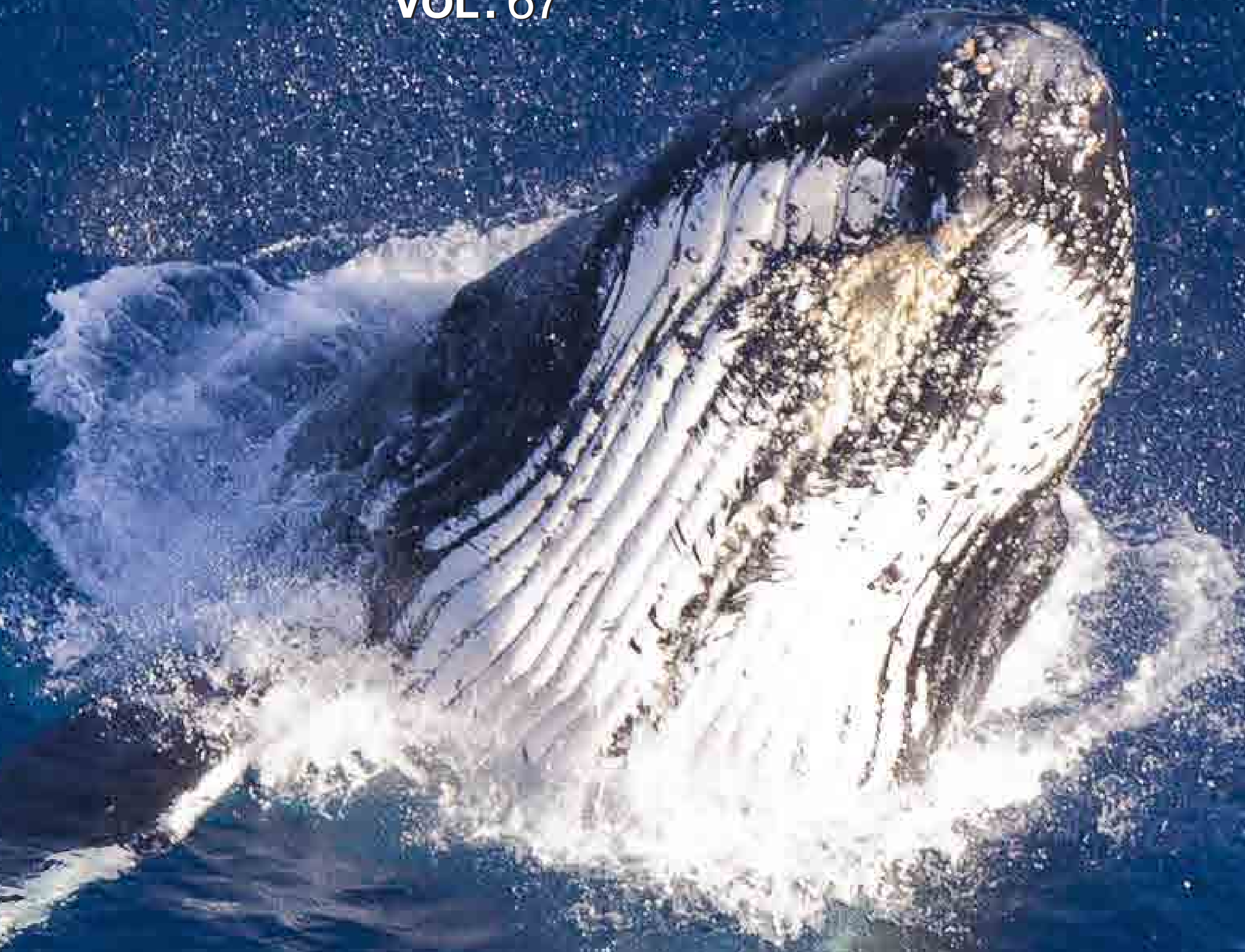


# WITNESS 2.19

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# EDITORIAL

Mousumi Dhar  
Interim Executive Director  
Greenpeace India

I would like to start this note by thanking all our supporters for standing with us during our difficult times. Our small team of enthusiastic campaigners have organised multiple public events across India during the elections, urging voters to cast their votes demanding clean air, safe food and a plastic-free future. The online and offline petitions signed by the citizens of India have been submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. As an outcome of the campaign we are glad to say that many of our recommendations to major political parties have found a mention in their election manifestos.

In June, we released the 'Solarisation of Agriculture' report. This report examines five models of solar irrigation pumps in the states of Bihar, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Odisha, looking at state policies, cost/revenue and benefit sharing associated with each case study. We are committed to transitioning from conventional pumps to solar-based pumps. It is dependent on the implementation, success and challenges of the central and state policies, and schemes that promote solar irrigation.

In July, we released an analysis of Nitrogen Oxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) satellite data, where the findings re-asserted that the transport and industrial clusters are giving rise to the country's worst NO<sub>2</sub> hotspots. We are continuing to push our demands to the government to ensure that emission standard deadlines for coal power plants and industries are strictly adhered to. It is also required that industrial and electricity sectors transition to cleaner alternatives for power generation. Every delay is costing us lives.

We would continue to push through our campaigns in an attempt to ensure a resilient and sustainable future for the people of India.

Thank you for all your support.



# A LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT

Last year, leading UN scientists warned that we have just 12 years to ensure that global warming is kept to a maximum of **1.5° C**, beyond which even half a degree could worsen the risk of extreme weather events and poverty for millions of people. To achieve this, governments must put in place effective policies in the next 18 months, in order to curb Carbon Dioxide emissions by **45% by the year 2030**.

Prior to India's recent elections, we made several recommendations to the government, which lay the building blocks of India's energy transition, and agricultural security over the next 12 years.

## ALLEVIATING AIR POLLUTION

**22 out of the world's 30 most polluted cities are in India.** We urged the government to focus on clean energy for cleaner air, through a four-point approach. First, the spread of solar power in urban and rural areas. Second, the electrification of India's public transport bus system. Third, strict enforcement of new emission standards for coal power plants, and fourth, conversion of Non-Performing Assets (energy projects stalled by financial or other issues), into sustainable energy sources.



## TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE

Factors like depleting groundwater, declining soil health and an increase in the use of chemical fertilisers, are paying a high-price on the agro-business and our environment. To tackle this, we recommended the aggressive phasing out of chemical-fertiliser subsidies, investment in biomass conservation, decentralisation of rainwater harvesting infrastructures, incentivisation of organic farming, funding of local seed-banks and a blanket moratorium on field trials and use of GM seeds.

Each component is significant and challenging. If implemented, the government can benefit 1.3 billion Indians and establish India as a world leader in tackling the climate change crisis. All we need now is bold and visionary leadership!





# SOLAR IS THE WAY TO GROW

**A**griculture in India has relied on polluting energy systems, like diesel-powered irrigation pumps, for a long time. Too long. These systems burn irreplaceable fossil fuels like coal, which not only burden farmers cost-wise but also emit extremely polluting toxic fumes that affect human health. The alternative electric pumps,

**of Agriculture' report**, which studies the implementation of five exemplary solar-irrigation pump models across Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu. These solar models helped increase irrigation in a few test villages and even enabled some farmers to sell extra electricity units back to the main supply grid, for additional income.

The report also found that the proposed renewable energy target is not feasible with the current plan. However, shifting to solar irrigation pumps will help achieve 38% of this target. To implement this successfully, each state will require a unique solar irrigation model. This unfortunately means a longer assessment period. While these irrigation models are empowering farmers, encouraging sustainable groundwater use, and benefitting electricity distribution companies, there is still a long way to go.

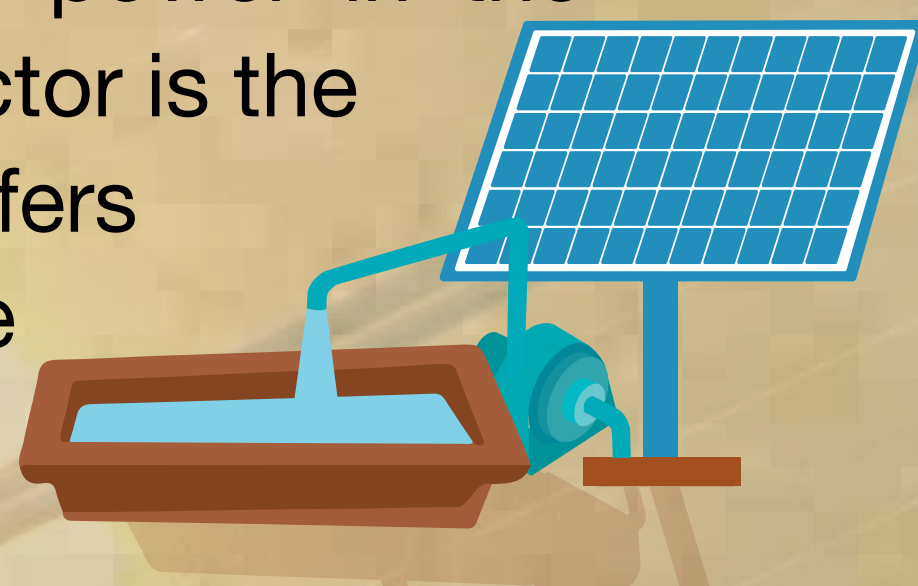
India is **highly vulnerable** to extreme weather events like droughts and floods, triggered by climate change. Solar irrigation systems can help improve the efficiency of water management and, subsidies and policy intervention can make solar power more accessible. In the long run, this could play a key role in managing the food and energy crisis. It's clear that renewable energy like solar power is the way to grow.

operate on free or subsidised electricity supplied by state governments, which are also largely fossil fuel dependent.

In today's increasingly unpredictable climatic conditions, we cannot dispute the need for energy powered irrigation but we must stress on sustainable long-term solutions.

Implementing renewable solar power in the energy intensive agriculture sector is the need of the hour. Solar power offers zero fuel costs, additional income for farmers, a low environmental impact, subsidised government costs and the ability to increase irrigation. It is also a crucial part of India's efforts to transition towards 175GW of renewable energy by 2022, of which 100GW is solar-power.

With this focus, Greenpeace India released the **'Solarisation**





# BLUE HAVEN: WHY OCEAN SANCTUARIES ARE ESSENTIAL

The high seas comprise 43% of the Earth's surface. They provide a home to abundant wildlife, food for a billion people and half of our oxygen. The marine life in this region drives the ocean's biological pump, capturing carbon at the surface and storing it deep below. Today, the high seas face growing exploitation from fishing and deep seabed mining, besides threats from climate change, plastic, acidification, etc.

In July, Greenpeace released the **'30X30' report**, a blueprint for ocean protection. It calls for the creation of ocean sanctuaries to protect species, preserve habitats and revive ocean ecosystems.

The report shows why 30% of the world's oceans need to be guarded as sanctuaries and how we can design a planet-wide network of protected areas.

By creating an international legally-binding instrument to enable the protection of marine life and habitats outside national jurisdiction, the United Nations can put in place structures to establish and govern ocean sanctuaries.

The study is based on biological data, such as the distributions of sharks, whales, seamounts, trenches, hydrothermal vents, oceanic fronts, upwellings, biogeographic zones, commercial fishing pressure, mining claims, etc. The suggestions also take into account and avoid areas used intensively by high seas fishing fleets, to reduce disruption to fishing activity.

To promote the Protect the Oceans campaign and celebrate World Oceans Day, Greenpeace asked people to show their support, by painting themselves blue and performing human waves. In 26 countries, people took action in a movement to encourage world leaders to push for a strong Global Ocean Treaty.

We have the means, and the need is more urgent than ever. What we need now is political will.



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# GLOBAL & NATIONAL NEWS

## School Strikes Go Global



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When leading UN scientists warned that there were only 12 years left to curb the climate catastrophe, a global uproar was raised. Since then, the school strike for climate movement - initially sparked by Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish activist - has spread its wings across the globe. Also known as #FridaysForFuture, the movement has energised weekly protests by thousands of students and adults in over 100 countries. Today, climate strikers comprise of approximately **3.6 million people** across 169 countries. On September 20th, 2019 - three days before the UN Emergency Climate Summit - school strikers planned a global climate strike to demand immediate action.

## India Takes a Climate Beating

India has been attacked by extreme environmental events since May 2019, when Cyclone Fani ravaged the eastern coast. Since then, devastating floods in Assam, Bihar, Maharashtra and Kerala, and deadly heatwaves in Bihar and Tamil Nadu have plagued the country. The floods have killed approximately **250\*** and displaced more than a million people. The heatwaves claimed a total of **210\*** lives across India, according to a government statement. Bad policies coupled with climate change, mean that extreme weather events are likely to become increasingly frequent if adequate action is not taken.

## Chennai Thirsts for Better Management

Climate change hit especially hard this year, as Chennai experienced a water crisis that left the city completely parched. The city's four main water-supplying lakes completely dried up, while groundwater levels hit an all-time low. While Chennai's 4.6 million residents scrambled to save every drop of water, the unforgiving heatwave made their plight worse. However, this disaster is not unexpected, as last year, a government think tank warned that Chennai would be among the **21 Indian cities** to possibly run out of groundwater by the year 2020.

\*Data as per count on 14th Aug 2019



# FIRING UP A NATION OF ACTIVISTS

**A**s 16-year old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg recently said, “We are in the beginning of a mass extinction.” As we spread awareness across India, more people are rising to demand immediate climate action.





## Impact Box

### 13 Wells Dug; Groundwater Revived

Kedia resounds as a success story for the shift from chemical to organic fertilizers and the subsequent restoration of the soil. But that's not all. Today, 13 wells have been dug and brick work is currently in progress. All 13 wells have struck water at a depth of 17 to 25 feet, which is a big deal in a water-deficient region. Greenpeace India along with Jivit Mati Kisan Samiti arranged the necessary finances for the work, which has cost approximately 16 lakh rupees to date.



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