webinar affirmed that individuals – as consumers and producers and community leaders- have a central role in combating climate change and it would now be important to sustain engagement and build platforms for sharing knowledge and processes of good practices. WSF and its partners need to understand process, map them and disseminate widely both online and through its offline and hybrid mode consultations and knowledge management forum.