

Civil 20 India 2023 Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) Working Group

LiFE is our Responsibility

Policy Brief



LiFE working group of C20 contends that cultural and value-based transformation is needed in global environmental governance.

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Executive Summary

LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) working group of C20 contends that cultural and value-based transformation is needed in global environmental governance. This transformation is packaged into the LiFE. India and many other countries of global south have a great cultural legacy of environment consciousness and sustainable traditions.

LiFE working group has recommended preparing a value-based sustainability framework to guide and assess the progress of countries. Global wellbeing i.e., Sumangalam will be the universal principle of this framework. This framework will include a set of values, concepts, instruments and actionable for individuals and communities. This will bring a much-required holistic perspective

For example, the Bharatiya way (i.e. traditional Indian way) of using any natural resource is frugality i.e. taking only what you need from nature and giving back more than you take. It is observed in almost all traditional communities in the global south. Similarly, it is very important to recognize and make collective efforts to strengthen the 'family' system, which has for ages effectively served in imparting value-based education and conduct of individuals and communities.

to the subject of sustainability. The set of values would include compassion, gratitude, respecting diversity, sense of responsibility, decentralization, harmony, using local resources (and not drawing from far off places) etc. Behavioural indicators, goals and levels of progress can be defined from the set of values. LiFE along with the value-based sustainability framework will bring in paradigm shift from right based approach to responsibility-based approach in global environmental governance.

LiFE is a set of good, desirable practices rooted in cultural traditions, customary practices, grassroots innovations and environmentally conscious contemporary actions. LiFE can complement scientific, political and economic measures of global environmental governance. However it would require close cooperation between the government and society in which societal responsibility would be a little higher than the government.

The working group has deliberated extensively to identify LiFE principles. This policy brief presents recommendations of the working group including building an ecosystem of CSOs and learning alliance that will continue working on LiFE in the future G20 presidencies and in other multilateral forums.

Introduction

India's G20 Presidency is a unique opportunity for the Global South. Current troika of Indonesia, India, Brazil can bring some key issues of the Global South for discussion and policy development on the G20 forum. Cultural and value-based transformation in global environmental governance is one of the areas wherein these three countries, known for their great cultures and sustainable traditions, can synergize.

There exist numerous international multilateral framework conventions directed at reducing human impacts on the environment. These framework conventions provide scientific, economic, and political measures of environmental governance. The effectiveness of these treaties is limited despite the enormous resources spent and efforts put in by the global community in creating and implementing these conventions¹.

Increase in GHG emission, rising global temperature and sea level, pollution of air, water and soil, unprecedented rate of biodiversity extinction and desertification and many more are the symptoms of the global environmental problem. Need to state that most of the international framework conventions for environment are aimed at reducing these symptoms. It is but natural that unless there are concrete global actions on the root cause/s of the problem, addressing the symptoms will have limited results.

Greed, selfishness, and apathy are the root causes of global environmental problems. Therefore scientific, political and economic means of addressing the symptoms are not sufficient to address environmental problems. We need a cultural and value-based transformation to address the root cause.

Voluntary contribution by individual citizens and collectives of individuals in the form of change in lifestyle-extractive to sustainable consumption is important in addressing the environmental problems.

Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)

LiFE embodies Bharatiya Sanskriti (great cultural legacy of India). It is rooted in culture, traditions, customary practices, grassroots innovations and (environmentally) conscious contemporary practices. India and many other countries of the global south have a great legacy of environment consciousness. It is in the form of non-codified (rich folk knowledge existing in oral form with numerous communities, individuals, practitioners) and the codified (treatises in the form of veda, samhita, aranyak, upnishads etc.) forms and thousands of grass root innovations addressing the production-processing-consumption problems at local level.

¹ Reports of COPs of UNFCCC, Convention on Biodiversity, Convention on Combat Desertification attest the limited results.

LiFE - Codified

'Bhumi suposhan' is a new term in the agricultural discourse. However, as a concept, it is as old as the Indian agriculture, i.e. at least 8000 years, the Rigveda period. Bhumi suposhan is an integral approach which ensures productivity improvement without harming mother earth. It is a manifestation of mother-son relation between the land and the cultivator as expressed in a verse Mata Bhumi Putro aham Prithivya (माता भूमि पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्या) of Bhumisookta in Atharva Ved. Likewise there are numerous ancient treatises and documentation on eco-agriculture for example, Krishi Sukti, Vrikshayurveda etc. Bhumi suposhan in the present time links traditional agriculture wisdom with modern science to lead us to sustainable agriculture.

LiFE - Non-Codified

Rahibai Popere is a tribal woman tribal farmer. She has not gone through formal schooling. Through her experiences, she realized that the conservation of agrobiodiversity and wild food resources is the need of the hour to achieve seed sovereignty and nutritional security. Twenty years back she started a nursery of hyacinth bean seedlings, rice, vegetables, beans landraces and shared them with 210 farmers in 7 neighbouring villages. As of now she is conserving about 43 landraces of 17 different crops. She has also established a perennial kitchen garden for household consumption and year-round use. Government of India has recently conferred on her Padmashree, the third highest civilian award of India.

LiFE is embedded in jeevan drushti (life vision) and jeevan shaili (lifestyle) – two traditional Bharatiya (Indian) ethos. Both are interconnected. Jeevan drushti manifests jeevan shaili and experience from jeevan shaili refines jeevan drushti. The goal of these Bharatiya ethos and thus LiFE is Sumangalam, i.e. the global wellbeing.

LiFE can complement scientific, political, and economic measures of global environmental governance. However it would require close cooperation between the government and society in which societal responsibility would be a little higher than the government.

LiFE has close linkage with several SDGs, particularly SDG 12 pertaining to sustainable production and consumption. The global discussion on this topic i.e. sustainable production and consumption has started comparatively recently. But individuals and communities in India have been practicing this approach for centuries.

It is important for the global community at large to understand how individuals and communities lived throughout centuries in harmony with nature, developed technologies which are less/not destructive less while giving desired output and so on.

Civil society organizations are important facilitators in such situations to bring the community experiences in the global environmental framework agreements and the institutional set up thereof.

The Foundations of LiFE

- Indic wisdom – It is the culmination of the ceaseless exploration of the relationship of man with nature, sacredness and ultimate reality. For thousands of years, this wisdom has been explained and expounded upon through sacred scriptures of India such as the Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Dharma Shastra, Artha Shastra, Natyashastra, Sushruta Samhita etc. It also constitutes the knowledge fabric of the oral tradition of India – classical as well as folk.
- Panch Tatva (the five fundamental elements) of Indian culture – They are Akash (Space), Vayu (Air), Agni (Energy/Fire), Aap (Water) and, Bhumi (Earth). These five elements form the foundation of the universe. The Atharva Ved emphasizes this fact and states that the creation of the universe is a result of the combination of these five essential elements. It is said that our existence is intricately connected to these five basic elements.

LiFE as Sustainable Domestic Consumption

Mumbai Grahak Panchayat is a membership-based consumer organization with 32000 members based in Mumbai, India. With 3500 volunteers, this is wholly managed by volunteers. Every month it conducts cooperative buying of groceries and essential household items for its members and subsequent decentralized distribution. Cooperative buying and decentralised distribution save considerable amounts of energy and fossil fuels. At the same time, they reduce use of plastic, make available environment friendly products at doorsteps, encourage local production-consumption cycle etc.

All these lead to a lifestyle which is eco-conscious and action oriented. Along with that it promotes a thought of connectedness and collectiveness in all its members which is key precursor for LiFE.

Components of LiFE @ Previous G20s

Environment and climate have been part of G20 discussion process. The last 5 presidencies from 2017 to 2021 have reiterated commitments towards protection and conservation of the environment and secure future of our planet. These commitments are in the form of improving climate finance, technology transfer, switching over to renewable energy etc. G20 Indonesia 2022 declaration has integrated nutrition, poverty, development and conservation commitments.

The chair summary of ministerial meetings has specific reflection towards some aspects of lifestyle and environment linkage. Continuing support towards the G20 platform for localization of SDG is another commitment which is linked to lifestyle related aspects. Agriculture ministers reiterated support for the technical platform on measurement and reduction of food loss and waste.

Various G20 countries have developed policies towards sustainable investment linked to various aspects impacting lifestyle. A careful examination of this discussion reveals that most of these efforts are government and formal institution centric while society's role is more of beneficiary of the process.

During the G20 Indonesia meeting, Environment Ministers recognized that cultural diversity is a source of sustainable living. In a way it is an impending recognition of importance of culturally diverse societies like Bharatiya (Indian) Samaj (society) and their sustainable traditions which lead to environmental protection and conservation.

Hon. Prime Minister of India introduced the Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) movement at COP 26 of the Climate Convention in Glasgow, UK in 2021. He called 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'.

“*LiFE as an international mass movement towards mindful and deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption*”

Life Working Group of C20 under India's Presidency

LiFE is introduced for the first time as a working group theme of C20 under India's presidency. It is being presented at a time when global environmental governance needs cultural and value-based transformation.

LiFE working group has covered both jeevan drushti (life vision) and jeevan shaili (lifestyle) aspects in its thematic deliberations. The working group deliberated on 14 sub themes: grassroots innovations, Panchayatva, youth, food, Indic wisdom, fashion, water, habitat, waste, industry, education, and nature-based solutions and two outreach programs specially meant for community engagement (Higher education student engagement program and LiFE-The Nandurbar way). The deliberations of the group in the form of conferences, workshops, plenaries, presentations, web meetings were attended by various stakeholders. These deliberations covered various facets of human life and brought about recommendations pertaining to both life vision and lifestyle.

The deliberations were focused on formulating certain principles, recommendations, building an ecosystem of CSOs and learning alliance that will continue working on LiFE in the future G20 presidencies and in other multilateral forums.

LiFE working group of C20 under India's presidency is working to give the required momentum to individual and community efforts towards sustainable lifestyles and ultimately towards Sumangalam, the global wellbeing.

Following are the recommendations of LiFE working group based on its sub thematic deliberations.

Recommendations and implications

- 1. To prepare a value-based sustainability framework** to guide and assess the progress of countries:
 - Global wellbeing i.e., Sumangalam will be the universal principle of this framework. This framework will include a set of values, concepts, instruments and actionable for individuals and communities. This will bring a much-required holistic perspective to the subject of sustainability. The set of values would comprise of compassion, gratitude, respecting diversity, sense of responsibility, decentralization, harmony, using local resources (and not drawing from far off places) etc. Behavioural indicators, goals and levels of progress can be defined from the set of values.
 - LiFE along with the value-based sustainability framework will bring in paradigm shift from right based approach to responsibility-based approach in global environmental governance.
- 2. To create a knowledge repository on LiFE:**
 - G20 member countries should set up a knowledge repository of good practices -of individuals, communities and business entities. The knowledge repositories will be helpful in developing guidelines to bring out changes in the individual lifestyles, community lifestyles so that ecological and carbon footprint can be reduced.
- 3. To create an official engagement group A20 (ancient 20) for LiFE,** traditional knowledge and ancestral wisdom:
 - A20 will be mainly integrated by representatives of traditional cultures and ancestral

Recognizing grassroots innovators

Palle Srujana is a volunteer group based at Hyderabad, India. It is dedicated to enhancing life of grassroots innovators. Palle Srujana undertakes shodh yatra (search expeditions) to identify and document innovators. After identifying the innovator, it supports technical improvement of the raw innovation, validation and patenting the same. So far Palle Srujana has identified about 78 innovators, more than 1000 traditional practices and registered them with National Innovation Foundation. Three innovators have received Padmashree Award, India's third highest civilian award for their innovations. Palle Srujana runs purely on volunteer basis. Dedicated volunteers who are passionate about grassroots innovations and have immense compassion for the grassroots innovators are key to the work of Palle Srujana.

wisdom keepers, to contribute to the G20 recommendations mechanism.

- G20 member countries should device the finance instruments for communities and individuals to incentivize their sustainable lifestyles.
- 4. To recognize grassroots innovations** as an important asset of humanity and as a separate

category in all kinds of international policy formulations:

- Grassroots innovators have been an important asset of humanity. They are playing important role in improving resource efficiency and effectiveness of circular economy. Their role in three 'R's i.e. reuse, recycle and repair out of the six 'R's of the circular economy is important. However, very few countries have officially recognised the importance of grassroots innovators. Recognizing their contribution and linking them in addressing environmental problems is urgently needed.

5. To promote and encourage local foods for local consumers:

- G20 member countries should promote and encourage consumption of locally grown, processed, stored and value-added foods. It is desirable for human health and for the environment also. Local production – local consumption saves transportation and energy also. Local food consumed locally may support conservation of local varieties of crop.

6. To encourage sustainable-green fashion over fast fashion:

G20 member countries should encourage and promote sustainable-green fashion which is all-inclusive - products, processes, activities, and stakeholders (policymakers, brands, consumers)

A Case of Individual urban LiFE

Mr. Mayur & Mrs. Sujata Bhave and their family are residents of Pune city, India. This family of six members has adopted 5 R principles - Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Replenish. Bhave family's biogas runs on kitchen waste to fulfil 75% fuel requirement and 100% waste treatment. A terrace garden with honeybee box provides cooling effect and promotes pollination in surrounding area. Bhave family has adopted multiple water saving ideas and imbibed them in their lifestyle. Continuous conscious efforts to reduce environmental burden of everyday activity is the key for LiFE.

aiming to achieve a carbon-neutral fashion sector based on equality, social justice, animal welfare, and ecological integrity.

Fast fashion leads to more and rapid waste creation. Often it involves labour exploitation, pollution and depletion of resources.

- The global fashion industry is estimated to be responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions – more than international flights and maritime shipping combined.

7. To encourage and incentivize mindful consumption and responsible disposal:

- In most of the developing and emerging countries, waste collection and segregation value chain remain largely informal. Linkage between formal and informal waste collection and segregation should be strengthened.

- Lack of awareness and education hinder effective waste management.

Sustainable consumption involves using fewer resources and striking a balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

Promoting pride and responsibility and incentivizing responsible disposal in keeping cities clean can help overcome.

LiFE as a CSO initiative

- **Tree Plantation in Nandurbar District, Maharashtra State, India**
Nandurbar is a remote district located in Satpuda mountains in Western India. The predominant population of Nandurbar is tribal and forest dependent. As a step towards LiFE, CSOs in the district have planned plantation of 25,000 plants on the 25th foundation day (1st July 2023) of the district.
- **Digital pledge on LiFE**
LiFE Working Group of C20 in association with premier higher educational institutes and a network of CSOs has facilitated the digital pledge³ on LiFE by hundreds of citizen from various parts of country through social media platforms and in person meetings.

- 8. To recognize that switching over to LiFE** is not just a cognitive exercise but also a socio-emotional-ethical-spiritual one:
 - The Bharatiya way (i.e. traditional Indian way) of using any natural resource is frugality i.e. taking only what you need from nature and giving back more than you take. It is observed in almost all traditional communities in the global south. However, we have forgotten this way.
 - Connection and reconnection with Nature must begin from the foundational stage (i.e. ages 3 to 8 years) itself through practical, real-life experiences. Practical and experiential, activity-based learning with hands-on engagement is required at all levels.
 - It is very important to recognize and make collective efforts to strengthen the “family” system, which has for ages effectively served in imparting value-based education and conduct of individuals and communities.
 - G20 member countries will have to carry out curricular and pedagogical changes whenever and wherever needed.
- 9. To recognize that youths are the future of LiFE:**
 - The majority of the nations of the global south have predominant youth population. The future of these nations is in the hands of the youths.
 - Planning and implementation to sensitize youths to align their aspirations with LiFE should be done on priority.
- 10. To promote and adopt Nature based Solutions (NbS):**
 - NbS are well-known techniques (for example, sacred landscapes, traditional agroforestry etc.) with an emphasis on local level adaptation and in many cases, building upon the traditional wisdom and techniques of communities.
 - When implemented in a proper way, they have multiplier effects such as integrated watershed management resulting in soil and water conservation, improving agriculture

productivity, enhancing tree cover, and strengthening livelihoods in a cost-effective manner.

- NbS is a cost effective, decentralized, and customized bouquet of options for enhancing mitigation and developing adaptation to tackle climate change.

11. To mandate implementation of circular economy principles in all economic sectors:

- G20 member countries should make it mandatory in all sectors of their economy to implement the circular economy principles. They should formulate and/or bring out necessary changes in their existing policies.
- This linear economic model generates about 50 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions. Materials are transformed through production processes, used or consumed, and discarded into the environment.
- The circular economy offers a response to these challenges by reducing waste and closing material and process loops, thereby preserving natural capital.
- Industries and businesses that implement projects on efficient resource management and sustainable waste management should be given green credits which can be redeemed for tax benefits, grants, or other financial rewards.

12. To ensure judicious use and equitable distribution of water in all walks of LiFE:

- Bharatiya Perspective – water is an important tatva (basic principle) in panchatatva .
- Reuse and recycling of water in daily use is like creating fresh water.
- Adoption of less water intensive practices – in food, crops etc. is important.
- Effective demand side and supply side management in all sectors where water is an integral component is needed.

LiFE as community water conservation through revival of age-old tradition

Halma is an age-old practice in Bhil community in Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh state in India. It is to help distressed without expecting anything in return. In Jhabua district, the distressed was the mother earth. The underlying feeling of Bhil community was 'She is thirsty'.

From 2010, Shivganga Abhiyan, a community organisation is calling Halma every year. Thousands of tribal villagers participate in this movement. They come with their equipment needed for the manual soil work. They prepare contour trenches on hill, dig pits for plantation. All this is for the society and not for any individual benefit. This self-initiative takes place in their own villages. This effort has shown change on the ground in the form of improved water availability.

Our Collaborators



Institute of Sustainability and Development Studies



**GOVARDHAN
ECOVILLAGE**

Govardhan Ecovillage



Palle Srujana



Indus University



Poornam Ecovision Foundation



School of Fashion Technology



Youth of India

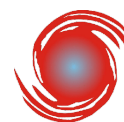


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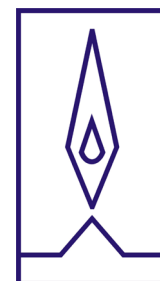
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