

WITNESS^{1.18}

VOL. 62

AIR PO CALY PSE II

ASSESSMENT OF
AIR POLLUTION
IN INDIAN CITIES



Ramesh Kumar Singh Malla
Interim Executive Director,
Greenpeace India

EDITORIAL

I hope your new year is off to a flying start. The year is indeed flying fast, it is only the first quarter, and we have already witnessed a lot and did a lot more: Kedia, Airpocalypse 2, India's concept note on national clean air action, our direct actions in Delhi and Mumbai, as you can read in this edition of Witness. Not only at home but also globally Greenpeace colleagues have been relentless: preventing harmful toxic waste moving from Australia to Denmark; getting the company Princes to commit that it will no longer rely on indiscriminate and destructive fishing methods that kill all kinds of marine creatures, and the victory in Fukushima.

The International Women's Day on March 8 this year was unlike any others, following the groundswell wave of #metoo campaigns among others. This was also the time to highlight 'climate change impacts women more than men', – UN estimates that 80% of people displaced by climate change are women. Women environmental activists are at the front of the receiving end of violence in the environmental struggle: we remembered Berta Caceres, the woman environmental activist who was murdered in Honduras two years ago, as the suspect has just been arrested.

Speaking about gender parity, in a recent Greenpeace Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA), which took place simultaneously in Mumbai and New Delhi, we made sure that the ethos of gender equality were embraced. Two brave women activists, Swetha and Banupriya made the perfect gender balanced team of four who climbed the Vasi bridge in Mumbai in equal authority, transcending the socio-cultural definition of courage and unfurled the banner demanding pollution free clean air in Mumbai.

We will continue to bring women in the centre of our people-powered campaigning as well as seeing our campaign from the perspectives of women. This means further building our understanding and capacity as well as walking the talk internally inside the organisation, not just in campaigns outside. We have an active group of colleagues working hard towards that. We are re-doubling our effort towards making the workplace safe and empowering for women staff.

AIRPOCALYPSE II REPORT

Greenpeace released the first Airpocalypse report in early 2017, which for the first time showed that air pollution is not a problem restricted to Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) or even to India's metros and is killing 1.2 million Indians every year while costing the economy an estimated 3% of GDP. The data that was gathered by Greenpeace India, showed that there is virtually no city meeting WHO and NAAQS standards, in fact most of the cities are way above the limits - showing how polluted the air is.

One year down the line, the air quality hasn't improved much, despite efforts like ban on firecrackers, implementation of odd-even car policy and more. Meanwhile Greenpeace came out with Airpocalypse II report to show we are way behind in taking any meaningful step towards solving the air pollution crisis.

About 580 million (47%) of the population are living in areas where no air quality data is available. Out of the 53% (630 million) population covered by data - 28% population live in areas where air pollution level is more than twice the stipulated standard, these areas mainly being - Uttar Pradesh (64 million), Rajasthan (20 million), Maharashtra (19 million), Delhi (17 million) and Bihar (15 million).

Delhi was the most polluted with an annual PM10 average of 290, which is close to five times the permissible limit, followed by Faridabad in Haryana (272), Bhiwadi in Rajasthan (262), Patna in Bihar (261), and Dehradun in Uttarakhand (238). These are also the places where children are worst affected.

What is worth pondering - the more dangerous pollutant PM 2.5, has increased steadily in India in the last decade, even as its level has been falling in China, the United States and the European Union.

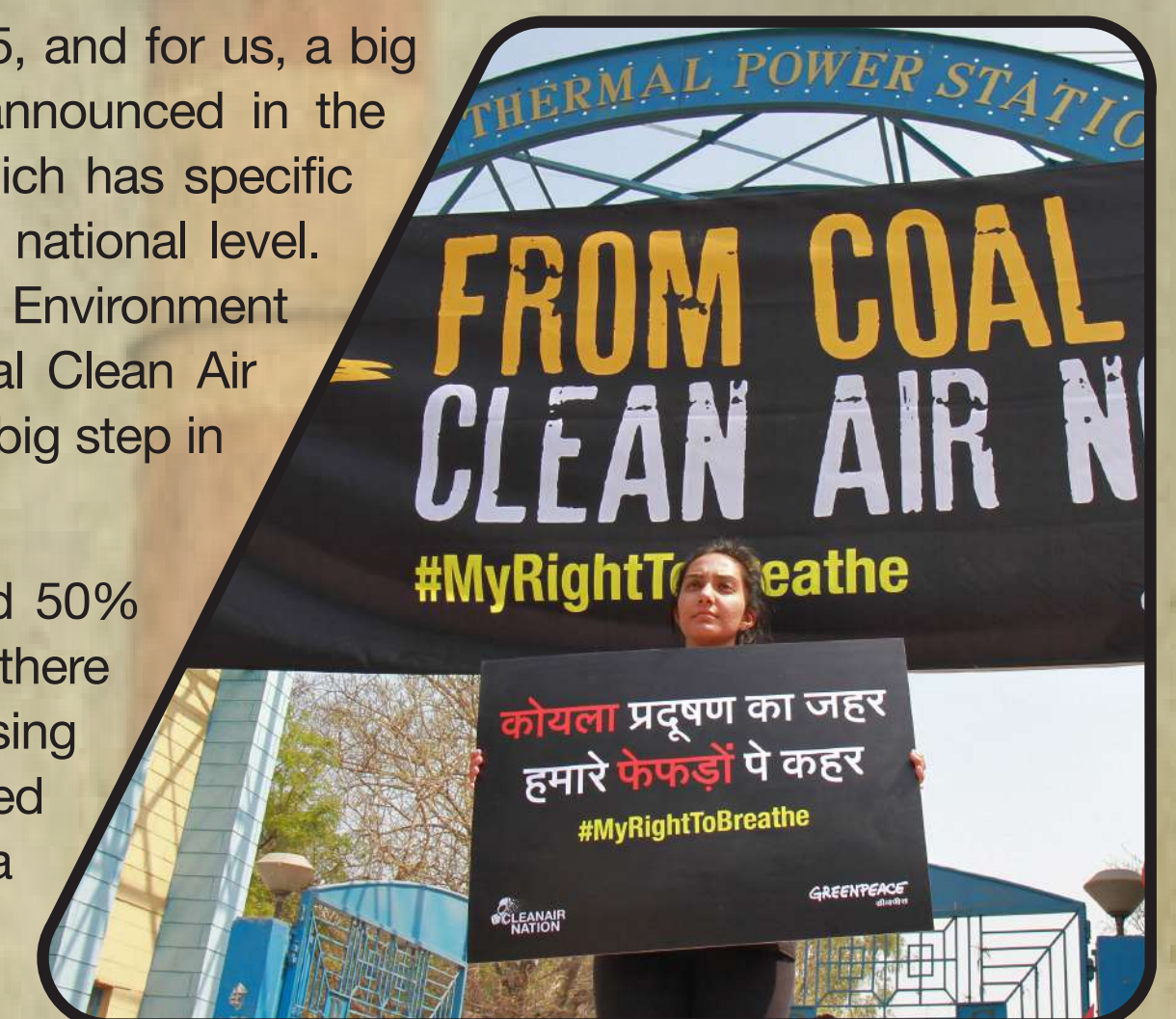
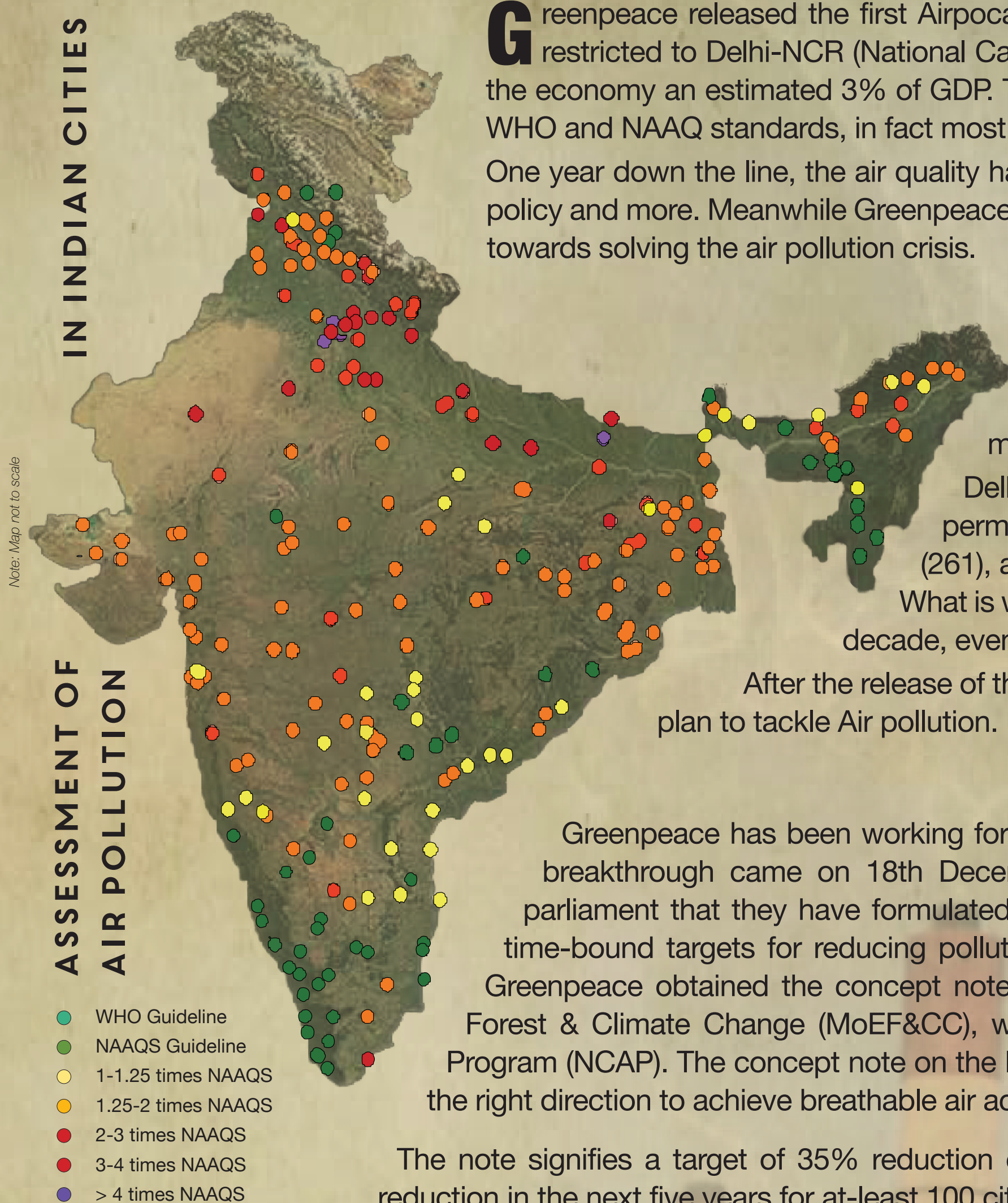
After the release of the Airpocalypse II report, Greenpeace India got an exclusive hands-on of the government action plan to tackle Air pollution.

THE PATHWAY TO BREATHABLE AIR

Greenpeace has been working for a national clean air action plan since 2015, and for us, a big breakthrough came on 18th December '17, when the government finally announced in the parliament that they have formulated a National Clean Air Program (NCAP) which has specific time-bound targets for reducing pollution from various sectors and regions at a national level. Greenpeace obtained the concept note documents through RTI from Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC), which shows the framework of the National Clean Air Program (NCAP). The concept note on the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) is a big step in the right direction to achieve breathable air across the country.

The note signifies a target of 35% reduction of air pollution in the next three years and 50% reduction in the next five years for at-least 100 cities across India. Although it is a big target, there has not been any specification to achieve the same. The framework also emphasizes on increasing

manual monitoring station from 684 to 1000 stations across the country. Another important step that has been mentioned in the note, is of identifying the sources of pollution across the country and then working to tackle it accordingly. Data dissemination to the public, inclusive public participation on planning and implementation for the National Clean Air Programme, coupled with daily air quality forecasts are some vital steps mentioned in the report.





TIME FOR BOLD ACTIONS

On the 20th of March, 14 bold Greenpeace activists stood outside the Badarpur Thermal Power Plant in Delhi. As a sign of non-violent protest, they demanded the Ministry of Environment help India break free from air pollution, by protesting at one of the biggest sources of pollution in India.

The location was symbolic, as it represented everything that needs an overhaul. The coal power plant, a huge waste dumping yard, which often catches fire releasing hazardous gases in the air, and a flyover, adding to vehicular pollution. “This location represents a combination of what goes on in our cities everyday,” says Sunil Dahiya, Greenpeace India Campaigner.

At the same time, nine activists in Mumbai deployed a 60 x 22 ft banner from Vashi bridge to highlight the contribution of fossil fuels to the air pollution crisis in Western and Southern Indian cities. It’s critical India breaks free from fossil fuel, and embraces clean energy.

“It was very emotional for me. The only thought running in my head was not to let our future go up in smoke. Air pollution is posing a threat to our very existence. There has to be a solution somewhere, I’m glad I was bearing witness and doing my bit, to trigger it,” says Banupriya, an activist-climber from Bengaluru.

THREE YEARS OF ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE HAS CHANGED KEDIA FOREVER

I remember Kedia from three years ago- the fields were going barren, plants dying from the addition of chemical pesticides and fertilisers. The agricultural yield was not good, resulting in low income. The villagers had lost all hope. It is during this time that the ecological revolution was introduced.

The 'Bihar Living Soils' campaign was an attempt to reduce dependence on agrochemicals such as chemical fertilisers and chemical pesticides, and bring the soil back to life by rejuvenating soil health and biodiversity, using biomass-based organic supplements. The period of the shift from chemical-laden farming to ecological agriculture was not easy, but the farmers persevered.

Today, apart from enjoying the benefits of reduced input costs on farming by almost 60%, the Kedia farmers are also fully trained to help in the capacity-building of other farmers, and have also become self-sufficient by eliminating middlemen.

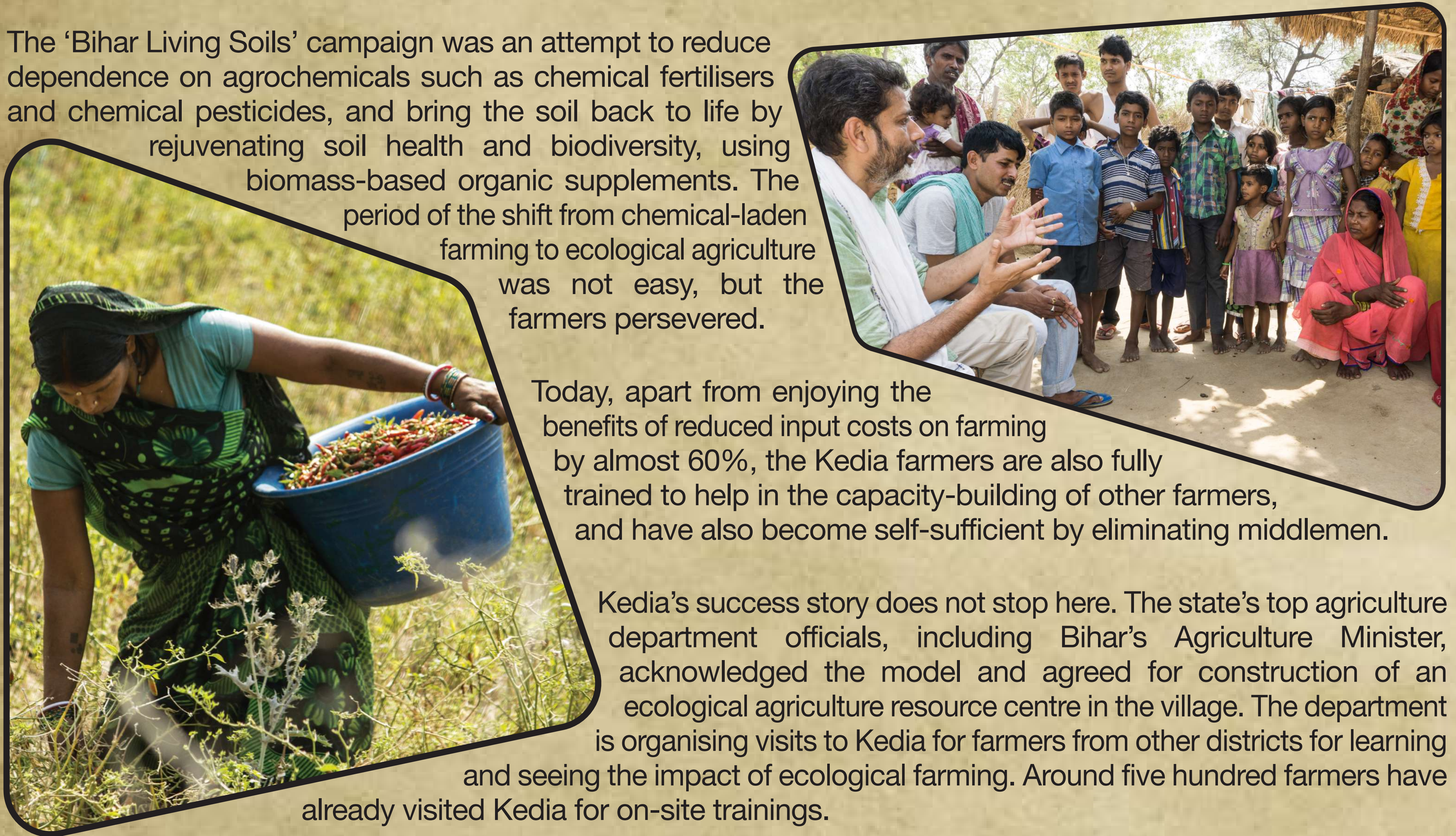
Kedia's success story does not stop here. The state's top agriculture department officials, including Bihar's Agriculture Minister, acknowledged the model and agreed for construction of an ecological agriculture resource centre in the village. The department is organising visits to Kedia for farmers from other districts for learning and seeing the impact of ecological farming. Around five hundred farmers have already visited Kedia for on-site trainings.

The state government has announced the replication of such organic farming models in all the districts of Bihar and developing organic farming corridors along the state and national highways under its 3rd Agriculture Roadmap. During the Krishi Unnati Mela held in Delhi from 16 to 18th March this year, Department of Agriculture, Bihar, showcased our BLS Kedia Model as the way forward for the government and the Union Agriculture Minister Sri Radha Mohan Singh also visited the stall put up by Bihar Government department of agriculture to Jivit Mati Kisan Samiti of Kedia Village.

It gives me a great sense of satisfaction to see how Greenpeace involvement became a farmers' movement to the extent that the government has responded with policy commitments in the region.

Ishteyaque Ahmed is a Senior Food for Life Campaigner at Greenpeace India

[Read more here](#)



EVENTS



Lucknow

With the launch of the Airpocalypse II, Greenpeace organised the first mobilization drive with the objective of spreading awareness about air pollution, in Lucknow. A variety of issues formed the crux of the discussions starting from air pollution, renewable energy, waste segregation and ecological agriculture, livelihoods. The three day event started with an activity in Indira Nagar with Self Help Groups in a community, followed by an event with the law students of Lucknow University on the 1st of February. All this culminated at the day three event at Sheroes Cafe in Lucknow- a place run by acid attack survivors. The final panelists for this event were, Tahira Hasa Vice President, AIPWA, Mukul Srivastava, HoD, Mass Comm, Lucknow University, Dr. K P Mall, Cardiologist, Dr. Prachi Gupta Naturopathist and Greenpeace campaigner Sunil Dahiya. The discussion was followed by a song recital by some local groups.

Bengaluru

On the 24th of February 2018, a documentary screenings was organised in Greenpeace Bengaluru. Two documentaries were screened Riverblue, and A Plastic Ocean. Participants who came from the various walks of life were overwhelmed by these thought provoking movies as they got engrossed in how small individual things have a big impact on the environment. It was followed by a short discussion on the challenges of climate change and the focus of discussion quickly turned from the problem that we face to how we can be a part of the solution.

Mumbai

In the month of February as people from all over the country were gearing up for an early onset of spring, Mumbai air suddenly turned for bad, making it worse than the infamous Delhi air. While most of the people remained unaware of the same, Greenpeace organised a street play in collaboration with Smita Patil academy in various locations across the city on Feb 3rd and 10th to show the harmful impact of air pollution. The plays were able to evoke the curiosity of the people. Keeping the theme of Air pollution static, another event was organised on 18th Feb in Juhu beach, which saw a magnanimous participation of 300 plus volunteers and local corporators. The event was a mix of street play and drum circle. A discussion on air pollution also took place on 9th of March, in Ascend International School, where amongst others Nandita Das was also present as a concerned mother.



VICTORY IN FUKUSHIMA

The Japanese government had lifted the evacuation order for people living in the nuclear disaster-hit areas in Fukushima prefecture last year. But according to a recent Greenpeace investigation in the towns of Iitate and Namie in Fukushima prefecture, including the exclusion zone, revealed radiation levels up to 100 times higher than the international limit for public exposure. The high radiation levels in these areas pose a significant risk to returning evacuees until at least the 2050's and well into next century.

The findings came just two weeks ahead of a critical decision at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) review on Japan's human rights record and commitments to evacuees from the nuclear disaster.

It came both as a victory and a relief to evacuees as the Japanese government accepted the recommendations made at the UNHRC on the rights of evacuees, including acknowledging for the first time that evacuees have rights under the UN Principles of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). It should immediately lead to the government reversing its earlier decision and restore all the rights of the evacuees, including full housing support. "This is a victory for the human rights of tens of thousands of evacuees, coming seven long years after the nuclear disaster...", said Hisayo Takada, Deputy Program Director at Greenpeace Japan.

The Fukushima disaster is the single largest release of radioactivity into the ocean and one of only two Level 7 nuclear disasters in world history – the other being Chernobyl.

Prevention is better than cure; and it is high time we think renewable - as the world cannot afford another environmental and human rights crisis, of this scale.

[Read more here](#)



Greenpeace does not solicit or accept funding from governments, corporations or political parties.

Greenpeace is fiercely independent and survives on donations solely from individuals like you.

Supporter Services

Email: supporter.services.in@greenpeace.org

Phone: 1800 425 0374

(Monday to Friday, 10:00am to 6:00pm)

New address/email/ phone number?

Email your current contact information to supporter.services.in@greenpeace.org

If working for a cause and increasing awareness is what you are looking for, then write to us:

careers.india@greenpeace.org

www.facebook.com/greenpeaceindia/

www.greenpeace.org/india

<https://twitter.com/greenpeaceindia>

Greenpeace India Office

Chennai:

No. 49/23, 2nd Cross Street

Ellaiamman Colony

Chennai 600 086

T: 044 4206 1559

Bengaluru:

5th Floor, Shubharam Complex,

Old No. 22/1, 22/2, New No. 144, 144/2,

MG Road, Bengaluru 560 001

T: 080 4282 1010