

A background photograph showing a group of young adults, mostly of Asian descent, participating in a tree-planting activity in a lush green park. In the foreground, a man with a beard and a woman are focused on planting a sapling. The man is wearing a white t-shirt with 'UNTEER' printed on it and orange sneakers. The woman is wearing a white t-shirt with 'VOLU' visible and blue jeans. They are both smiling and looking down at the ground where they are working. A pile of brown soil is in the immediate foreground. In the background, other volunteers and dense green foliage are visible under bright, natural light.

# LiFE

(Lifestyle for Environment)

There exist numerous international multilateral framework conventions directed at reducing human impacts on the environment. These framework conventions provide scientific, economic, and political measures for environmental governance. However, 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 conventions<sup>1</sup>.

Increase in the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, rising global temperature and sea level, pollution of air, water and soil, the unprecedented rate of biodiversity extinction and desertification and many more are the symptoms of the global environmental problem. Most of the international framework conventions for the environment are aimed at reducing these symptoms. Unless there are concrete global actions towards the

root causes, addressing symptoms will have limited results.

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 is rooted in culture, traditions, customary practices, and (environmentally) conscious contemporary practices.

India has always had a legacy of environment consciousness. The Indian sub-continent has historically 'lived with nature' and promoted this environmental consciousness through its oral traditions. Coined by the Indian Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, Lifestyle for Environment or LiFE is India's contribution to find the solutions towards climate change and environmental degradation.

The larger discussions on climate change and environmental degradation seem to have reached a stalemate with development policies of States. However, addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach which covers education to values, and from lifestyle to developmental philosophy. LiFE, as envisioned by the Indian PM, focuses on behavioural change. Respect for nature, the judicious use of resources, reducing our needs and living within ones means have all been important aspects of both India's traditions and its present-day efforts. As Prime Minister Modi has



said, respect for nature is an integral part of our culture and protection of environment comes naturally to us. The present generation, has the responsibility to act as a trustee of the rich natural wealth for future generations.

LiFE complements scientific, political, and economic measures currently undertaken towards global environmental governance. It has close linkages with several SDGs, particularly SDG 12 pertaining to sustainable production and consumption. The global discussion on sustainable production and consumption has started comparatively recently with Italian G20 Presidency and the European Union (EU) hosting an online workshop on circular fashion on 7 June 2021. But

India has traditionally been practising this approach for centuries.

Civil society organizations are important facilitators in such situations to bring the community experiences from different countries in the global environmental frameworks.

### **The Foundations of LiFE**

***Panch Tatva (the five fundamental elements)*** – They are Akash (Space), Vayu (Air), Agni (Energy/Fire), Jal (Water) and, Bhumi (Earth). These five elements form the foundation of the universe. The Atharva Veda 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.

## Components of LiFE in Previous G20 Summits

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi 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’.

Environment and climate have been part of the G20 discussion process for a significant time. The last 5 Presidencies from 2017 to 2021 have reiterated



commitments towards the protection and conservation of the environment and securing the 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 integrated nutrition, poverty, development and conservation commitments. The G20 Indonesia Environment Ministers recognized

cultural diversity as a source of sustainable living. The chair summary of ministerial meeting has specific reflection towards some aspects of lifestyle and environment linkage. Continuing support towards the G20 platform for the 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.

## Life Working Group of C20 under India's Presidency

LiFE has been introduced for the first time as a working group theme of C20 under India's G20 presidency. It is being presented at a time when global environmental governance needs cultural and value-based transformation.

The working group deliberated on sub themes: grassroots innovations, Panchatatva, food, Indic wisdom, fashion, water, habitat, waste, industry, education, and nature-based solutions and conducted 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, and 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, and 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. It is now building the required momentum to individual and community efforts towards sustainable lifestyles and ultimately towards Sumangalam, the global well-being.

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, a sense of responsibility, decentralisation, harmony, using local resources (and not drawing from far-off places) etc. Behavioural indicators, goals and levels of progress can be defined from these sets of values.
  - LiFE along with the value-based sustainability framework aims to bring in a paradigm shift from a rights-based approach to a 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. Such knowledge repositories will be helpful in developing guidelines to bring out changes in individual lifestyles, and community lifestyles so that ecological and carbon footprint can be reduced.
3. To recognize grassroots innovations as an important asset to humanity and as a separate category in all kinds of international policy formulations. Grassroots innovators have been an important asset of humanity. They are assisting in improving resource efficiency and the effectiveness of the circular economy. Their role in the three 'R's - reuse, recycle and repair - out of the six 'R's of the circular economy is important. Recognizing their contribution and linking them in addressing environmental problems is urgently required.
4. To promote and encourage local and seasonal 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 the conservation of local varieties of crop varieties. Seasonal food has less preservatives and is healthier for the populace.
5. To encourage sustainable green-fashion over fast-fashion: The global fashion industry is estimated to be responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions – more than international flights and maritime shipping combined. G20 member countries should encourage and promote sustainable-green fashion which is all-inclusive. There should be a thrust on products, processes, activities, and stakeholders (policymakers, brands, consumers) aiming to achieve a carbon-neutral fashion sector based on equality, social justice, animal welfare, and ecological integrity.
6. To encourage and incentivize mindful consumption and responsible disposal: In most of the developing and emerging countries,

waste collection and segregation value chains remain largely informal. The linkage between formal and informal waste collection and segregation should be strengthened. Lack of awareness and education hinder effective waste management. Promoting pride and responsibility and incentivizing responsible disposal in keeping cities clean can help overcome this problem.

7. To recognize that switching over to LiFE is a socio-emotional-ethical-spiritual exercise: 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.

i). To promote and adopt Nature-based Solutions (NbS)

8. 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.

9. To mandate the 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

- Water is an important tatva (basic principle) in panchatatva.
- Reuse and recycle water in daily use is like creating fresh water.





## Udaaharans

### Recognizing Grassroot Innovators

Palle Srujana is a volunteer group based in Hyderabad, India. It is dedicated to enhancing the life of grassroots innovators. Palle Srujana undertakes shodh yatras (search expeditions) to identify and document innovators. After identifying the innovator, it supports the 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 received have 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.

### 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.



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### 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 pledge2

on LiFE by hundreds of citizens from  
various parts of the country through  
social media platforms and in person  
meetings.

## 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 a honeybee box provides a

cooling effect and promotes pollination in the surrounding area. Bhave family has adopted multiple water saving ideas and imbibed them into their lifestyle.

Continuous conscious efforts to reduce environmental burden of everyday activity is the key for LiFE.

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

Halma is an age-old practice in the Bhil community in Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh state in India. The practice is meant to help the 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 the equipment needed for the manual soil work. They prepare contour trenches on hills dig pits for plantations. All this has been done for society and not for any individual benefit. This self-initiative takes place in their own villages. This effort has shown changes on the ground in the form of improved water availability.



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