India Humanitarian Hub (IHH)
Assembly 2025

Assembly Report

PART OF
IHH
India Humanitarian Hub
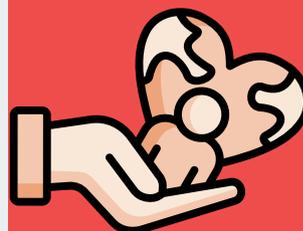
START NETWORK

The IHH Assembly 2025 convened local, national, and international actors over **two** days in New Delhi to advance the vision of locally led, community-driven, and climate-resilient humanitarian action in India.

Climate-Resilient

Humanitarian Aid

Deep Dive →

India Humanitarian Hub (IHH) Assembly 2025

6–7 March 2025 | New Delhi

Executive Summary

The India Humanitarian Hub (IHH) Assembly 2025 convened local, national, and international actors to collectively reflect on the progress, challenges, and opportunities in strengthening locally led humanitarian action in India. Hosted over two days, the assembly brought together civil society organisations, experts, CSR leaders, and government representatives to co-create strategies for a more inclusive and resilient humanitarian architecture.

Key highlights included:

- **Governance Strengthening**: The governance structure of IHH was revisited, leading to the formal dissolution of the previous Executive Committee (EC) and the initiation of a new election process. The assembly agreed on clearer rules for nominations, voting, and the EC's composition, ensuring inclusivity, transparency, and wider ownership.
- **Decolonisation in Practice**: A powerful session unpacked how colonisation manifests in the humanitarian sector—through funding control, knowledge hierarchies, and exclusion of community voices. Participants explored strategies to shift power, amplify indigenous knowledge, and build equitable partnerships.
- **Visioning for Change**: Using the Iceberg Model, members co-created long-term visions at micro, meso, and macro levels, focusing on climate resilience, local leadership, inclusive governance, and nature-based solutions. Community-driven responses and hyperlocal planning emerged as foundational principles.
- **Legal and Financial Compliance**: Expert guidance was provided on navigating India's tightening legal landscape, especially around FCRA, service contracts, and administrative expenditures—reinforcing the importance of financial transparency and regulatory compliance.

- **Disaster Law & Policy Dialogue**: NDMA representative presented key amendments in the Disaster Management Bill, underscoring the growing role of local governments and the need for anticipatory action, gendered approaches, and sustainable financing.
- **Corporate-NGO Partnerships**: CSR leaders discussed strategies to bridge corporate and civil society goals—shifting from reactive relief to proactive resilience. Emphasis was placed on insurance for frontline workers, risk mapping, local capacity-building, and real-time data-driven planning.
- **Indigenous Knowledge & Nature based solution**: The assembly explored innovative ways to integrate indigenous practices with scientific approaches to climate adaptation. Participants called for better documentation, inclusive planning, and stronger community engagement for sustainability.
- **Collective Commitments and Closing Reflections**: Participants endorsed a collective values charter emphasizing transparency, intersectionality, community leadership, and knowledge exchange. The event closed with renewed energy to deepen collaboration and operationalize IHH's vision of a locally led, community-driven, and climate-resilient humanitarian future.

Opening Address

Ms. Christina Bennett, CEO of START Network, welcomed all attendees. In her opening address, Ms. Bennett reflected on the current challenges and opportunities facing humanitarian organisations. She mentioned a letter she received upon assuming her position in 2019-2020 which highlighted localisation as a key challenge. She emphasised the ongoing collective efforts to integrate community-led innovations into humanitarian action and reaffirmed the START Network's commitment to being anti-colonial, flexible, and distinct by learning from practical experiences.

Ms. Bennett acknowledged the disparity between the urgency of humanitarian response and the slow pace of funding, despite the START Network's operation across six continents and support for 134 civil society organisations. Focusing on India, she highlighted the significant opportunity for humanitarian professionals to collaborate in addressing on-the-ground challenges, improve solutions through mobilisation, and explore new models of financing, knowledge-sharing, and collective action. She emphasised that this gathering would serve as a platform to understand the governance and functioning of the India Humanitarian Hub (IHH), co-design the hub, and foster new alliances and networks through meaningful engagement.

Ms. Bennett concluded by posing a critical question about whether IHH would emerge from crises as a transformative and innovative platform or if the challenges would be too significant to overcome. This question set the stage for subsequent discussions on resilience, collaboration, and the future of humanitarian action.

Mr. Tirtha Prasad Saikia, Director of North-East Affected Area Development Society (NEADS) and host of the Secretariat of the India Humanitarian Hub (IHH), delivered a heartfelt Welcome Speech at the inaugural National Assembly of IHH. He warmly greeted all participants and reflected on the transformative journey of IHH since its inception in 2019. Highlighting the pressing need for a localized, inclusive, and resilient humanitarian ecosystem in India, he drew attention to the increasing challenges brought about by climate change, rapid urbanization, and development-induced crises. Mr. Tirtha also acknowledged the crucial support of the Start Network in nurturing this ambitious initiative and celebrated the formal establishment of IHH with 15 member organizations, marking a significant milestone in advancing collaborative and community-led humanitarian action in the country.

Day 1

Session 1: Legal Compliance & Financial Accountability

By Dr. Sanjay Patra, Founder of India Donates

The first session was led by Dr. Sanjay Patra, Founder of India Donates, who provided an insightful overview of financial compliance and regulatory frameworks that organisations must follow, particularly within India's evolving legal landscape.
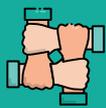
Financial prudence & compliance

He noted that legal requirements are becoming more stringent, which poses challenges for humanitarian responses often requiring rapid processes. The session primarily highlighted the critical importance of financial prudence and compliance for NGOs operating in India, especially in managing foreign contributions and adhering to changing regulatory frameworks.

Key points included:

- **FCRA Law and Compliance**: Dr. Patra explained that the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) regulates foreign funding, specifically focusing on the donor rather than the source of funds. Foreign contributions are categorised under five defined purposes: Education, Social, Economic, Cultural, and Religious. FCRA applies to organisations holding funds on behalf of beneficiaries, necessitating clear utilisation and reporting.

- **Sub-granting and Service Contracts:** Sub-granting, previously permitted, has been prohibited since September 2020. Organisations have explored using service contracts as an alternative; however, this introduces additional compliance issues such as Goods and Services Tax (GST) and taxation. A commercial agreement involving Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) deductions is considered a business contract rather than a grant. NGOs must be cautious if foreign contributions exceed 20% of their income, as commercial and charitable activities cannot coexist.
- **Advance of Staff**: Programme advances are not permitted, while salary and travel advances are allowed. Funds must be transferred through official banking channels, not personal accounts. In disaster situations, cash disbursement is permissible but requires thorough documentation, with cash amounts exceeding ₹1 crore often raising questions. Reimbursement of programme expenses is restricted as both advances and reimbursements are subject to scrutiny. The FCRA cash withdrawal limit is ₹10,000 per person per day, though larger withdrawals attract scrutiny. The income tax cash spending limit is ₹10,000 per transaction, and transactions exceeding this must be carefully justified.
- **Administrative Expenditure**: Administrative expenditures include payments to board members, HR, IT, and documentation costs. 20% of total funds can be used for administrative costs, with new provisions allowing unutilised amounts to be carried forward to the next financial year, provided it is properly documented and justified.
- **Bank Management**: All foreign contributions must be received in the SBI branch at Sansad Marg, New Delhi. Inter-FCRA transfers between organisations are a violation. Quarterly reporting of foreign receipts is no longer mandatory.
- **Conditions for Grant of FCRA Certificate**: Organisations must ensure that their board members are not fictitious or benami.
- **Intimations Under FCRA:** Any changes in name, address, nature, objectives, or board members must be reported.

Key takeaways from the session included the tightening of compliance requirements, making financial transparency crucial. NGOs must document and report fund utilisation to avoid legal complications. Sub-granting is no longer allowed, and service contracts necessitate strict tax compliance. Cash transactions should be minimised, and all expenditures must be justified and well-documented. Strict adherence to banking and financial reporting norms is essential to maintain FCRA certification and avoid legal risks.

Session 2: Governance & Election Process of IHH

By Ms. Vasundhara Pandey

Ms. Vasundhara Pandey provided an overview of the governance structure and functionality of the IHH. The session began with an introduction to the previous moderators and their experiences within IHH. This was followed by the formal dissolution of the previous year's governance body, paving the way for a new one.

The governance framework of IHH was explained as follows:

- **General Body**: This is the highest decision-making body, functioning like an assembly, with an Executive Committee (EC) under its governance. It comprises all members and an EC.

- **Current Membership Structure:**
Full Members – Hold voting rights.
Associate Members – Maintain partnership status with mixed membership.
Independent Members – Experts contributing knowledge and experience from across India, but without voting rights.
Each organisation is entitled to only one voting representative.

- **Executive Committee (EC)**: The EC will consist of six members. Elections will be held every two years, with voting taking place three months before the end of the term. Each organisation will have one vote, regardless of the number of representatives present. The committee will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair, who will serve a two-year tenure and oversee governance implementation. A suggestion was made to add the tenure of the committee and its composition to the relevant clause.

- **Committees and Subcommittees:**
  1. *Working Committees* – Ongoing governance and operational committees.
  2. *Ad Hoc Committees* – Temporary committees established for emergency or post-emergency response, which will dissolve after fulfilling their purpose.

- **Eligibility Criteria for Nomination:** Only full members may nominate candidates, with each organisation allowed to nominate one representative. Candidates must be actively involved in IHH governance.

- **Voting Process and Membership Debate:** A debate arose regarding the number of voting members, with two options proposed: proceeding with the 15 members present or waiting for all 33 members to vote. Given that only 15 members were physically present, the decision was made to proceed with the 15 members. It was also decided that the six-member EC would include five nominated members and one host organisation representative, the latter without voting rights.

- **Election Process:** All organisations present in the hall constitute the governing body. The voting outcome showed 14 votes in favour of constituting the governing body (with +1 vote on behalf of Sanjay Ji who was away for the important meeting) and 1 vote against. As a result, the IHH governance body was formally constituted, allowing for the formation of the EC. All those in favour signed a formal document for office records.

- **Executive Committee Election Process:** It was mutually agreed that nominations would remain open for two weeks. However, if all 15 organisations submit their nominations within 2-3 days, the process may conclude early.

Action Points
- Nominations must be submitted via email only; phone and WhatsApp submissions will not be accepted. If nominations are received before the two-week deadline, counting and declaration will occur within a single day.

Session 3: IHH Vision For Change

By Ms. Vasundhara Pandey

The discussion centred on the steps the network will take and how collaboration can enhance support for India. It was emphasised that transforming approaches to recovery and resilience after disasters requires a fundamental structural shift.

The Iceberg Model: A Structured Approach to Disaster Response

Ms. Pandey elaborated that superficial mapping alone cannot effectively address challenges. She introduced the Iceberg Model, categorising emergency events into four layers: Events, Patterns/Trends, Underlying Structures, and Mental Models. This model aims to facilitate a reactive, anticipatory, and structured approach to programme planning.

To make the session more interactive, participants were divided into four groups and tasked with analysing a given problem through the four layers of the model, with examples provided for each layer. The general frames presented by the four groups are noted in the minutes.

Key takeaways from this part of the session included the need to enhance collaboration among organisations instead of competing, develop long-term resilience strategies beyond immediate aid distribution, engage in proactive planning rather than waiting for disasters, and shift donor and organisational mindsets towards impact-driven funding.
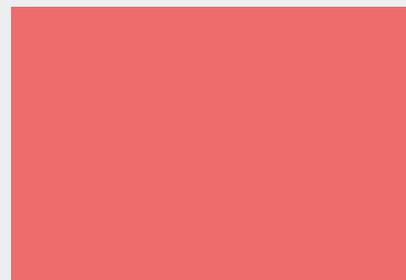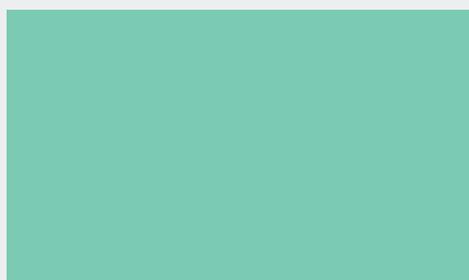
The session continued with discussions on planning, climate resilience, and the future vision. Mr. Rahman stressed integrating planning, adaptation, and climate change into disaster strategies, emphasising a hyperlocal, community-driven approach. Mr. Manoranjan highlighted the importance of Nature-Based Solutions but called for clearer timelines, community metrics, and impact tracking. He stressed tailored disaster responses, like supporting fishermen during cyclones, and strengthening communities through risk assessments and microplanning.

Mr. Ray urged for community-led responses with accountability, regardless of NGO involvement. Mr. Mintu suggested focusing on one or two key issues for greater impact, and both proposed clear visions at micro, meso, and macro levels. Mr. Rahman noted that aligning organisational practices with cultural values could boost impact by 18-20%, recommending the use of AI and tech at higher levels. Mr. Mintu supported blending scientific and social interventions.

At the meso level, Mr. Ray pushed for stronger knowledge-sharing and research, Mr. Rao advocated integrating community traditions, and Ms. Shreya suggested a knowledge hub. For the macro level, Mr. Ray called for a focus on saving lives, strengthening localisation through evidence-based practices, ensuring accountability, and transforming policies. Ms. Prabha introduced a local-to-global equity approach. Looking ahead to 2050, Mr. Ray questioned future goals for humanitarian work.

Mr. Sudhanshu emphasised tackling root causes of inequality and poverty. Together, they explored how disaster risk strategies could better address climate change and social inequities. The discussion noted that responses often centre on relief rather than resilience, and Mr. Manoranjan reinforced the need to build climate-resilient communities through local actions and strong partnerships.

Proposed Vision Statements included:

- Macro Level: Strengthen local expertise and leadership in humanitarian action while regenerating the climate ecosystem.
- SNIRD's Vision:
  - Micro Level: Empower local communities through knowledge and resource accessibility.
  - Meso Level: Strengthen community networks.
  - Macro Level: Transform development policy to prioritise equitable growth.

- Other key vision statements given by SNIRD: Empowering communities for climate change adaptation; India Humanitarian Hub Vision: Building an inclusive and sustainable future; Sustainable development and human well-being for all; Empowering local action for effective humanitarian response; Fostering sustainable human progress for change and safeguarding.

Day 2 of the workshop started with a general introduction of the new participants. This was followed by various panel discussions focusing on aspects of Humanitarian Work on the ground and off the ground, along with a detailed overview of the New Disaster Policy by a prestigious Civil Servant to the Government of India.

Session 1: Decolonisation & Decoloniality in Humanitarian Work

The panel discussion explored the nuances of colonisation within the humanitarian sector, focusing on power dynamics, decision-making, and knowledge production. The session was moderated by Mr. Sudhanshu and featured insights from Ms. Christina, Mr. Tirtha, Mr. Sanjay, and Mr. Manu.

- **Understanding Colonisation:**

Ms. Christina highlighted that while racism and colonisation are intertwined, colonisation is often rooted in financial control.

Mr. **Tirtha** emphasised that the exclusion of communities from decision-making constitutes a form of colonisation, as it disregards their perspectives and lived experiences.

Mr. **Sanjay** framed colonisation as a mindset issue involving subjugation and equity.

Mr. **Manu** linked colonisation to agency, power, and participation.

Mr. **Sudhanshu** concluded that colonisation still exists within the sector, influencing governance and aid distribution.

Challenges in Shifting Mindsets:

Ms. Christina mentioned that while establishing the START Network was relatively easy due to institutional support, shifting mindsets, especially donor-driven priorities and political influences, remain the biggest challenge.

She cited instances of unequal accountability, where large Western organisations faced lenient consequences for financial mismanagement compared to smaller NGOs.

Mr. **Sudhanshu** raised the question of whether racism now extends beyond skin colour.

Mr. **Sanjay** affirmed that racism is no longer solely about race but is embedded in the same systems and mindsets that perpetuate inequities.

Localisation and Its Challenges:

Mr. Manu highlighted the impact of shifting localisation efforts, noting that while the USA initially championed them, recent funding cuts have left many local organisations struggling. In **Nepal**, agencies face severe financial constraints, while in India, tighter aid regulations forced a more gradual adjustment.

Ms. **Christina** emphasised the political nature of foreign aid, warning that abrupt withdrawals have exposed the sector's reliance on international funding. **She** advocated for financial diversification and prudent management to reduce dependence on a single source.

Colonial Legacies in Knowledge and Education:

Mr. Sanjay highlighted that colonisation is deeply embedded in education, shaping how people perceive themselves. He stated that a Eurocentric or North-centric knowledge system dominates, often sidelining indigenous knowledge.

Mr. **Manu** reinforced this view, stating that true knowledge lies within communities, and platforms like the IHH should work towards documenting and amplifying this knowledge.

The Shift to CSR Funding and Network Building:

Mr. Manu acknowledged the increasing reliance on CSR and private funding with the drying up of international aid. However, he cautioned that this shift could lead to conflicts, particularly during emergencies. He also emphasised the power of networks and collaboration, suggesting that local entities should embrace international organisations to strengthen knowledge-sharing and coordination rather than being suspicious.

Exploring Financial Sustainability: When asked about areas where organisations can become financially independent, Ms. Christina noted that while funding remains crucial, organisations are now joining the **START Network** not just for financial support but also for ideas and collaboration.

She stressed that investors are drawn to vision, mission, and impact rather than just financial needs.

Strategies for De-Colonisation:

Mr. Tirtha suggested strengthening local governance and leadership as a pathway to reducing dependency on external actors.

Mr. **Sanjay** reinforced that fostering a democratic mindset and valuing indigenous knowledge is essential.

Positive Legacies of Colonialism:

Mr. Sudhanshu acknowledged the infrastructural developments left behind by colonial rule, such as railways and postal systems, as beneficial legacies.

Takeaways from the session: The need for humanitarian professionals to shift from donor-driven approaches to community-led initiatives.

Building resilient funding models, respecting indigenous knowledge, and fostering equitable partnerships were identified as key steps towards a decolonised humanitarian sector.

Session 2: Disaster Response Frameworks under the Amended Disaster Management Bill

Speaker: Mr.Krishna Vatsya (Member of NDMA)

He provided insights into recent developments in disaster management at the state level, highlighting amendments to the Disaster Management Act. Originally framed in 2005 following the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Act has now been updated, with amendments passed in the Lok Sabha and currently under consideration in the Rajya Sabha.

Institutional Framework for Disaster Management in India

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

National Executive Committee (NEC)
Coordinates national response and planning

State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs)
Headed by Chief Ministers

District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs)
Chaired by District Collectors / Magistrates

Disaster Management Cycle – Updated Approach

PREVENTION   MITIGATION   PREPAREDNESS

DISASTER EVENT

RESPONSE   RELIEF   REHABILITATION   RECONSTRUCTION
🆕 Amended DM Bill Focus:
- Early Warning Systems
- Community-Based Response
- Climate Adaptation
- Tech-based Forecasting & Geo-Spatial Mapping

Funding Mechanism – Pre and Post Amendment

Fund Type	Before Amendment	After Amendment
National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)	Central Govt Allocation	Enhanced via CSR, state inputs, and ESG-linked funds
State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)	State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)	More flexibility for localized disaster spending
Mitigation Fund	Provisioned but underutilized	Revamped with monitoring framework
PM CARES (parallel, not statutory)	Voluntary and emergency-based	Separate from official institutional mechanism

Key Amendments in the Disaster Management Bill

1. Recognition of Climate-Linked Disasters
2. Integration of Health Emergencies (Post-COVID)
3. Role of Urban Local Bodies in Preparedness
4. Legal Mandate for Multi-stakeholder Coordination
5. Dedicated Data Repository for Risk Mapping
6. Provision for Private Sector Collaboration

- A key amendment focuses on enhancing the resilience of cities to disasters, strengthening local government capacities in urban planning.
- A significant provision includes establishing State Disaster Response Forces, ensuring that all states have dedicated teams for disaster response.
- Additionally, the roles of the National and State Disaster Management Authorities (NDMAs and SDMAs) have been refined to focus on planning and advisories.
- Financially, disaster response now includes structured mitigation funds at both state and district levels, alongside new funding mechanisms for capacity-building initiatives.
- Mr. Vatsya emphasised that disaster management is not solely about funding but encompasses preparedness, mitigation, and recovery, which are essential for building resilience.
- He stressed the need for long-term strategies, particularly in responding to climate-induced disasters such as heatwaves, which require sustained planning and financial support.
- Further, he mentioned that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding should not be reactive but should support long-term disaster risk reduction efforts to prevent homelessness and economic hardship.
- Strengthening livelihoods, diversifying income sources, and increasing women's participation in disaster management are critical aspects of this approach.
- The expansion of the Apda Mitra initiative, which aims at increasing the number of trained frontline workers, is a priority. The government also plans to introduce insurance schemes to ensure their safety.
- Given existing CSR compliance regulations, Vatsya proposed developing clear guidelines on how CSR funds should be allocated for disaster preparedness and management, particularly at the district level.
- Strengthening SDMAs and DDMAs by incorporating more experts will enable a more professional and effective response system.
- He highlighted the importance of local governance, particularly the role of panchayats in addressing village-level disasters such as lightning strikes.
- Engaging local communities through inclusive programmes ensures better participation and more effective disaster mitigation strategies.

Session 3: Bridging the Gap: Strengthening Corporate-NGO Partnerships for Sustainable Humanitarian Impact

The panel discussion focused on exploring strategies for strengthening corporate-NGO partnerships to enhance sustainable humanitarian impact.

- **Corporate Responsibility in Disaster Response:**

1. Mr. Vivek Prakash, Senior Vice President and Head Corporate Social Responsibility at Jubilant Ingrevia Ltd., highlighted the responsibility of corporations, particularly in areas where they are the wealthiest entities, to support disaster response beyond immediate relief.
2. He stated that the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for both on-site and insight-driven emergency plans.
3. He further highlighted that the focus should be on capacity building and long-term resilience.
4. He also mentioned that a provision now exists under which corporations are required to share their risk mitigation strategies with local communities.
5. Mr. Prakash underscored that climate-related risks also necessitate mapping and proactive planning. Jubilant has developed an application that identifies disaster risks such as floods and droughts, enabling communities to engage in mitigation strategies.
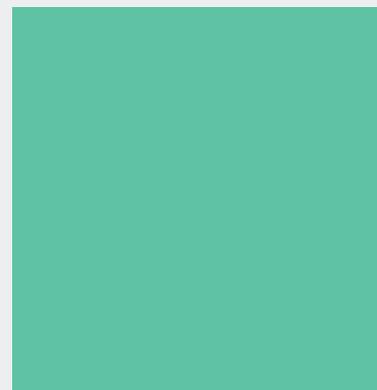
6. Ms. Sudha from Apollo Hospitals spoke about their initiative on heart disease awareness, which has evolved into a trust dedicated to training individuals in cardiac emergency response, including CPR. This initiative extends to frontline workers, state disaster personnel, bus drivers, traffic police, and nursing colleges. Their efforts go beyond heart-related emergencies to include training on choking and fire safety. Apollo also provides medical capacity-building for the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), recognising the critical role of emergency responders. Instead of merely accumulating financial resources, they aim to build a skilled resource pool.

- **Innovative Approaches to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):**

  - **Mr. Anant Tiwari** - Deputy Vice President - Climate Risk Adaptation and Insurance, emphasised the importance of Insurance for frontline workers and how disasters impact them economically. He cited the implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi as an example where workers often become jobless. To mitigate this, an insurance scheme was developed in collaboration with construction companies to support affected workers financially.
  - The HCL Grant operates with a defined annual budget for DRR, focusing on three key areas: relief and response, shelter, and resilience-building. Being a crucial part of the disaster response for COVID-19, heatwaves, cold waves, floods, and cyclones, the HCL Grant highlighted that corporate funding is contingent on real-time data, and disaster programmes must account for environmental and animal welfare as well.
  - Rather than short-term relief, NGOs must demonstrate long-term rebuilding strategies, ensuring sustainable recovery. For this, a robust disaster management mechanism is essential.
  - He added that an organisation's effectiveness is often measured by its ability to mobilise volunteers, local governments, and communities during crises.
  - **Mr. Rajkumar** emphasised the need for cities to be designed to withstand extreme weather events, particularly heavy rainfall. Local bodies should play a central role in disaster preparedness, ensuring infrastructure such as plumbing and water storage systems are resilient. He advocated for incorporating disaster awareness and preparedness into school curriculums, ensuring that future administrators and policymakers grow up with disaster resilience as a core principle.

- **Long-Term Risk Management and Local Involvement:**

  ○ **Mr Praveen** highlighted that managing future risks should take precedence over simply responding to current disasters. Statistical evidence indicates an increase in disaster frequency. While disasters are gender-neutral in occurrence, they disproportionately impact women, potentially affecting gender ratios in the long run. Biodiversity loss is another pressing concern that is not being adequately addressed. Disaster preparedness must extend beyond financial investment in environmental conservation and include broader ecological considerations. Local panchayat partnerships are crucial for effective disaster response.

  ○ Mr. **Anant** stressed the importance of pre-arranged disaster preparedness, including better shelters, financial planning, and the integration of climate data to identify high-risk zones. Dividing hotspots into immediate action areas and long-term preparedness areas allows for more efficient financial allocation. This structured approach should be incorporated into pre-disaster CSR funding strategies.

  ○ Mr. **Vivek** underscored the necessity of empowering local communities before national disaster response teams such as NDRF or SDRF arrive. Establishing village-level disaster committees and allocating budgets for local capacity-building efforts—particularly through anganwadis and panchayats— is essential. The priority should be on expertise rather than mere financial contributions, ensuring communities are self-sufficient in disaster preparedness. Since government administrations frequently change, local knowledge and trained individuals must be prioritised, as they remain constant. NGOs should focus on capacity-building rather than short-term relief efforts since, in times of disaster, communities require preparedness rather than administrative paperwork.

- **Key Recommendations:**

  ○ Legislative Reforms: Establish a network to propose CSR Act amendments through NDMA, IICA, and other relevant bodies to enhance disaster management frameworks.

  ○ Financial Transparency: Both corporates and NGOs must maintain meticulous financial records, as funding is now subject to stricter monitoring.

  ○ Strategic Proposal Submission: Well-prepared funding proposals, submitted at the right time with accurate reporting, are essential for securing donations.

  ○ Bridging Expectations: Both NGOs and corporates have distinct objectives and expectations that must be aligned for effective collaboration.

  ○ Insurance for Disaster-Prone Communities: Catastrophic insurance should be available for high-impact, infrequent disasters, rather than for recurrent, predictable events. For instance, areas prone to regular flooding, such as Sundarbans and Kaziranga, may not qualify for insurance, whereas regions affected by unforeseen catastrophes should receive coverage.

SESSION 4: Harnessing Nature-Based Solutions and Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Resilience: Bridging Tradition & Innovation

The panel discussion focused on the role of indigenous knowledge in mitigating climate risks and explored strategies for integrating and replicating successful practices to enhance climate resilience. The session featured distinguished panellists, including **Dr. Manu Gupta, Ms. Monisha, Ms. Nishani, Mr. Harjeet, Dr. Anil Gupta, Mr. Abhishek, and Ms. Shivika**, who shared insights on disaster management, nature-based solutions (NBS), and community-driven resilience models.

Dr. Anil Gupta highlighted that most disasters are human induced, making better prevention strategies essential. He spoke about an ongoing global mapping of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) efforts aimed at identifying gaps & stressed the need for localization models in India, which the govt is actively considering. He also pointed out that policy presentation & systemic research require significant improvement. Ms. Nishani emphasized the importance of a "local to global" approach and the need to link indigenous knowledge with humanitarian actions, such as traditional medicine & Ayurveda. She advocated for long-term planning, anticipatory action, & capturing ground-level evidence to enhance disaster management. Additionally, she stressed that organizations must integrate NBS with traditional knowledge to ensure sustainability.

Mr. Harjeet pointed out that fossil fuel extraction is causing severe ecological damage and highlighted that global aid is declining due to factors such as the "Trump effect." He raised concerns about the undervaluation of indigenous knowledge and how climate change is making traditional farming less effective. He advocated for a shift towards futuristic learning that considers micro-climate conditions, migration patterns, socio-economic factors, and cultural impacts, while also promoting collaborative rather than hierarchical leadership. Ms. **Shivika** introduced the "Climate-Smart Gram Panchayat" project, which is being implemented in vulnerable districts of Uttar Pradesh. This initiative focuses on identifying local risks such as flooding, waterlogging, and droughts while integrating both scientific and indigenous knowledge to develop effective solutions. She also discussed the development of user-friendly manuals for local communities and partnerships with CSRs and government bodies to enhance expertise and impact.

Mr. **Abhishek**, representing RRA, spoke about supporting farmers and pastoralists in rainfed areas by focusing on the revival of farm ponds, conservation of seeds, and promotion of local farming techniques. He emphasized that collaboration between government agencies, academia, and civil society organizations (CSOs) is essential to achieving state-level success. Ms. Monisha pointed out that developed areas experience fewer climate impacts than developing regions, highlighting the urgent need to integrate indigenous knowledge with scientific advancements. She stressed that communities are the most affected by disasters, and therefore, solutions must be both practical and feasible to be effective.
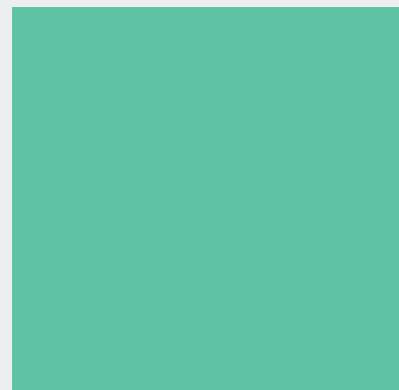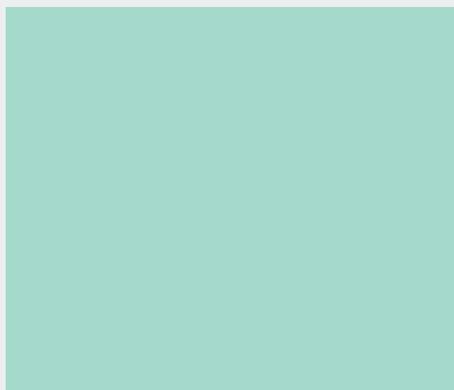
The discussion also centered on key takeaways for better integrating indigenous knowledge into climate resilience efforts. Dr. Anil Gupta suggested leveraging institutions like State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) and NITI Aayog for implementation while identifying innovation leaders who can champion these efforts. He also proposed the establishment of knowledge-sharing networks to optimize traditional wisdom. Ms. Nishani emphasized the connection between displacement and disaster risks and stressed the importance of engaging with displaced communities to preserve and utilize their knowledge. She suggested that such efforts should function as hubs for adaptation, particularly in tackling climate challenges like **heatwaves**.

SESSION 5: IHH GROUP CONTRACT – Principles, Values, & Commitment

by Ms Vasundhara

She focused on defining the core principles and commitments for the IHH Group, ensuring a collaborative and ethical approach to humanitarian efforts.

- **Key Commitments:**
  - Recognition of individuality and expertise of each other
  - Ensuring transparency and accountability in all humanitarian endeavours
  - Solution exchange
  - Keeping a community centric approach
  - Intersectionality in terms of gender and sector

Closing Summary:
The five-day workshop concluded with a vote of thanks and a comprehensive summary of key discussions and takeaways, presented by Ms. Christina. The sessions reinforced the importance of inclusive disaster management, highlighting the need to consider not just human recovery but also the impact on animals and nature, which are equally affected by disasters.

A recurring theme was the value of knowledge from scientific research to indigenous wisdom, emphasising that every perspective matters in building resilience. Collaboration remained central to the dialogue, with the powerful reminder: "Alone, we may go fast, but together, as a network, we go far".

The workshop ended with a shared commitment to strengthening partnerships, fostering local leadership, and ensuring long-term, community-driven disaster preparedness and response.

Glossary & Acronym List (IHH Assembly)

Acronym	Full Form / Definition
IHH	India Humanitarian Hub
EC	Executive Committee
FCRA	Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act – Indian law regulating foreign funding of NGOs.
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility – Corporate initiatives for social and environmental welfare, often including disaster response.
GST	Goods and Services Tax – Indirect tax applicable on service contracts.
TDS	Tax Deducted at Source – Tax collected at the time of payment under service contracts.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NBS	Nature-Based Solutions.
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NEC	National Executive Committee –
SDMA	State Disaster Management Authority .
DDMA	District Disaster Management Authority.
NDRF	National Disaster Response Force
SDRF	State Disaster Response Fund
NDRF (Fund)	National Disaster Response Fund
PM CARES	Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund
USP	Unique Selling Proposition
AI	Artificial Intelligence
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ICEBERG Model	A model used to explore underlying causes of disasters through different layers: Events, Patterns, Structures, and Mental Models.
Apda Mitra	A government initiative to train local volunteers in disaster response.
HCL Grant	A CSR initiative supporting disaster response and development sectors.
GRAP	Graded Response Action Plan
CIQAL	Center for Inclusive Quality and Accessible Learning
YEU	Yakkum Emergency Unit
START Network	A global network of humanitarian
Benami	A property/asset held under a fictitious name, illegal under Indian law & scrutinized under FCRA.

Note: Participants adorned in the traditional Assamese **Gamcha**, a handwoven textile deeply rooted in the cultural identity of **Assam's tribal communities**. Worn with pride, the Gamcha symbolizes respect, resilience, and the enduring legacy of indigenous craftsmanship.

Thank You

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