



Educating people about climate change

Posted at: 21/08/2018

Highlights

The World Bank projects that climate change could cost India 2.8% of its GDP, and diminish living standards for nearly half the country's population, in the next 30-odd years.

Various initiatives

Several initiatives have been implemented to create awareness about climate change — about how to mitigate it and adapt to it.

- In 1991, the Supreme Court directed the Central government and all State governments to provide compulsory environmental education to all students in schools and colleges which was reiterated in 2003 (M.C Mehta v. Union of India).
- Corporate organisations, research and education institutes, NGOs and foundations have committed themselves to educating people about climate change and providing the know-how for mitigation, adaptation and resilience building initiatives targeting urban and rural populations including school going children.
- Their thrust ranges from inculcating the concept of environmental sustainability to driving home the impact of climate change on food, water, nutrition and health.

Most of the country's plans for vulnerable populations are directed towards poverty alleviation, improving living standards, enhancing access to education, sanitation, healthcare and ensuring human rights. Climate change finds little mention. It must receive greater prominence because the lives of a large number of the population is at risk

The way forward

- At present, climate change does not find specific mention in Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013.
- However, if it were to be articulated and specified as an activity for corporate social responsibility (CSR), rather than be implied in the umbrella term of environmental sustainability, organisations may be encouraged to view it with increased importance and clarity and lend more weight to creating awareness, mitigation and resilience-building.
- Scaling up current initiatives of the corporate and social sectors to regional or national levels would be an early, albeit challenging, solution. Efforts on this front could be facilitated and amplified by companies' CSR activities.
- Similarly, the film industry could consider ways to incorporate key aspects of climate change in films, writers could introduce climate change in adult and children's literature, and gaming companies could develop games on this theme.

Given the startling forecasts about the impact of climate change, it is the need of the hour to educate and equip both rural and urban communities to build resilience against natural disasters, adapt to environmental changes, and manage potential risk.

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