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**ICLEI South Asia E-News**

September 2020



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Deputy Secretary  
General, ICLEI and  
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Dear readers!

The year 2020 so far has brought home to us how ecological destruction is only making us more vulnerable to serious environmental threats. The cleaner air that we have been enjoying for the past few months underscores the fact we cannot go back to the way things were before March 2020. It was, then, hugely encouraging that 38 cities from five countries in South Asia stepped up to sign a pledge to fight air pollution, under an ICLEI South Asia initiative to mark the UN's first International Day of Clean Air for blue skies on 7<sup>th</sup> of September. This was in addition to the support extended to the initiative by the Indian and the Maldives' national governments.

We need to green-light more such efforts that work towards protecting biodiversity and the environment. A ray of sunshine in these turbulent times is the news that we are setting up a pollinator garden for butterflies and moths in Kochi - happily coinciding with 'Big Butterfly Month' in September - which will also help spread the word on the importance of conserving biodiversity.

September is even more special to us as it marks 30 years since the founding of ICLEI in 1990, when a group of emboldened mayors asserted the importance of local contribution to global sustainability and signed the Charter for the "International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives".

This edition of e-news carries a concise account of the climate resilience webinar series that we successfully hosted in August under the Climate Development and Knowledge Network programme. The sessions covered climate resilience and associated aspects such as gender, peri-urban areas and economic green recovery in the context of COVID-19. There is also a report on our work to improve energy efficiency, in addition to podcasts on disaster management and gender inclusiveness in climate change actions. Don't miss out on a couple of interesting blogs by young writers who provide a fresh perspective.

Happy reading!

## Latest developments

**38 South Asian Cities Pledge to Fight Air Pollution to Mark UN Day of Clean Air for blue**



### skies

Leaders from six countries in South Asia – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives – called for greater action to improve air quality, on the occasion of the United Nations’ first International Day of Clean Air for blue skies on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. To mark the day, 38 cities from the region signed a pledge to use their authority towards reducing air pollution, in an initiative driven by ICLEI South Asia.

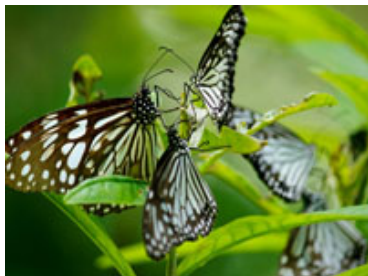
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### Climate Resilience Webinar Series Highlights Opportunities for Recovery in South Asia

ICLEI South Asia and the Climate and Development Knowledge Network organised a series of webinars on climate resilience and its various aspects, including urban and peri-urban planning, gender and green economic recovery, in the context of COVID-19. The webinars had interactive sessions and participation by expert speakers and the attendees.



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### Demonstration Projects to Bring People Closer to Nature in Kochi

Subhash Park in Kochi, Kerala, is set to create a buzz by opening a nature interpretation centre, a pollinator garden and a herbal garden soon. These new attractions in the city are pilot projects aimed at connecting the urban population with biodiversity, an initiative by ICLEI South Asia under the INTERACT-Bio project, which is funded by Germany’s Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).

[Read more](#)

### Local Governments Focus on Strategies to Improve Energy Efficiency in the Long Term

There should be no doubt that local governments as well as State and National Governments need to find robust and resilient developmental models through cross learning from peers. The answer could be to identify best practices in low- carbon solutions and to try contextualising and internalising them in planning and implementation processes. Through its various initiatives, ICLEI South Asia has been supporting local governments and other stakeholders to continue their progression towards a resilient pathway and resource efficiency.



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### CDKN Policy Dialogue Calls for Including Peri-Urban Spaces in Governance, Regional Planning



ICLEI South Asia, the Asia Regional Coordinator for CDKN Asia, organised an online policy dialogue on Peri-Urban Ecosystems – Potential for a Planned Approach in India on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2020. Field experts from various organisations participated in the dialogue and gave their feedback on the brief prepared by the CDKN Asia team.

[Read more](#)

## Blogs

### A Live Debate – Could Indian Cities Boost Resilience by Embracing Native Trees?

Pratibha Caleb and Rithika Fernandes of ICLEI South Asia describe the range of tree species in India's cities, and the live debate over whether native or introduced species contribute to greater urban resilience in the face of climate change impacts.

[Read more](#)



### Lessons from the Pandemic – Nepal is Learning to Transform its Agricultural Sector

In Nepal, coronavirus-related lockdowns have damaged households' food security and ability to access adequate nutrition. Thankfully, rapid adoption of new farming and gardening methods, and systems for agricultural inputs and marketing are helping people to adapt successfully and could be scaled up in the future. Aastha Bhusal and Laxman Khatri, Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD), and Geeta Sandal, ICLEI South Asia, report.

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## Podcasts

**Ms. Kalyani Raj** of All India Women's Conference (AIWC) talks about gender equity and climate change in the context of COVID-19. <https://bit.ly/3hVH4iP>

**Dr. Anil Gupta** of the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) discusses how general disaster preparedness can help in overcoming crises such as pandemics and extreme events linked to climate change. <https://bit.ly/2EpU3uH>

## Upcoming events



### Daring Cities 2020

In the light of the ongoing developments around the COVID-19 pandemic, ICLEI and the German city of Bonn are transforming Daring Cities 2020 into a virtual, global forum for urban leaders who are tackling the climate emergency. Daring Cities 2020 will run from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, offering an online array of high-level and visionary speaking sessions, a series of informative workshops and personal networking opportunities.

[Read more](#)

## More from ICLEI across the globe

- [Redesigning Environmental Transformation in the Post-COVID-19 Era](#)
- [Accra's Steps Toward Clean Air: The Essence of the Urban Health and Short-lived Climate Pollutant \(SLCP\) Reduction Project](#)

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### About ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a network of more than 1,750 local and regional governments, supported by a team of global experts, driving sustainable urban development worldwide. Active in 100+ countries, we impact over 25 percent of the global urban population.

ICLEI firmly believes that sustainable cities are the foundation of a just and sustainable world. We create systemic change in urban areas through practical, integrated solutions and spark city-to-city and city-to-region connections. ICLEI brings a strong urban component to national and global sustainability policy and translates global policy into action. Through our collective efforts, ICLEI is building a sustainable urban world to shift the trajectory of global development.

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