

# Exploring Development Pathways that are Equitable and Climate Resilient

## Introduction

The **development and equity project** is an attempt to define “decent standard of living” and use this knowledge with robust sector-wide analysis to come up with a basket of development pathways. The hope is that India could adopt the outcomes and findings from this study, and address the key objective of providing decent standard of living to all its citizens while also following a sustainable and climate resilient pathway.

## Context

Many emerging economies including India, fears that the deals on climate change currently being discussed at UN Framework on Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) would lead to long-term constraints on their development. India’s stance at the UNFCCC, particularly on the issue of equity is centered on that **“they have to develop, and therefore the requirement of carbon space”** and it largely stems from current GDP based growth and development paradigm.

The contentious issue in operationalization of the principles of equity is related to demands of a number of developing countries on “carbon space entitlement”. This is primarily due to development pathways practiced in most countries including India are not only resource and carbon intensive but does not factor in sustainable development. Therefore, the current narrative focuses **“carbon space entitlement”**, rather than a **“need based development carbon space”**. Even the most aggressive “low carbon plans” in many countries are based on the current development trajectory with few fixes, and does

not necessarily promote sustainable development. Mere technological solutions to reduce carbon emissions will not be enough to bring temperature rise to the least minimum levels required while securing adequate levels of development for the populations in developing countries.

## Aim and Objectives of the Project

The project aims to investigate how to meet development aspirations of India through pathways and options that optimize resource utilization and promote sustainable and decent standard of living as required in a climate constraint world.

- *An attempt to change the narrative of discussion from a “carbon space entitlement” approach to a “need based development carbon space approach” in India.*
- *And thereby an attempt to create a conducive environment at the UNFCCC to find a resolution to the vexed question of equity.*

One of the prime objectives is to initiate a **“need based development debate”**, which will be participatory and inclusive, and also generate new knowledge on development indicators and thresholds. The purpose of this exercise would be to come up with a **“Decent Standard of Living (DSL)”** which will be based on thorough analysis of existing approaches on development and equity.

## What is different and new about this project?

Most often, alternate development pathways have always been confused with “low carbon development pathways”, where a number of

studies have already been initiated and a wide range of options suggested. Most low carbon pathways that are currently on the table in a number of countries, including India, are primarily a combination of efficiency improvements and technological solutions to a business-as-usual growth rates. These approaches do not address development needs, while only retrofitting existing development trajectories with low carbon solutions.

Therefore the project not only focuses on just a macro-economy wide framework of alternate development pathways, but also to supplement and complement with a sector wise analysis. Any new knowledge of alternate development pathways that are generated would also have the propensity to inform and influence India's (and other developing countries) position at various international platforms/forums and negotiations, which includes UNFCCC, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and other processes.

### **What is this project trying to achieve?**

From a domestic and an Indian perspective, we hope that the project will strengthen the on-going debate on moving away from the currently practiced development approach towards an alternative development approach that is inclusive, and ensures a climate friendly and sustainable decent standard of living for. The project's success will ensure greater integration and mainstreaming of concerns around climate change into the development discourse. The project will aim to ensure that there are detailed pathways identified to implement an alternate development approach, which will motivate policy makers to seriously examine, and eventually adopt this paradigm. Since the project will follow a consultative, participatory approach, hence ensuring that grassroots and community voices are adequately captured within development objectives (decent standard of living) as well as the pathways chosen to meet

these objectives. For a country like India, where close to 77 per cent of its population lives below the poverty line<sup>1</sup>, the development approach required should ensure "a sustainable and decent living standards" for all with greater equity and cohesion.

From a global perspective, and particularly from a UNFCCC negotiation angle, there is very little movement or progress towards an agreement by 2015 that would ensure a fair, ambitious, equitable, legally binding climate regime that would keep temperature rise to minimum possible levels. Amongst other issues, one of the key issues that is coming in a way of such an agreement is with regards to operationalization of principles of equity and notably the principles of CBDR and RC.

From a global perspective, this could influence and stimulate a similar kind of debate on development thresholds in other emerging economies. Further, it could also influence the global dynamics of climate negotiations by changing the narrative from carbon space entitlement to a sustainable, need based optimization of resources approach and thereby create an enabling environment to keep temperature rise within sustainable limits.

All this could help to ensure that the 2degree global target is not missed and the emerging economies are active and positive participants in this global endeavor.

### **What are various the components of this project?**

#### **A. Literature Review:**

There is huge body of work that already exists on various development approaches hence we have done an exhaustive literature review of various research papers and approaches. The approaches

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<sup>1</sup> Arjun Sengupta Report on Poverty Estimation in India, 2010

like Human Development Index (HDI), Inclusive Wealth Framework (IWF), Millennium Development Goals Plus (MDG +), Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), Gender Gap Index (GPI), Genuine Progressive Index (GPI), Stiglitz Commission Report were also studied in great detail to look at the commonalities and differences with our approach. The idea is to identify relevant sectors and indicators that can comprehensively define decent standard of living.

## B. Research:

Based on the literature review, and consultation with various stakeholder and experts to develop a broad methodology for assessing potential policy options and framework that could address the issue of “internal equity” and “inclusive growth” for India. This would be the outcome of a combination of modeling exercise to determine decent standard of living for India for key demand sectors and also the supply side infrastructure requirements to meet identified indicators, thresholds and pathways to achieve decent standard of living.

## C. Modeling

1. Develop a qualitative map of links between development indicators, and characteristics of low-carbon pathways.
2. Establish quantitative relationship between development indicators and emission scenarios based on defined development thresholds. A cost benefit analysis of different options and pathways will be undertaken depending on the availability of data.

## D. Reports and Papers

Come up with a report on various principles and parameters for operationalizing development and equity from a global context, particularly aimed

at influencing 2015 global deal currently negotiated under the UNFCCC as well as other key national and international moments.

## E. Advocacy and Strategic Interventions:

1. Create a consortium of wide range of critical stakeholders representing various sectors expertise.
2. A comprehensive report that provides set of options to enable a change in India’s negotiation position, particularly on equity and CBDR RC, which is based on new development thresholds (output A1), which articulates the benefits of adopting the new options based in development and equity.
3. To broaden this approach by working with groups with from other emerging economies and low income countries and explore the possibility of amplifying the voices from the south and also building south-south understanding on development and equity.
4. Leveraging key intentional/domestic political and policy moments like UNFCCC, BASIC, BRICS Summits, G-20 etc. to create a broader political buy-in for development and equity narrative, and need for climate actions.

## Key Implementing Groups:



**Vasudha Foundation**

[www.vasudha-india.org](http://www.vasudha-india.org)



**Climate Analytics**

[www.climateanalytics.org](http://www.climateanalytics.org)

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