



Editor's Note

January's chill factor did not impede the frenetic activity at The Infravision Foundation. A roundtable on agri exports, the first initiative by CAIRA; a report on high speed rail; and plans to present the findings of the report on CAMPA to key institutional heads. TIF hopes to continue as it began.

WORKSHOP ON TREES OUTSIDE FORESTS >>



Event Alert

InfraKatha #8

TIF@Media

TIF@CII

TIF@UnionBudget

Quiz

Workshop on Trees Outside Forests

Targeted policy interventions, standardized certification processes, market development strategies, and collaborative frameworks designed to overcome critical barriers and establish Trees Outside Forests (TOF) products as a foundation for sustainable and climate-resilient construction practices in India. These were among the key recommendations of a project where The Infravision Foundation (TIF) collaborated with the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) to support one of the major objectives of the Trees Outside Forests in India (TOFI) programme. TOFI is a joint initiative of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ministry of Environment,

Forests, and Climate Change (MoEFCC), that aims to expand the area under trees outside forest while enhancing livelihoods and ecosystem services in seven Indian states. TIF's role is to promote the integration of wood-based materials sourced from TOF into construction projects across public and private sectors. A key element of this effort has been extensive stakeholder engagement, including a Consultation Workshop held on December 16, 2024, at the India International Centre, New Delhi, where leading stakeholders and industry experts convened to deliberate on policy reforms, technical innovations, and market strategies for mainstreaming TOF products, while refining a draft advisory for MoEFCC.



TIF will be organising a high-level roundtable on a topic of national importance, Boosting India's Agri Exports by Transforming Infra, under the aegis of its new initiative, the Centre for Agri Infrastructure Research and Action (CAIRA). The roundtable will be attended by key stakeholders in the agri infra space, among them Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Dr Subrata Gupta; DG, Directorate General of Foreign Trade Santosh Sarangi; and Country Chairman SATS India Siraj Chaudhry. Siraj Hussain, chairman of CAIRA's governing council, will be presenting a paper highlighting the urgent need for improved infrastructure to support global supply chains originating in India. The event will take place at the India Habitat Centre on January 18, 2025.

Welcome Aboard



TIF welcomes **Khurshed Daruvala** as Founding Patron. Daruvala is MD, Sterling and Wilson, which has gone from being an electrical contractor in the 80s to being the subcontinent's largest MEP (Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing) and Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) business. As a Founding Patron, Daruvala also joins the Council of Advisers.



TIF welcomes **Cyril Shroff** as a member of its Council of Advisers. Shroff has been Managing Partner of Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas since 2015, and has 43 years of experience in a range of areas, including corporate and securities law, disputes and bankruptcy.

InfraKatha #8: Can Public Private Partnerships in Infra Be Revitalised?

The eighth edition of InfraKatha, in partnership with India Habitat Centre, was an insightful discussion between **Montek Singh Ahluwalia** and TIF Founder Vinayak Chatterjee on whether Public Private Partnerships (PPP) can be revitalised. As former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia said, the government has to invest in health, education and research, plus defence. So it has limits on fiscal capabilities. There are areas which are crying out for privatisation like Railways which clearly needs a review. "Each ministry should be asked for its privatisation plan," he said, adding that India

faces a problem of stigmatised capital in the words of former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian. Ahluwalia also noted that the environmental clearance of projects is a mess. Add to that, he said, foreign investors have no assurance that agreements will be respected. While Chatterjee gave the audience a quick history of PPP in infrastructure development in India, Ahluwalia provided insight into how the political perception of PPP has evolved.

You can see it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukODX0IIH7o>



TIF@Media

TIF has undertaken a research study, in collaboration with TERI, on the subject of Compensatory Afforestation. The study was undertaken to understand existing policies. Founder and Managing Trustee Vinayak Chatterjee wrote at length in Business Standard on how the implementation has been poor and patchy and needs significant overhauling so that India's robust development agenda is not pitted against serious environmental degradation.

Business Standard NEW DELHI | FRIDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2024

Forests await better compensation

A news item in the Delhi edition of the *Times of India* on December 3, 2024, stated that the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had taken *asa mota* cognizance of a report by Global Forest Watch, which pointed out India had lost 2.3 million hectares of forest cover since 2000. That amounted to 6 per cent of tree cover. This "would be almost 15 times the size of Delhi!"

While much of this alarming reduction would be attributed to all-round development efforts, it would also be necessary to point out that India has "Compensatory Afforestation" (CA) policies in place. The question, therefore, is: How effective have these policies been? The Infravision Foundation worked alongside TERI to examine this whole area, including the working of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (Campa).

The 1972 Stockholm Conference inspired India's 42nd constitutional amendment in 1976, which emphasised environmental protection through Articles 48(A) and 51(A)(g), shifting forest management to the Concurrent List. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, regulates the diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes. Although CA was not initially included, the concept was introduced in the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 1981, and has since been strengthened through several amendments and guidelines. The Forest (Conservation) Rules, 1981, provided detailed procedures for land diversion, compensatory afforestation, and methods for funds collection and utilisation. The rules have been revised multiple times, with the latest update in 2022. CA encompasses fresh plantings done in lieu of the diversion of forest land. This also requires transferring non-forest land to the state forest department. While CA aims to balance development with conservation, there is criticism regarding its effectiveness in truly compensating for lost ecosystems and related biodiversity.

Contributors to Campa span diverse sectors, reflecting India's development priorities. Infrastructure-building agencies feature prominently in this. Industrial enterprises — including mining and manufacturing, and water authorities managing canals and pipelines — also contribute significantly.

Urban-development agencies and strategic entities like oil and gas companies further bolster the fund. While these contributors are essential for financing CA activities, the process has faced significant criticism due to sketchy balance sheet disclosures and inconsistent financial reporting across states.

Challenges in the implementation of CA were last identified in the audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General conducted in 2013. The report reveals serious flaws in its management. From 2006 to 2012, only 27 per cent of non-forest land designated for afforestation was handed over, with afforestation occurring on just 7 per cent of it. Financial discrepancies were glaring, with significant funds and related expenditures unaccounted for. The e-Green Watch system, meant for real-time project monitoring, remained largely non-functional. Weak enforcement mechanisms further enabled unauthorised mining and other encroachments. State Campa guidelines had established a three-tier structure for fund management, involving a governing body, steering committee, and executive committee. Despite these efforts, audits revealed mismanagement, leading to the enactment of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act in 2016 and its rules in 2018.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's Annual Report 2023-24 highlights the unsatisfactory status of compensatory afforestation achievements. Despite ambitious targets of 56,032 hectares for CA, only 38,922.77 hectares was achieved, leaving a gap of 17,140.04 hectares.

The e-Green Watch portal, intended to ensure transparency in CA, struggles to serve its purpose. Moreover, finding recent data on contributions to Campa by infrastructure developers is nearly impossible. Critics like Patrick Oskerson and Sarthak Shukla aptly observe in their essay "Missing Trees, Cancelled Rights: Does Compensatory Afforestation Negate Forest Rights?" (September 30, 2024), the e-Green Watch portal gives the appearance of a "bureaucratic maze", frustrating efforts to trace and verify compensatory afforestation projects.

A study by TERI, on behalf of the Infravision Foundation, highlighted that not even 50 per cent of CA targets had been achieved by any state and for few

states like Bihar, Delhi, Mizoram, and Nagaland, the achievements were exceptionally low. It was also highlighted in the report that only seven states/Union Territories — Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi, and Haryana — had dedicated websites for maintaining records. In the analysis of land diversion and fund utilisation for Campa activities, a significant issue was identified — that the data uploaded across various platforms — such as e-Green Watch, Panchajanya Portal, Annual Plan of Action (APO), Annual Reports, and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) documents — did not align. Key challenges identified include land unavailability and fragmentation, inefficient fund utilisation, and inadequate record maintenance. Furthermore, despite several initiatives aimed at compiling data, much of it remains outdated, inaccessible, or unavailable.

To enhance the implementation of Campa, five recommendations have been proposed.

First, improving data transparency is critical. States and Union Territories should upgrade Campa websites regularly to include comprehensive and up-to-date information, such as APOs, Monitoring and Evaluation reports, and expenditure details.

Second, states should focus on consolidating land to prevent fragmentation and establish land banks to identify degraded and fallow land suitable for afforestation efforts.

Third, capacity-building programmes for state forest departments should be introduced to enhance project planning, execution, and monitoring.

Fourth, afforestation efforts should also consider local ecological and climatic conditions to ensure sustainability, so that planted saplings do not die at early stages. Advancing research and development is necessary for innovation in afforestation techniques.

Fifth, engaging local communities in afforestation projects and developing benefit-sharing mechanisms can incentivise their participation and foster a sense of ownership.

In conclusion, it would be fair to say that the state of affairs in CA is far from satisfactory, and a comprehensive reset with greater transparency and public accountability is desirable. Only then will India's rapid growth ambitions be balanced with appropriate sensitivity to ecological preservation.

The author is an infrastructure expert. He is also founder and managing trustee, The Infravision Foundation. Research inputs were provided by Teri and Vinayak Singh.

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TIF Co-founder Rumjhum Chatterjee anchored a session on women at the Rising Rajasthan summit in Jaipur. Among those who spoke at HerStory: Advancing Inclusive Societies were Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari; author and academic Shwetanshu Bhushan; Secretary, Women and Child and Development; Minister of State, Women and Child Development; noted handicraft designer and social worker Ruma Devi; businesswomen Sminu Jindal and Nimisha J Vadakkan. The session was also graced by Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma.



TIF@UnionBudget

TIF CEO Jagan Shah was among the key stakeholders from the infrastructure, energy and urban sectors, who presented their inputs in the pre-Budget consultations chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

TIF@Workshop

TIF CEO Jagan Shah participated in a workshop in IIT-Delhi on the subject: 'Gendered Resilience in Transport – Enhancing Adaptation to Extreme Heat in Delhi'.



TIF Work Updates

- Champions' Lab on Land Value Capture (LVC) in Mumbai:** TIF submitted the final report on the proceedings to the World Bank.
- High Speed Rail:** Dr. Ramakrishnan T. S submitted a white paper to TIF titled 'The Economic, Environmental, Technological, and Societal Case for Developing High-Speed Rail Corridors and Prioritizing Routes in India'.
- Ropeways:** TIF has initiated a study titled 'Relieving Urban Congestion and Promoting Tourism: The Case for Urban Ropeways in India' in partnership with Infrastructure Development Corporation (Karnataka) Limited (iDeCK). The study will describe the potential to use ropeways in targeted and location-specific projects in the hugely diverse urban landscape of India, to supplement and, wherever appropriate, substitute the dependence on road-based transportation and relieve congestion, thereby improving the economic performance of cities.

How Much Do You Know About Infra?

- Horror films are good business for old forts in India. Which old fort was the venue for much of the shoot of Bhool Bhulaiya 3.
- China approved construction of the world's largest hydropower project in December 2024. On which river will it be?
- How many devotees is the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj expected to attract?
- What percentage of Indian Railway tracks can now handle speeds of 130 km an hour?
- Where is the world's highest tunnel being built?



- Jahangir Mahal, Orchha, Madhya Pradesh
- The Yarlung Tsangpo (or Zangbo) river in Tibet. On completion, the 60,000 MW project will have the capacity to produce three times the amount of electricity as the world's largest hydro project, the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze in central China.
- 40 crore
- One fifth, or 23,000 track km
- At a height of 15,800 feet under the forbidding Shinkun Pass in Ladakh.



Editor: Kaveree Bamzai

Find me @9810707314,
Email: Kaveree.bamzai@theinfravisionfoundation.org;

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