



50
YEARS IN INDIA



A sustainable, inclusive and resilient economy can only be achieved by safeguarding nature and the valuable services it provides.

Nature loss from forest, soil and water degradation undermines the foundation of human prosperity and well-being. It threatens the varied ecosystem services which sustain us and our food security, and has devastating impacts on people and biodiversity.

Reversing the loss of biodiversity, preventing land degradation and adopting sustainable development pathways are critical to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and the planet.



HUMAN WELL-BEING IS INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

400 MILLION PEOPLE

Natural ecosystems provide food, water and livelihood to over 400 million people.

These ecosystems are in danger due to overexploitation, habitat fragmentation, degradation of land and pollution. With the degradation of ecosystems, we stand to lose the life-giving services they provide and become more vulnerable to environmental disasters and diseases.



7.5 LAKH WETLANDS

Wetlands occupy an area of 15.3 million hectares (mha) in India and provide a host of ecosystem goods and services.

Drinking water, food and irrigation for crops are among the biggest benefits we draw from our wetlands, with 690 km³ of surface water available for different uses. However, 90% of India's major surface waters are affected by pollution and encroachment.

India's 20 river basins are home to 932 million people. Fourteen of these river basins are expected to suffer from water scarcity by 2050, making India one of the most water stressed countries in the world. There are 302 polluted stretches along 275 rivers in the country. Increased pollution and sedimentation in streams and rivers causes decline in fish and other aquatic species. This directly affects the livelihoods of inland fishing communities, who contribute 65% of the fish production in India.



256 WATER STRESSED DISTRICTS



600 million people in these districts are affected with scarcity of drinking water, water for irrigation and for commercial activity.

Groundwater in 1,186 administrative blocks of the water stressed districts is overexploited, and 90-100% of the groundwater is extracted in at least 312 blocks. At this rate, India's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply by 2030.

30% LAND DEGRADED

30% of India's geographical area is degraded.

Erosion by water and wind are the biggest causes of land degradation. While 1.95 mha of land was reclaimed from degradation, an additional 3.63 mha of land became degraded between 2003 and 2015. This directly affects people's livelihoods as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries become less productive due to land degradation.

77 COASTAL DISTRICTS



Over 60 million people live in 77 coastal districts with 3,300 fishing villages and about 1 million sea going fisherfolk.

India's coastal resources are reducing at an alarming rate, affecting both the biodiversity and livelihoods of coastal communities. While India's marine production has increased by nearly 12% in the last decade, coral reefs in the Lakshadweep islands have reduced by a staggering 40%. India's mangroves have reduced by 40% in the last century. Global warming, destruction of mangroves, pollution and urbanisation are the biggest threats to coastal ecosystems and the fishing communities.

7,000 MEDICINAL PLANTS

India is home to 7% of the world's biodiversity, with 15 agro-climatic zones.

More than 7,000 of the 18,000 flowering plants in India are used for their medicinal properties in folk medicine and documented traditional medicine systems like Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy. In addition to being a major resource for the traditional medicine and herbal industry, medicinal plants also provide livelihood and health security to a large section of India's population, especially tribals.



US\$ 1.6 TRILLION

Value of ecosystem services of forests in India is US\$1.6 trillion.

Yet, forests have been getting diverted for non-forest use at the rate of 35,000 hectares per year since 1980.



THE WESTERN GHATS



Map not to scale



50 MILLION PEOPLE

The Western Ghats are home to 50 million people, providing them with food, water and livelihood in Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.



ECONOMIC VALUE CHAIN

The total value of the forest ecosystem, including timber, fuelwood, Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), recreation and carbon is about US\$ 4,151/ha.



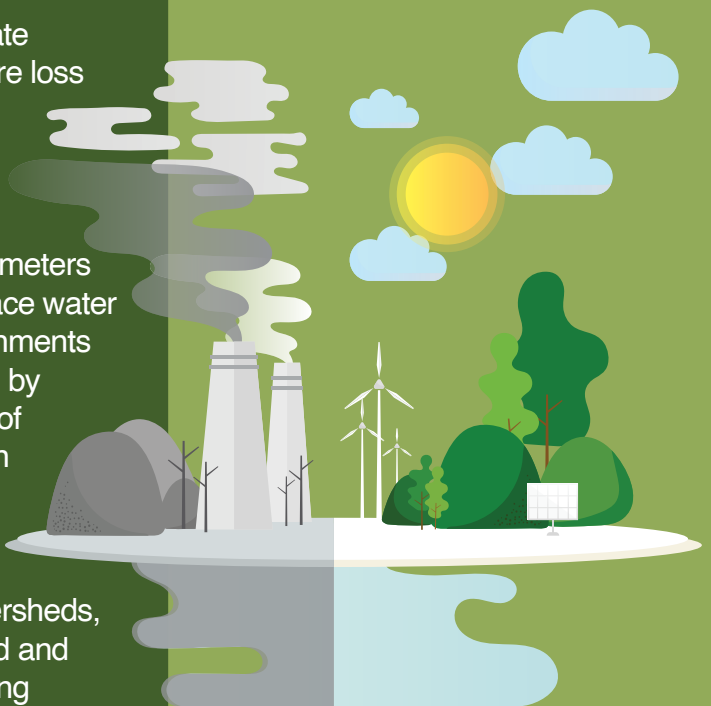
58 MAJOR RIVERS

Western Ghats are home to a majority of watersheds with 58 major Indian rivers originating there.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

India stands to lose these free services and economic benefits from nature permanently if immediate actions to prevent nature loss and degradation are not taken.

India will be requiring 800-1,000 billion cubic meters of water by 2025. Surface water systems and their catchments need to be rejuvenated by large scale application of landscape conservation measures. Improving vegetation cover, preserving catchment areas, conserving watersheds, restoring degraded land and forests, and sequestering rainwater will be vital to achieving water security.



39 million hectares of India's agricultural land is irrigated by groundwater drawn from about 23 million pumps.

Water efficient agriculture and efficient use of land can relieve this enormous stress on groundwater.



22% of Indian population lives below the poverty line, which includes many coastal and forest-fringe communities.

The survival and prosperity of these communities is dependant on sustainable use of natural resources around them and equitable distribution of its benefits. Inclusive planning and development with these communities not only helps achieve poverty alleviation and local livelihood security but also creates local stewards of nature and biodiversity.



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91% of the solid waste generated in India is collected, of which only 23% is treated.

27% of the waste goes into landfills, leading to air and water pollution. Composting, segregation at the source, recycling and safe disposal of solid waste is necessary to prevent India's cities from permanently degrading the environment.

More than 60% of untreated sewage from India's cities enters water bodies, thereby making the water unfit for human consumption.

Currently, only 160 out of about 8,000 towns in India have both sewage system and a sewage treatment plant. Stringent enforcement of sewage and effluent treatment needs to be done to prevent pollution of land, especially wetlands.



Sustainable infrastructure not only protects the environment, but also improves the quality of life.

It has the potential to greatly enhance the quality of nature by reducing pollution, carbon dioxide emissions and energy consumption. For India, creating sustainable infrastructure in energy and power, real estate, roads, water and waste management has to be a priority.





Our natural capital is often used in ways that are economically inefficient and ecologically wasteful. We have also not been very mindful of the social and ecosystem costs of resource depletion. This threatens the long-term sustainability of the economic growth and social progress that India seeks to achieve. Despite being a fast growing economy, 22% of our population still lives in poverty, our dense forests are reducing and crucial ecosystem services are under threat. We need to urgently adopt green and sustainable development pathways to achieve economic, social and environmental sustainability. Mainstreaming these pathways across the country is vital to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and secure our future.

