

Annual Report

2021-2022



Legal Initiative For Forest and Environment



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About Us

LIFE was formed in 2008 with the mandate of promoting environmental democracy by facilitating Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in matter relating to environment. The mission of LIFE is based on the belief that effective environmental protection is possible if concerned citizens have an effective voice in matters concerning the environment.

LIFE applies a unique combination of law, science and advocacy to protect biodiversity hotspots, flora and fauna, clean up air and water and protect vulnerable communities while ensuring that India adopts and implements a low carbon path of development and strengthening climate resilience.

LIFE addresses the issue of declining environmental quality and the shrinking space for people's participation in environmental decision-making. It has been focusing on india's environmental impact assessment process specifically the public consultation process and ensuring that impact assessment studies correctly examine the social and environmental impacts of proposed projects. In addition, life has been providing scientific and legal support to communities and csos across the country. Life also builds the capacity of the forest department officers for effective implementation of forest & wildlife rules in the field.

Vision

Life's vision is to reform environmental law by inspiring new conversation. It promotes environmental democracy and justice through creative use of law and scientific evidence-based advocacy.

Mission

Life supports environmental democracy by focusing on access to information, public participation and access to justice.

Board of Trustee



Ritwick Dutta

Managing Trustee

Ritwick Dutta is a founder of LIFE and currently heads the organization as Managing Trustee. He graduated in Sociology and Law from the University of Delhi and has been involved in environmental litigation for the last 15 years. He is presently involved in litigation before the National Green Tribunal, Principal Bench as well as regional benches on subjects related to challenge to Environment and Forest Clearance. He is an Ashoka Fellow and recipient of many prestigious awards.

Rahul Choudhary is also a founder member of LIFE as one of the Trustees. He is in-charge of the Litigation Division. He is a law graduate from Delhi University and has been practicing as a lawyer in the field of environment for the last 17 years. He takes up the issues related to the environment before different forums including National Green Tribunal, High Courts and Supreme Court. He also assists communities in access to information, participation in the decision making process and understanding the implications of developmental projects.



Rahul Choudhary

Trustee



Dr. Rakesh Kr. Singh

Trustee

Dr. Rakesh Kr. Singh is a Trustee of LIFE and in-charge of Research Division. He has a PhD in Wildlife Sciences from the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. He is also a Member of the Jharkhand Biodiversity Board and Member, State Expert Appraisal Committee, Bihar and recently nominated as a Member of State Board for Wildlife, Ladakh. Dr. Singh is actively involved in research & training related to environmental and wildlife issues for the last 25 years and worked with many other reputed organizations like WWF-India, CMFR, IIT (ISM) and IIT (BHU).

Executive Summary

The last one year has been challenging for all of us at LIFE. However, we have not let the pandemic come in the way of our mission and have continued to carry out the work despite the uncertainty all around

This year has been significant for LIFE for the reason that we received the Right Livelihood Award 2021 also known as the Alternative Noble Prize. According to the Award Jury, LIFE has been chosen for 'grassroots approach of empowering vulnerable communities to protect their livelihoods and claim their right to a clean environment." LIFE's trustee received the award in Stockholm on the 1st of December, 2021.

Despite the disruption due to covid, we have been able to carry out our mission. We conducted series of meeting, community interaction and consultations in the states of eastern states of India specially in the states West Bengal and Jharkhand. We collaborated with local groups in different states to organize series of consultations. These consultations have led to identification of critical issues which deserve our attention. We have initiated work on restoration of landscape in North Karanpura landscape in Jharkhand; supported communities in seeking compensation for damage caused due to pollution and have undertaken detailed assessment on compliance with environmental laws in many of the mining areas in the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Assam among others.

We have expanded our research team and have prepared detailed policy briefs, practice notes and legal briefs on subjects ranging from air pollution to thermal power plants to compliance with coastal zone notification. These Papers have not just of academic interest, but rather have helped in influencing policy. Thus our paper on State Action Plan on Air pollution has led the authorities to direct for time bound preparation and implementation of the State Action Plan on air pollution in all states in India.



Due to LIFE's intervention, India today has constituted Biodiversity Management Committees and prepared Peoples Biodiversity Registers in 2, 70,000 local bodies. Over the next few years, LIFE will continue to work for the effective implementation of the Biological Diversity Act.

The Annual Report gives an overview of our activities on a range of areas where LIFE is working.

LIFE acknowledges the support it receives from its funders and supporters in carrying its mission forward.

Ritwick Dutta
Managing Trustee

Right Livelihood



Hindustan Times

Ritwik Dutta and Rahul Choudhary Living the good LIFE

The two lawyers have won a global award for going up against industrial giants in cases where they represent farmers, tribals, and apple-growers who stand to lose their land, livelihoods or way of life. Their aim, the two men say, is power in the hands of the people

01/10/2021
atasha Rego
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17 years after their fight began, 12 villages in the Niyamgiri hills in Odisha cast their vote in India's first environmental referendum. It was 2013. They'd waited years to have their say. Now, unanimously, they voted against a massive bauxite mine proposed by Vedanta to feed its alumina refinery in the region.

The Rs 50,000-crore project had been taken up in partnership with the Odisha government but was opposed by the Dongria Kondh tribe, to whom the hill is sacred. A David-vs-Goliath fight ensued, with the UK-based mining giant on one side and the tribals, activists and their lawyer on the other. The fight went to the Supreme Court, which eventually ordered the Odisha government to seek the consent of the villages that would be impacted by the project.

The 8,000-member tribe had won. Their lawyer was Ritwik Dutta, co-founder of Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE), which recently won one of this year's four Right Livelihood Awards. Also called the alternative Nobel, the awards were introduced in 1980 by German-wealth philanthropist Jakob von Weizsäcker and are given out annually 'to honour those offer

दो भारतीयों को मिला स्वीडन का प्रतिष्ठित Alternative Nobel पुरस्कार, जानिए क्या है ये

TV9 Hindi October 1, 2021

स्टॉकहोम स्थित ज्यूरी की तरफ से विजेताओं का चयन किया गया है. ज्यूरी का कहना है कि लाइफ को इस बार यह पुरस्कार इसलिए दिया गया है क्योंकि संस्था समुदायों को सशक्त बनाने के लिए नए तरह से कानूनी दिशा में काम कर रही है.

अद्वैतिक दत्ता और राहुल चौधरी को इस पुरस्कार से सम्मानित किया गया है.

साल 2021 का राइट लाइवलीहुड अवार्ड (Right Livelihood Award) जिसे अल्टरनेटिव नोबेल (Alternative Nobel) पुरस्कार के नाम से भी जाना जाता है, इस साल धार लोग इस्से सम्मानित हुए हैं. इनमें से दो भारतीय भी हैं. अवार्ड जीतने वाले को 10 लाख स्वीडिश क्रूरान मिलते हैं.

Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) को शुरू करने वाले अद्वैतिक दत्ता और राहुल चौधरी को इस पुरस्कार से सम्मानित किया गया है. इसकी शुरुआत साल 2005 में हुई थी. लाइफ को संस्था है जो पर्यावरण परदूषण के खिलाफ कानूनी कार्रवाई में लोगों की मदद करती है. संस्थान ने पर्यावरण और लोगों के स्वास्थ्य को

Congratulations winners of #AlternativeNobelpreis @rightlivelihood Award! One is Delhi-based Legal Initiative for Forest & Environment @lifeindia2016 helps vulnerable communities protect their livelihoods & right to...

German Embassy India (@Germanyin... 3 hours ago

LIFE receives right livelihood award 2021 for their innovative legal work empowering communities to protect their resources in the pursuit of environmental democracy in India.



LIFE works with communities through a grassroots approach: it assists and empowers often vulnerable populations to stand up against powerful interests and have a voice in the decision-making process, while also strengthening institutions and reforming laws. Noticing a lack of judicial access regarding environmental issues, LIFE was founded by lawyers Ritwick Dutta and Rahul Choudhary in 2005.

One of the early successes of LIFE has been a case against the British mining company Vedanta in the state of Odisha, which became a precedent-setting judgment. India's Supreme Court recognised that the local community's consent was required for such a project to commence.

Since then, LIFE has continued to stand up against powerful interests threatening the wellbeing of people and nature, securing better environmental protections for communities across India.

LIFE has also helped ensure that the provisions of India's 2002 Biological Diversity Act were fully implemented. Under the law, each local body is required to have a Biodiversity Management Committee and the local people are required to prepare a People's Biodiversity Register, which is a documentation of the biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge of the area. However, before litigation was initiated by LIFE, only about 5 per cent of India's around 255,000 local elected bodies had Biodiversity Management Committees. As a result of 4 years of litigation supported by LIFE, today about 254,500 such committees have been set up and the process of preparing People's Biodiversity Registers is nearing completion. A process of democratising biodiversity conservation has thus been initiated in India.

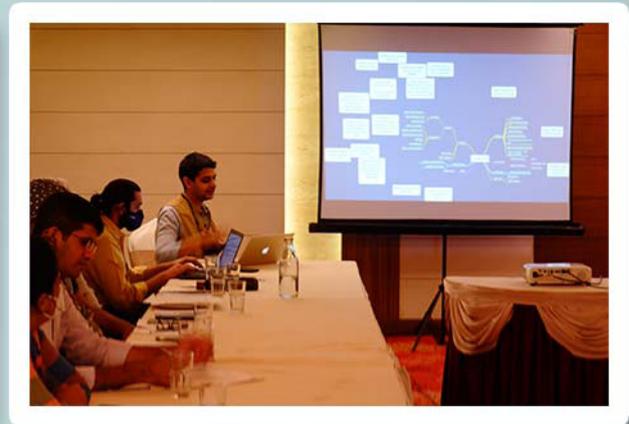
LIFE has been instrumental in calling for a specialised court to deal with cases of environmental protection. In 2010, the National Green Tribunal was established by the Indian government to adjudicate cases relating to the environment and the protection of natural resources. LIFE played a crucial role in giving shape to the Tribunal. The court, which is equipped to handle complicated, multi-disciplinary cases, is mandated to reach decisions within a set timeframe, thus speeding up the judicial process. Since its establishment, LIFE has been involved with litigating several cases at the tribunal daily.

Through its creative mix of litigation, capacity building and pushing for more effective judicial structures, LIFE has significantly raised the bar of environmental protection for people across India.



Capacity Building

Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Implementation Progress of National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and Cleaning Up of Environment in West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha on 4th -5th September, 2021



Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) is organising in association with Calcutta Tram Users Association (CTUA) an awareness workshop on 'Implementation Progress of National Clean Air Programme in West Bengal'. The first day of the workshop was attended by public health experts, civil society groups, young law professionals, researchers, media personnel and representatives from media advocacy organizations, Ex-Additional Director of CPCB. A total of 38 participants attended the workshop.

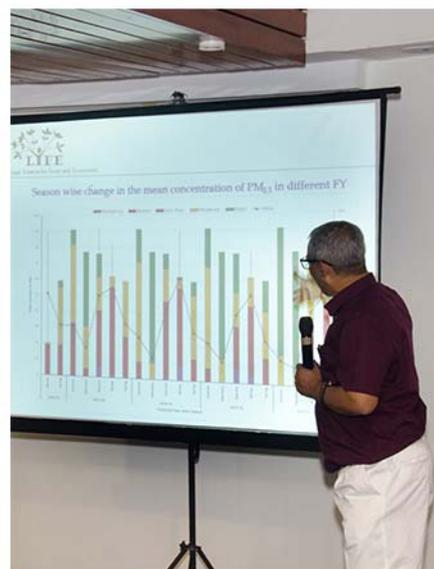
Community Awareness Workshop of Coastal Communities of West Bengal on 17th-18th September, 2021



Two community awareness workshops were organized by Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) and Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF) in Coastal region (Kakdwip and Madandarmani) of West Bengal with the intention of creating awareness among the fishing communities regarding the need to protect coastal environment, natural resources and various coastal features as well as the ways and means to use CRZ Notification and other instruments towards that end. The workshops were attended by approximately 70-75 persons which included fisher folk (both men and women), students, local media personnel and concerned citizens.

Various issues were discussed in these two meetings and the issue raised by the fisher folks of that region were recorded, among which includes identification of illegal constructions along the coastal districts of West Bengal and necessary documentation for facilitating advocacy actions; Overgrowth of Aquaculture and Brick Kilns in the coastal districts of West Bengal and necessary advocacy about the issue; Red Crab habitat destruction in East Medinipur district of West Bengal; construction of marine drive along Mandarmani beaches.

Regional Meeting on Environmental Challenges in Jharkhand (Kolahan Region) on 3rd October, 2021



Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) in association with Yugantar Bharti had organised a two days regional meeting on environmental challenges in the state of Jharkhand. The main objective of the meeting was to identify various environmental issues such as air pollution, water pollution, and the impact of mining on natural environment and loss of biological diversity. The meeting which was held in Jamshedpur on 3rd and 4th October, 2021 was attended by various civil society organisation, students and teacher's representatives, doctors and health professionals working in environment and public health sectors respectively. The meeting was also attended by Padmashri awardee Smt. Jamuna Tudu who thanked LIFE to bring people together on one platform. A total of 50 participants attended the meeting.

Regional Meeting on Environmental Challenges in Dhanbad, Jharkhand on 23rd-24th October, 2021

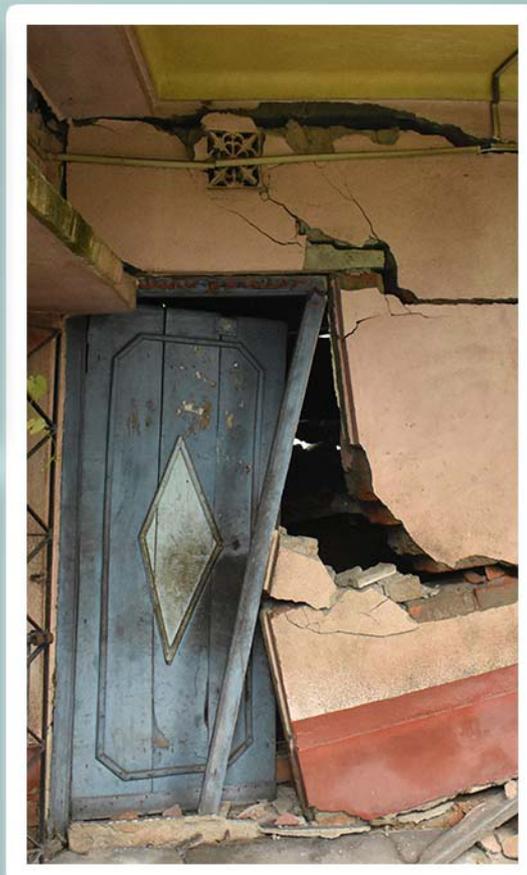
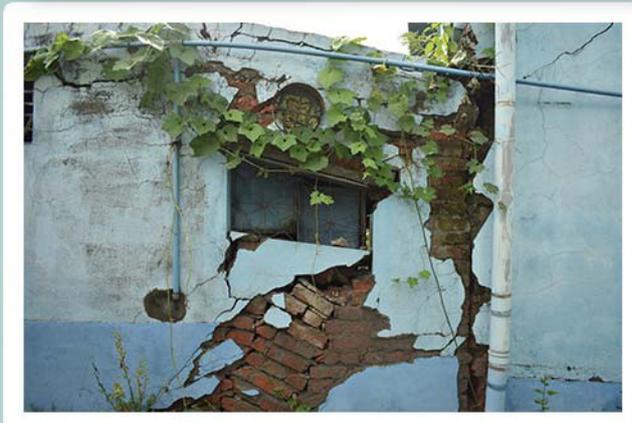


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Field Visits

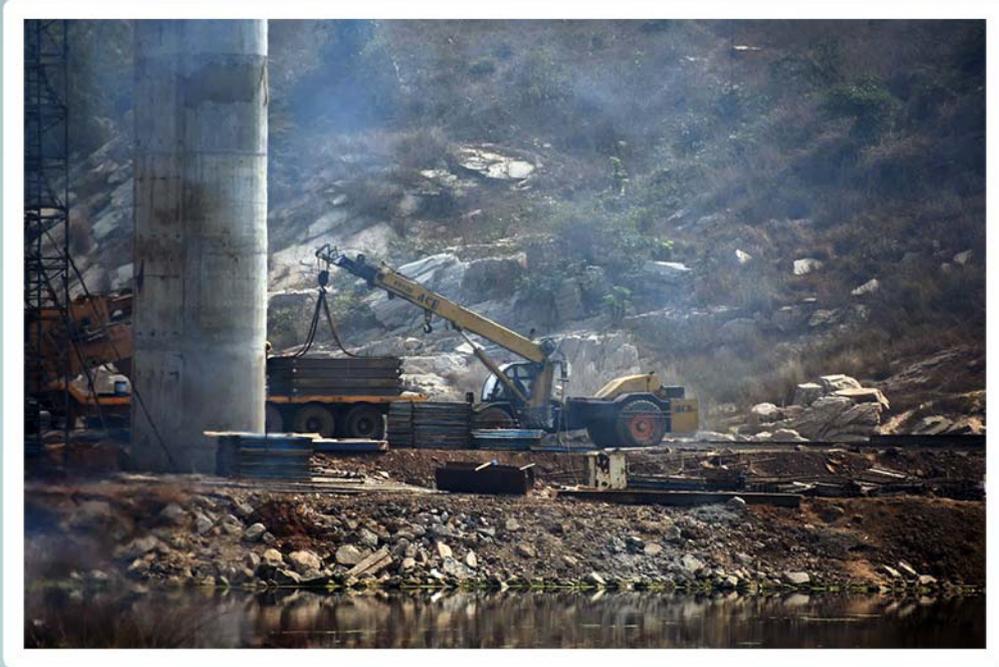
Assessment of subsidence in harishpur village due to coal mine



Two field visits were conducted by the LIFE team to document the incidences of recent land subsidence in Harishpur Village, District Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal and its surrounding areas. The purpose of the visit was to assess the extent of the damage, to interact with the affected community and to do evidence collection for necessary advocacy work.

The visit was based on the complaints by local communities, according to whom, the incident happened due to irresponsible mining activities. The team visited three villages viz. Harishpur, Parascole and Chatimdanga. All the villages are located in the coal belt area of Raniganj and Asansol. Harishpur village is in close proximity to Madhabpur mining projects of Eastern Coalfields Limited. The subsidence of land and the devastation in the area was clearly visible during the visit. The approach road to the village has collapsed and subsided into the ground leading to cracks in the road and making the road very difficult to navigate. Within the village, five (5) houses had been completely destroyed and a further fifteen to twenty (15-20) houses were rendered unlivable due to unsafe conditions.

Field Visit Report: Subarnarekha River in West Bengal



The Subarnarekha River basin extends over the states of Jharkhand, Odisha and comparatively smaller part in West Bengal. Total Meandering Length of the river is 395 km out of which approximately 64 km is in West Bengal. The River stretch is distributed over four blocks i.e., Gopiballavpur-I and II, Sankrail and Nayagram in Jhargram District and one block i.e. Dantan-I of Paschim Medinipur District of West Bengal. As the river is rainfed, most of the time in the year it remains dry. Fish workers in the area is claiming that their fish catch has been drastically reduced over the past few years. According to the local fisherfolks group of Nayagram in Jhargram District, they are noticing Fish Death every year during monsoon.

Assessment of Pollution in Damodar and Jalangi Rivers in West Bengal



A comparative study on physico - chemical and biological characteristics was conducted on two major rivers of West Bengal, Damodar and Jalangi, during November 2021 and January 2022. The river Damodar passes through the high industrial belt and Jalangi primarily passes through the agricultural area.

The findings of the study show that pollution in the river Jalangi is primarily caused by the disposal of untreated sewage, whereas pollution in the river Damodar is caused by an influx of both industrial effluent and untreated sewage.

Sand mining has been identified as one of the major factors affecting the health of the river Damodar and its aquatic life. Intensive sand mining activity has been observed near Bardhaman town on the banks of river Damodar. The presence of highly toxic pesticides such as Endosulfan and banned pesticides such as Aldrin is another major concern for the health of the river Damodar and its marine ecology.

Assessment of the coastal ecological degradation and loss of livelihood



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Coastal Villagers Face Threat to Livelihoods as Land is 'Forcibly' Taken Away for Mamata's Dream Project

Ayaskant Das | 28 Dec 2021

Politics India

Fisherfolk allege TMC workers are threatening them to give up their land for the Digha-Mandarmoni Marine Drive in Purba Medinipur district.



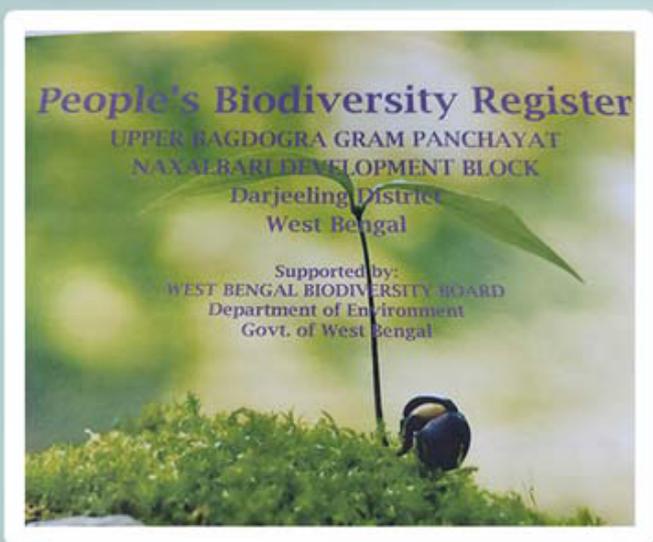
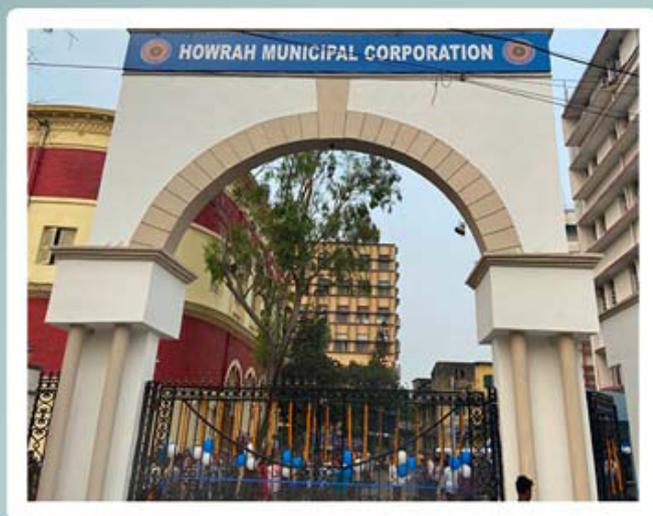
Villagers engaged in drying and sorting of fish.

Source: Media/Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of West Bengal



The Subarnarekha River basin extends over the states of Jharkhand, Odisha and comparatively smaller part in West Bengal. Total Meandering Length of the river is 395 km out of which approximately 64 km is in West Bengal. The River stretch is distributed over four blocks i.e., Gopiballavpur-I and II, Sankrail and Nayagram in Jhargram District and one block i.e. Dantan-I of Paschim Medinipur District of West Bengal. As the river is rainfed, most of the time in the year it remains dry. Fish workers in the area is claiming that their fish catch has been drastically reduced over the past few years. According to the local fisherfolks group of Nayagram in Jhargram District, they are noticing Fish Death every year during monsoon.

Assessment of implementation of the Biodiversity Act 2002 in Howrah, Nadia and Darjeeling



A Field investigation in three districts of West Bengal, namely Howrah, Nadia and Darjeeling was undertaken to assess the implementation of the Biodiversity Act 2002, with emphasis on the constitution of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC) and preparation of Peoples Biodiversity Registers (PBR's). As per the State Biodiversity Board, West Bengal, BMC was constituted in all its 3830 local bodies and also prepared PBR for all the BMCs. However, our investigation covering a total of 30 local bodies in the three districts, observed that BMCs were constituted in 83% of the total local bodies visited with a mere 8% of these BMCs being operational at the time. Peoples Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) were prepared in 72% of the BMCs constituted. It was also observed that none of the visited local bodies in the three districts has any knowledge or understanding of Access Benefit Sharing and the majority of the local bodies had not received any funds from the State Biodiversity Board (SBB) and in all such cases, the core in-house fund of Panchayat has been used for the preparation of the PBRs.

Ambient Air Quality Assessment in Barbil, Odisha

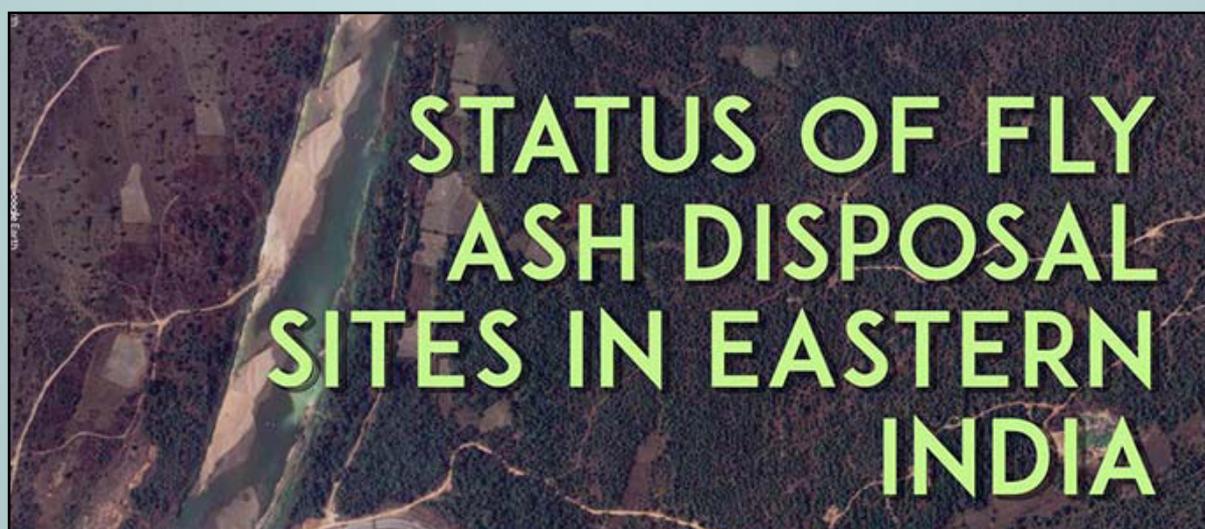


The operation of several iron ore mines and transportation of ore in Barbil-Joda and its adjoining area of Jharkhand, this region is facing severe environmental degradation and ecological threats in terms of deterioration of ambient air quality, depletion of ground water, fragmentation of forests and creation of linear barrier for movement of wild animals including elephants etc. In spite of concern raised by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) while granting the environmental clearance to new or expansion iron ore mine project, the State Pollution Control Board of Odisha and/or Jharkhand has never published a report for public to know current status of particulate matter in the ambient air of Barbil-Joda region. Therefore, LIFE has undertaken a rapid assessment to measure the concentration particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) in ambient air of Barbil-Joda area of Odisha during the month of March 2022 at six locations.



Prior Environmental clearance is prerequisite for commissioning construction activities of any Thermal Power Plant under the provision of EIA Notification, 2006. The coal-fired thermal power plants are appraised under activity 1(d) of the EIA Notification (2006). Hence, tracking of Environmental Clearances granted to coal-based power plants are a useful indicator to study power generation trends in India. The present report is based on tracking the EC granted for non-captive coal-fired thermal power plants for more than 500 MW installed capacity by using the information available on PARIVESH portal of the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) in the calendar year 2021. The analysis shows a decline trend in terms of number and installed capacity since 2019.

[Link to report](#)



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[Link to report](#)



The Indian policy ecosystem is replete with laws designed to guarantee the right to clean air and water to its citizens. Some of these laws and policies have been in place for decades but have failed to achieve their ambition. The source apportionment science is important in informing air quality management. However, they seem to hold less relevance as a policy planning tool for countries like India that boast a strong policy ecosystem but lack the capacity to implement laws. All scientific studies reviewed for this paper show that Indian air quality is being impacted by multiple sources. This goes to emphasise that deteriorating air quality in the country is not due to a dearth of policies. Experts working in the field of air pollution have expressed their frustration with the excessive reliance Source Apportionment science for designing air pollution mitigation strategies.

[Link to report](#)



Persisting upon its consistency from the previous many years, this year as well, the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife was found to be using its discretion to allow or reject proposals, in diverting protected area land for the reasons that does not benefit the wildlife, instead detriment crucial wildlife habitats. In the first half of the year 2021 alone, the Standing Committee has approved 1,385.34 ha land diversion where 302.89 ha was from protected areas and 780.24 ha was from tiger habitats. They also allowed complete denotification of two protected areas in Andaman and Nicobar Islands - Galathea Bay Sanctuary and Megapode Sanctuary and approved rationalizations of two sanctuaries - Salt Water Crocodile Sanctuary in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Bandh Baretha Sanctuary in Rajasthan. A strategic decisiveness was observed in the functioning of the Standing Committee which focused on speeding and diluting the process of clearance for ease in clearing projects, neglecting some keystone species at stake such as leatherback turtles, saltwater crocodiles, megapodes and of course tigers and elephants.

[Link to report](#)

NCAP SERIES

Swept Under The Carpet

Rethinking Investment on Mechanical Sweepers

The last decade has seen growing investment in mechanical road sweepers across Indian cities. These machines have gathered public and media interest alike. However, despite the introduction of mechanical sweepers, the city roads have largely remained unchanged. Under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), many cities have focused on these vehicles as the primary intervention to clean road dust. However, mechanical sweepers cannot be an effective solution for it, as the poor condition of Indian roads makes them unviable. Mechanical sweepers only serve a cosmetic purpose. Smaller machines and vacuum cleaners are more ergonomically sound in meeting the requirements of Indian roads.

[Link to report](#)

CLEARING THE COAST

How aquaculture and construction threaten the pristine coast of West Bengal

West Bengal has a long coastline with millions of people living around it. Growing scale of anthropogenic activities in recent years has threatened the state's fragile coastal areas. This report presents analysis of the land use changes in three coastal districts of West Bengal— Purba Medinipur, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas. In the last one decade, more than 1,529 ha agricultural land has been diverted to aquaculture clusters on the banks of Haldi River in Purba Medinipur district, as per field survey of 12 locations. This has also led to releasing of polluted water, loaded with synthetic chemicals, into the river without any treatment. Further, the soil and mud extracted during construction of aquaculture tanks are used in brick kilns, which become a source of air pollution.

[Link to report](#)



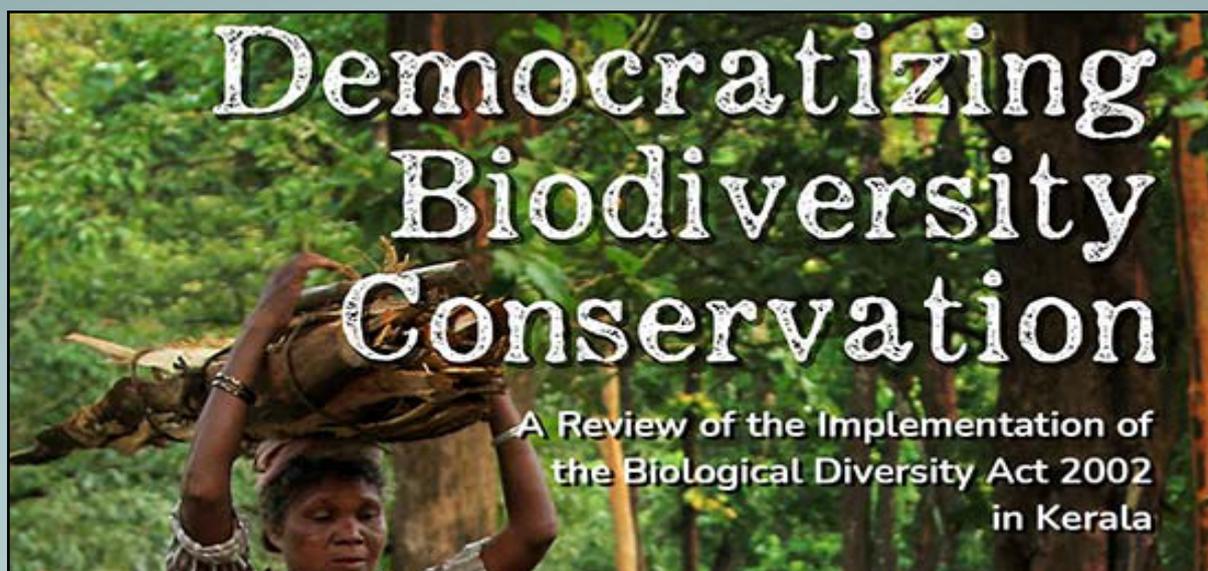
Exactly two years back on the occasion of the International Tiger's Day, a rise in the population of tigers in India from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,967 in 2018 was celebrated as a shining example of success of wildlife conservation in general and tiger conservation in particular. In the past two years, Forest Advisory Committee headed by the Director General of Forest and Standing Committee of the NBWL headed by the Environment Minister have granted many clearances to projects that cut through important Tiger Reserves and tiger corridors. The SC-NBWL approved diversion 324.89 ha in 2019 and 594.5752 ha in 2020 in prime tiger habitats. Further, analysis of clearances granted by SC-NBWL in the four meetings conducted so far this year, shows they have diverted 770.24 ha of tiger habitat in 2021. Besides these, several projects are in pipeline waiting to be cleared.

[Link to report](#)



India's effort to control air pollution is centred around two major plans—National Clean Air Plan (NCAP) and the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). NCAP focuses on the country as a whole while GRAP focuses on the National Capital Region of Delhi (NCR). The fundamental basis of GRAP is that strict and urgent measures for varied sources of pollution are key to bringing down air pollution. GRAP assumes that if a set of measures are taken, the level of pollution with respect to particulate matter will reduce and be within the acceptable standards. However, our findings show that GRAP has not led to any change in air quality. In fact, the very fact that GRAP could not ensure even a single "good" air day is a good enough reason to thoroughly review its objective and efficacy despite more than four years of its implementation. This focus on particulate matter implies that GRAP is not a comprehensive plan to clean up the air.

[Link to report](#)



The Biological Diversity Act, 2002 was passed with the objective of conserving biology, ensuring its sustainable use and fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from the use of bio-resources. A key provision of the Act was the formation of a Biodiversity Management Committee in every local self-governing institution. Kerala has one of the highest compliance rates among Indian states in formation of Biodiversity Management Committees and is regarded as a success story in the overall implementation of the Act. Survey has been undertaken in 17 panchayats of Idukki district, which have been analysed. Findings suggests that biodiversity conservation efforts beyond the PBR exercise have been largely stymied due to the non-autonomous nature of BMCs. Biodiversity conservation efforts often conflict with local politics and socio-economics. The BMC chairperson's shared role as the elected representative of the local body has been a major hinderance to the smooth functioning of the BMCs. One of the key concerns raised by the BMC members has been the lack of funds for carrying out conservation activities and understanding of ABS.

[Link to report](#)



The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) was launched in 2019 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India with the target to reduce PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ —by 20–30% by 2024 taking 2017 as the base year. An essential component of pollution reduction is continuous monitoring of pollutants such as Sulphur Dioxide (SO_2), Nitrogen dioxides (NO_2) and PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$. For this, the NCAP has laid out targets for nearly 700 new manual monitoring stations, 150 real-time Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS) and 100 new stations in rural India. Our analysis finds the weightage to manual monitoring unjustified. Manual monitoring system records data less frequently and has higher scope of error and delay. Despite the more efficient CAAQMS technology, the government plans to spend a larger sum of allocated money on the outdated manual monitoring operation. This directly affects the accuracy of data, which is especially relevant because the government plans to release NCAP funds based on performance. Air quality monitors other than CAAQMS serve a more supplementary role to measure site-specific air quality.

[Link to report](#)



Each year, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change proudly claims that the forest cover in India has increased. This increase in forest cover is supported by assessments done by the Forest Survey of India. However, these statements and assessment conceal the loss of natural forest cover in India due to various activities, many of which could clearly be located in non-forest land. In addition, there is a misconception that the environmental laws are a hurdle in getting approval for various projects. The present analysis shows that the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) and the Regional Empowered Committee (REC), which are constituted under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 have abdicated their statutory duty in order to grant approval to every project that seeks diversion of forest land. It is clear that approval is the norm and rejection takes place in the rarest of rare instance. Our analysis shows that in the year 2020 a total of 9,434.06 hectares (ha) of forest land diversion was recommended by these committees.

[Link to report](#)



The Karanpura Valley with total geographical area of 1,420 sq. km. including 425.37 sq.km. forest cover (Central Mine Planning & Design Institute 2019) is an environmentally crucial ecosystem surrounded by protected areas like Palamau Tiger Reserve, Betla National Park, Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary, Lawalong Wildlife Sanctuary, and Rautpara and Jorakath Reserve Forest. However, abundant presence of essential natural resource coal in Karanpura has led to continuous mining in the region leading to severe environmental degradation. Currently there are 31 mines in Karanpura within 69 existing coal blocks. Based on the preliminary secondary research, there is only partial compliance to EC conditions in most of the mines, which has caused the problems of this landscape. Ambiguous statements have been shared in compliance reports on the status of green belts, plantations along roads and compensatory afforestation. Fugitive dust emissions from extensive mining activities and transportation of coal either by road, conveyor belt or rail, have been identified as an issue of major concern affecting air quality and creating health effects. Many of the mines fall behind in the compliance of conducting health studies and provide Initial Medical Examination (IME) and Periodic Medical Examination (PME).

[Link to report](#)



Cities with poor air quality across India, that do not match the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) of 2009, have been identified as non-attainment cities and ordered to form “city action plans”. These plans lay out the roadmap and specific tasks to be performed to reduce air pollution in the city. Our analysis finds that Pune’s action plan has ignored major sources of air pollution, which will eventually make it unviable in achieving its targets. It is clear that findings of a previous source apportionment study have not been taken into account while designing the action plan, which means that the plan is unscientific and the source apportionment study is rendered futile.

[Link to report](#)



Cities with poor air quality across India, which do not match the National Ambient Air Quality Standards of 2009, have been identified as non-attainment cities. They have been ordered to form “city action plans” for reducing air pollution levels and meeting the standards within six months. Committees constituted by their respective state governments have formulated action plans for non-attainment cities, which serve as a roadmap for specific tasks to be performed. This report is a review of such a plan prepared for Kolkata. It offers a critique of the policy measures pushed through the city action plan. Secondary literature analysis finds that Kolkata’s action plan takes a city-centric approach to demarcate pollution sources while ignoring major emissions from nearby industrial regions. This process is faulty—emissions outside city limits have a significant role to play in its overall air quality. Such perceptions exist partly due to inadequate monitoring of air quality. Kolkata only has seven monitoring stations when it requires at least 16, as per some estimates. This means that only some sources of pollution are accounted for while others are ignored.

[Link to report](#)

NCAP SERIES

REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONTROL OF AIR POLLUTION G H A Z I A B A D & N O I D A

Cities with poor air quality across India that do not match the National Ambient Air Quality Standards of 2009, have been termed as non-attainment cities and ordered to form “city action plans”. These plans lay out the roadmap and specific tasks to be performed to reduce air pollution in the city. This report is a review of such plans prepared for neighbouring cities of Ghaziabad and Noida. The action plans are intended to control vehicular emissions, suspension of road dust, and other fugitive emissions from biomass/crop residue, garbage/municipal solid waste burning, and construction and demolition. The action plans for both cities are identical in terms of actions proposed and their timelines, which led to a joint review report. This analysis finds that the same action plan for two cities with different industrial profile and pollution sources is unreasonable. Overall, these plans merely reiterate existing regulations instead of data-backed ideas or targets. To see any improvement in the air qualities of Ghaziabad and Noida, new plans need to be formulated as the current ones are highly ineffective.

[Link to report](#)

NCAP SERIES

REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN FOR CONTROL OF AIR POLLUTION IN NON-ATTAINMENT CITIES OF ASSAM G U W A H A T I

Cities with poor air quality across India, that do not match the National Ambient Air Quality Standards of 2009, have been identified as non-attainment cities and ordered to form “city action plans”. These plans lay out the roadmap and specific tasks to be performed to reduce air pollution in the city. This report is a review of such a plan prepared for Guwahati city in Assam. Our analysis finds that Guwahati’s action plan does not have a target-oriented approach. In most instances, past policy frameworks and regulations have been repeated, and the authorities have failed to use this opportunity to develop a plan based on specific issues and baseline information. Instead, actions have been formulated without research, making the plan ineffective on many fronts. Overall, the plan largely includes “end of pipe” solutions instead of addressing the pollution problems at their source.

[Link to report](#)



The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) is a central scheme launched in 2019 that aims to mitigate air pollution in identified “non-attainment” cities across India. The plan sets an ambitious target to reduce coarse particulate matter (PM₁₀) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) concentration by 20-30% by 2024. However, two years on, most actions planned under NCAP are yet to be initiated. A fundamental flaw in this so-called “national” plan is its limitation of action to only 124 selected non-attainment cities. This means the total ignorance of non-urban regions dealing with high levels of pollution. Further, the selection of non-attainment cities is through an unscientific process in which less than 10% Indian cities are monitored. An important part of the NCAP is the formulation of State Action Plans, to be prepared jointly by respective State Pollution Control Boards, the Central Pollution Control Board and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Implementation of these plans was to begin by 2020, however our research found that states were yet to draft the State Action Plans.

[Link to report](#)



India is the third largest energy consumer in the world after China and the United States (IEA 2019). With increasing population, modernisation, and economic growth, the country's need for energy has grown over the past several years. Primary energy consumption in India has nearly tripled between 1990 and 2018, reaching an estimated 916 million tons of oil equivalent (IEA 2019).

[Link to report](#)



Environment Clearances

of Coal-Fired Power Plants in India
2019-2020

Environmental Clearances granted to coal-based power plants are a useful indicator to study power generation trends in India. This is in view of the fact that grant of prior Environmental Clearance is prerequisite for commissioning construction activities.

[Link to report](#)

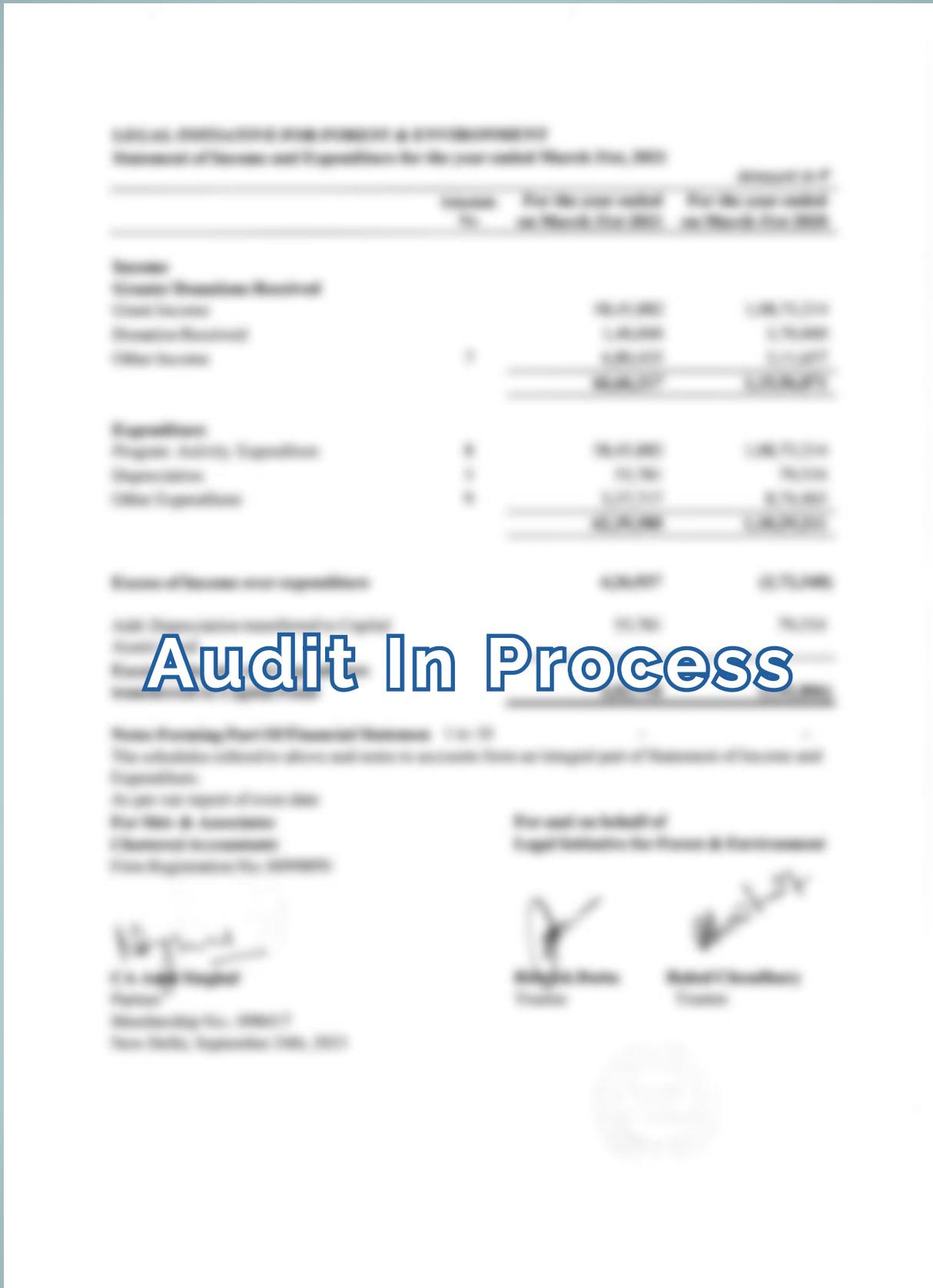


The National Board for Wildlife has a mandate to “promote the conservation and development of wildlife and forests by such measures as it thinks fit”. The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL) has the discretion to perform the duties and exercise powers that are delegated to it by the Board. The SC-NBWL has been found to be taking all the decisions while the National Board has not met in over six years, since its reconstitution. Both the SC-NBWL and the Board in their current form have functioned contrarily to their mandate. For years, they have continued to grant approvals for projects that provide no benefit to wildlife but instead cause dissection and destruction of crucial habitat. Our report has examined all the decisions taken by the SC-NBWL in 2020, their violations of the Wildlife Act and the likely impacts of the approved projects on wildlife habitats and protected areas.

[Link to report](#)



Financials



Audit In Process



Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment

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