



WITNESS

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EDITORIAL

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It was a busy quarter, as we scaled up the Living Soils campaign from Bihar to Odisha. We organised a consultation in Bhubaneswar on 'Soil Health and Sustainability of Agriculture in Odisha' for key stakeholders to discuss and map a way forward.

Jashn-e-Jaivik was celebrated in Kedia, Bihar to acknowledge the community's efforts to transition agricultural practices from chemical to ecological farming. Amidst cultural and ethnic programmes, the list of dignitaries ranged from our allies to government top-shots including Mr Prem Kumar, Bihar Agriculture Minister.

Our staff and volunteers interacted with attendees and alumni at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee's annual event 'Thomso', about the need to understand and adopt sustainable farming practices. To interact with our supporters and donors on the matter, we hosted an organic lunch in Bengaluru.

Under our air pollution campaign, we released an analysis verified by satellite data, which showed no significant reduction in PM2.5 levels in Delhi from 2013 to 2018. It only showed a slight reduction in the later part of 2018, which is not a 25% reduction as the Delhi government claimed.

In October, the team amplified the Global Climate Strike together with students and allies. Our volunteers undertook a cleanliness drive at Ganga Kali Ghat in Patna and Sanjay Lake in Delhi. We also conducted a medical camp in Delhi to study the health of children's lungs, and found alarming results.

As we move forward, I must say a big thank you for your continued belief in us!

A SEASON OF CELEBRATION & NEW BEGINNINGS

It was a season of celebration and new beginnings for the Bihar Living Soils (BLS) team, as we closed the last quarter of 2019 on a high note. Now, we're taking the model to distressed farmlands in the states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh. In the first step, we focused on establishing networks and spreading awareness about the ecological farming model and the story of Kedia Village, Bihar.

We kicked off with an informative booth at Thomso fest - IIT Roorkee, followed by an organic lunch in Bengaluru, and finally, the Jashn-e-Jaivik festival in Kedia. A celebration of life and livelihoods, the festival drew over 1500 participants from Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Attendee, Bihar Agriculture Minister, Dr Prem Kumar stated that the BLS model is an inspiring way forward for farmers across India.

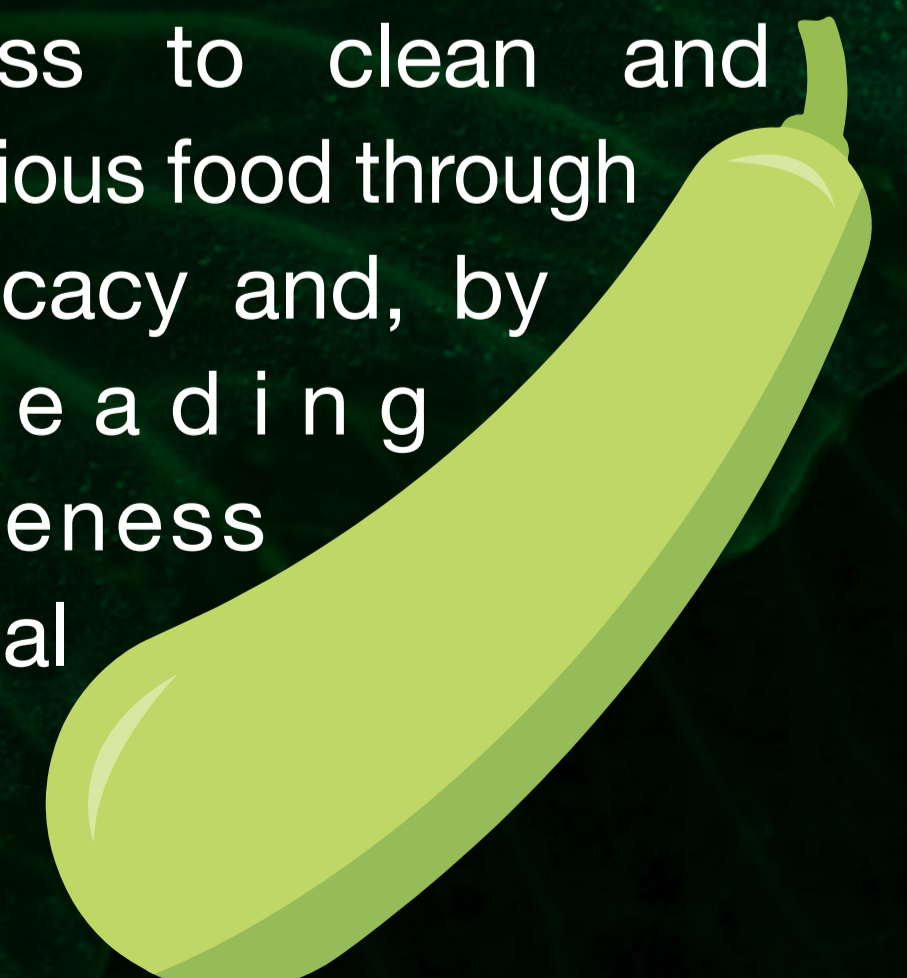
In Jamui, to ensure a smooth handover of the BLS model, we held a series of capacity-building workshops together with the Jamui Horticulture Department. Our development of several model kitchen gardens led the Department of Education to ask us to develop the models in more villages. Kedia farmer Rajkumar Bhai together with Greenpeace India hosted training sessions on organic farming for over 300 farmers from across Bihar.

The Government of Bihar plans to increase the acreage of organic farming in the state with more financial allocations. The department sought BLS suggestions which were promptly accommodated. This includes; increasing the area under organic farming in the state, proposed organic corridors, increasing biogas subsidy, an investment in organic kitchen gardens, increasing the annual support to organic farmers, reducing the land requirement for organic certification, opening a department of Organic Farming in all Bihar agriculture universities and investing in research.

In Odisha, we began by building a stronger network with grassroots organisations for future interventions. This was done through a multi-stakeholder consultation for govt. officials, farmers, civil society representatives and experts, on current soil health and agricultural sustainability.

We will continue striving to provide every citizen with access to clean and nutritious food through advocacy and, by spreading awareness

and knowledge about ecological agriculture across India.



ACTIONS FOR CLEAN AIR

The last quarter of 2019 left millions across India feeling breathless. Not as a result of the festive high, but rather a consequence of the seasonal rise in air pollution. Air toxin levels were spurred on by a medley of episodic factors including stubble-burning, Diwali, peak travel season, and low temperatures. However, these are not the only reasons for the decline in public health and the quality of our environment.

Deadly emissions from perennial sources like transport, industries and



power plants pose direct and devastating impacts. These continuous emissions lead to pollution levels in Delhi-NCR remaining within the 'Unhealthy' category on the Air Quality Index (AQI) for most of the year. When the seasonal spike in polluting activities sent levels soaring into the 'Severe' category, the EPCA (Environmental Pollution Control Authority) finally declared a public health emergency on November 1, 2019. This came after months of demands for a declaration put forward by Greenpeace India and allied civil societies.

We worked to build awareness about the direct impacts of emissions across Delhi through several activities; from holding knowledge workshops, to conducting lung tests and supporting



students and our allies in the local climate strikes. After conducting lung tests in several schools across Delhi, we found that many students showed either a 'Mild' or 'Severe' obstruction in their lungs. The doctors postulated that the poor lung health of students is a direct repercussion of breathing the 'Hazardous' air quality in Delhi-NCR. Young people with developing lungs and individuals with pre-existing breathing conditions are especially susceptible to contracting irreversible lung damage by breathing in polluted air.

Precautions, like wearing anti-pollution masks and installing air filters, are available but they are not enough. If we hold the government publicly accountable, we can ensure that the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) emission reduction targets are met. We must act as a watchdog to ensure that thermal power-plants adhere to deadlines for implementation of emission standards



and demand strict action for non-compliance.

Only by cutting pollution at the source, can we ensure clean air for all.



Breathe With Caution

With elections looming around the corner, tackling air pollution is high on the agenda for most major political parties across India. In fact, earlier in 2019, the Delhi government claimed that air pollution levels in the capital reduced by 25% from 2013 to 2018. However, this far-fetched claim must be taken with a **pinch of salt**.

Our recent report revealed that while PM10 levels in the capital declined marginally in the past couple of years, levels in 2018 are actually higher when compared to levels in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Similarly, Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels actually increased during the same period. Data from all real-time air quality monitoring stations collectively show no noticeable reduction in deadly PM_{2.5}, besides a slight reduction towards the end of 2018.

The widespread media attention to our report led the Delhi government to reject our analysis, but air quality index levels don't lie.

CLIMATE JUSTICE WIN



A historic decision for communities and a momentous **victory for climate justice!** The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR), recently declared that the 47 polluting corporations from the fossil-fuel industry, can be found legally and morally responsible for human rights harms to Filipinos, due to climate change.

These investor-owned companies could also be held accountable under civil and criminal laws, due to intentional obstruction, confusion and climate denial. The CHR also announced that people who have dramatically suffered human rights harms by climate change must be able to receive help and justice.

The fossil fuel industry, including companies such as ExxonMobil, Shell, BP, Chevron, and Total, knowingly put the safety of millions at risk for their own interests. Comprising the world's largest and richest companies, the industry rakes in profits, while poor, at-risk communities suffer from natural disasters worsened by climate change.

This is the last chapter of the fossil fuel industry's control over our political systems! These big polluters and corporations have a responsibility

to protect human rights in the face of the climate emergency. We must stand up against fossil fuel companies that put profit before people. It's time leaders put people before polluters.



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GLOBAL & NATIONAL NEWS

Slavery on the High Seas



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Today, the fishing industry is **extremely profitable**. Growing demands have led to declining fish numbers and the overexploitation of coastal water resources. Consequently, the industry increases efforts in the high seas, leading to illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. This fishing racket is sustained on a cheap labour force of Southeast Asian migrant fishers who end up trapped on the high-seas, working aboard foreign-owned distant water fleets.

The Greenpeace Southeast Asia (GPSEA) team conducted a study and released the disturbing findings in the **‘Seabound: The Journey to Modern Slavery’** report. It uncovers a corrupt system of recruitment and forced labour. **13** foreign distant water fishing vessels have been accused in human rights abuse cases so alarming, they have been classified as “modern slavery”.

GPSEA has called for all 10 ASEAN member states to step up and address overfishing, IUU fishing, and modern slavery at sea.

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Boost India’s Economy Organically

Home to a vast agricultural diversity, India has a mixed economy. In times of economic depression, such as the 2008 recession, agriculture has always played a key role in helping the country recover. This is due to domestic sources contributing greatly to the GDP and a lower dependence of the economy on export markets.

With India’s GDP growth rate slipping to **5%** in the first quarter of FY20 - the lowest in over six years - our economy is now in a slowdown. The current 0.30% spending allocated for organic farming is not sufficient. It’s destroying our soil, food nutritional values and farmer’s lives.

To ensure the steps taken are revenue generative, we must focus on boosting our nation’s primary source of income, i.e. agriculture. Through organic farming, we can not only maintain India’s economic growth but also provide healthy and nutritious food to all.

STUDENTS ON STRIKE

The youth-powered global climate strikes proved to be vital in initiating conversation and mobilizing the world to take action. On November 29, 2019, we supported the student's climate strike in Delhi, together with our allies 'Fridays For Future'.

The protest drew over 300 citizens, who marched to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoEFCC)



and presented a list of demands. Among these demands was the declaration of a Climate Emergency, a strengthened and improved National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), mitigation plans for farmers, and an increased focus on R&D.

Impact Box

Bhopal Case: A Landmark Victory!

In March 2006, 300 citizens from Bhopal Gas Tragedy survivor and advocacy organisations, marched to the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers in Delhi. When they peacefully protested the continuing toxic contamination of Bhopal and its people, several were arrested.

On 31st October 2019, the court ruled in favour of the individuals involved, saying 'Holding peaceful demonstration in order to air grievances and see that their voice is heard in the relevant quarters is the right of the people. This is a fundamental freedom under Constitutional Article 19.' The case was closed and all the accused were dismissed. This is a huge victory for democracy and human rights!

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