

# **Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE) Movement**

*An India-led global mass movement to nudge individual and community action to preserve the environment.*

## **1. Context**

Environmental degradation and climate change impact ecosystems and populations across the globe. Estimates suggest that if requisite action is not taken against the changing environment, approximately 3 billion<sup>1</sup> people globally could experience chronic water scarcity and the global economy could lose up to 18% of GDP by 2050<sup>2</sup>.

Over the last two decades, several macro measures have been implemented globally to address environmental degradation and climate change, including policy reforms, economic incentives and regulations. Actions required at the level of individuals, communities and institutions, despite their enormous potential, have received limited attention.

## **2. Individual Action and Environment**

Changing individual and community behaviour alone can make a significant dent in the environmental and climate crises. According to the United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP), if one billion people out of the global population of eight billion adopt environment-friendly behaviours in their daily lives, global carbon emissions could drop by approximately 20 percent. Similarly, the 2020 UNDP report ‘The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene’ also highlights that “Humans wield more power over the planet than ever before. In the wake of COVID-19, record-breaking temperatures and spiralling inequality, it is time to use that power to redefine what we mean by progress, where our carbon and consumption footprints are no longer hidden,”

While on one hand the world has focused disproportionately on policy and regulatory measures to address the climate and environmental crisis, on the other hand India has demonstrated multiple successes in tackling longstanding development challenges through large-scale behaviour change movements. Examples include the Swachh Sagar Surakshit Sagar Campaign, the Swachh Bharat Mission, the Ujjwala Scheme, Give-It-Up Campaign and others. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) alone, for instance, led to the construction and use of over 100 million toilets in rural India within a span of 5 years by harnessing the full power of collective action.

## **3. Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE)**

In this context, the concept of ‘Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE)’ was introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 at Glasgow on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021, calling upon the global community of individuals and institutions to drive LiFE as an international mass movement towards “mindful and deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption” to protect and preserve the environment. LiFE puts individual and collective duty on everyone to live a life that is in tune with Earth and does not harm it. Those who practice such a lifestyle are recognised as *Pro Planet People*, under LiFE.

Further, in August 2022, India included LiFE in its updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted to UNFCCC as:

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<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment WG-II Report – Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (2022). <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/>

<sup>2</sup> Swiss Re (2021). The economics of climate change. <https://www.swissre.com/institute/research/topics-and-risk-dialogues/climate-and-natural-catastrophe-risk/expertise-publication-economics-of-climate-change.html>

*“India will put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation, including through a mass movement for ‘LiFE’ – ‘Lifestyle for Environment’ as a key to combating climate change”*

#### 4. Environment-Friendly Traditional Practices in India

Borrowing from the past, operating in the present and focusing on the future, LiFE is conceived as a global movement that builds upon the environment-friendly culture and traditional practices in India. The average carbon footprint per person in India is 1.8 tonnes per year, as compared to the global average of 4.5 tonnes, reflective of the sustainable social norms that govern the lifestyle of Indians<sup>3</sup>.

A distinct focus of knowledge systems developed by indigenous communities in India, for instance, is adaptation to evolving natural ecosystems which in-turn has enabled agrarian communities to effectively adapt to changing environment with practices such as the spring rejuvenation, planting *Neem*, *Banyan* and *Peepal* trees alongside built structures. Varied water harvesting techniques contextual to local conditions are found across India. These techniques included Step Wells of Gujarat and Rajasthan, underground tanks (Tankaa) of Tamil Nadu, check dams (johads) of Rajasthan & Zabo System of Nagaland which deposit the water in pond-like structures on terraced hillsides. Such practices demonstrate how people in India have traditionally exercised judicious utilisation of natural resources.

Individual and household-level practices equally reflect the mindful relationship that Indians have with the environment. Clay utensils, for example, are commonly used for cooking and serving purposes. Across the country, street and public food establishments continue to serve food in plant-based biodegradable utensils (sal tree leaves) and tea in clay pots (kulhad). From water-efficient utensil/clothes washing practices to dietary preferences for plant-based foods to adaptive architectural forms that minimise electricity consumption, several elements of Indian lifestyle can serve as foundations Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE).

#### 5. Mission LiFE

##### **Mission LiFE Objective:**

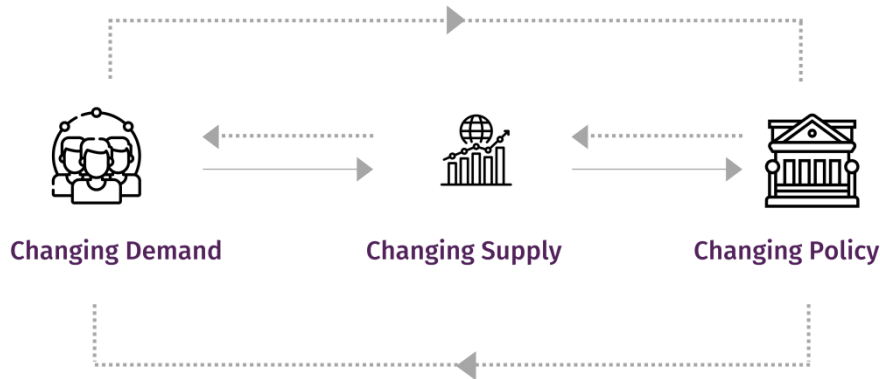
To translate the vision of LiFE into measurable impact, Mission LiFE is designed with an objective to mobilise at least one billion Indians and other global citizens to take individual and collective action for protecting and conserving the environment in the period 2022-23 to 2027-28. Within India, at least 80% of all villages and urban local bodies are aimed to become environment-friendly by 2028.

As a global programme, Mission LiFE envisions three core shifts in our collective approach towards sustainability, achieved in a phased manner:

- **Change in Demand (Phase I):** Nudging individuals across the world to practice simple yet effective environment-friendly actions in their daily lives;
- **Change in Supply (Phase II):** Changes in large scale individual-demand is expected to gradually nudge industries and markets to respond and tailor supply & procurement as per the revised market demands; and

<sup>3</sup> World Bank CO<sub>2</sub> emission data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC?locations=IN-1W>. Accessed on 11.10.22

- **Change in Policy (Phase III):** By influencing the demand and supply dynamics of India and the world, the long-term vision of Mission LiFE is to trigger shifts in large-scale industrial policy and government policy that can support both sustainable consumption and production.



The mission will be incubated, curated and piloted by NITI Aayog and subsequently implemented by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India in a non-linear and non-sequential manner. While a proceeding phase will organically feed into the next phase of Mission LiFE, all phases are equally simultaneous in nature.

## 6. LiFE and Sustainable Development Goals

Environmental degradation is more than just one of the 17 SDGs. It is a threat multiplier with the potential to worsen some of humanity's greatest challenges, including health, poverty and hunger. To support billions of livelihoods, promote growth and investment opportunities, raise the standard of living, and tackle the climate crisis, the world needs to adopt a new paradigm for development. Specifically, the SDGs focused on sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), responsible production and consumption (SDG 12), climate change (SDG 13), or life on land (SDG 15), and life under water (SDG 14) require that all individuals temper their lifestyles in sync with the resources available on the planet. Further, research from the New Climate Economy highlights that bold environmental action could create as many as 65 million jobs by 2030 (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth).

SDG 12, in particular, entails decoupling economic growth and environmental degradation and demands more efficient and environmentally friendly management of resources, including improving energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, access to basic services, and providing green and decent jobs to ensure a better quality of life for all. The societal responsibility towards SDG 12 goes beyond businesses, to involve individual consumers as active participants in the process of achieving this goal.

Given the global commitment to achieving the SDGs by 2030, it is important to note that Mission LiFE contributes directly OR indirectly to almost all the SDGs. Moreover, in view of India's population, any large-scale behaviour change implemented in the country will also make a direct and immediate contribution to the SDGs at a global level. For example, the Swachh Bharat Mission (SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation), by changing the behaviour of 550 million Indians from open defecation to use of toilets, reduced 60% of the one billion open defecators in the world.