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A fretwork of waterpipes lines the gullies of Ambowadi, rising in relief against sewage spilling across parts of the basti. Civic water supply made its way into this settlement in northwest Mumbai in 2020, but drain lines are yet to cover the entire area (just 2.5km of drainpipes serve a settlement of more than 56,000 people).

For nearly four decades, Ambowadi has struggled to keep its head above wastewater. Deprived of a serviceable sewage system and functioning waste management, the basti, built on marshland, has become a checkerboard of dry, navigable areas and wet, garbage-choked patches that spread into swamps during the rains.

Chitrakala Chaurasia, who migrated to the area from UP 25 years ago, says the densely packed settlement floods even after brief showers, the water taking two to three days to subside. "People have dealt with it by raising the plinths of their houses, but they must still step out for work, school, and the market. Then, there's no option but to wade through the muck," says the paan stall owner.

An open space in Buddha Vihar, a neighbourhood in the slum, was one such seasonal swamp. Each monsoon, rising floodwater forced residents indoors or compelled them to wade through the muck, costing wages and school hours and increasing the risk of diseases such as malaria, gastroenteritis and skin infections — impacts intensified in recent years by longer, heavier rains.

Last monsoon, the area did not flood, for in place of accumulated sludge and plastic stood a 30ft x 30ft patch of soil that soaked up the water. A compact community garden had been installed in the clearing, with papaya, fig and jamun saplings rooted in a bed of new soil 5ft deep. The garden, *Panchsheel Buddha Vihar Udyan*, is a solution designed and implemented by the local community and the nonprofit, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA).



A focus group discussion with women in Vanthopada basti in Vasai Virar, conducted as part of the community climate action planning process

## When climate change planning moves from PowerPoint to people

Bengaluru recently launched the country's first ward-level climate action plan, favouring neighbourhood-specific fixes over a one-size-fits-all solution. Community climate action plans (CCAPs) have been doing exactly that for years. Here's what city planners can learn from them

to address flooding. This low-cost intervention emerged from the community climate action plan (CCAP) co-created by the nonprofit and the community to customise climate solutions to the specific conditions, climate hazards, socioeconomic vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of the neighbourhood.

### ABC OF CCAP

National, state and city climate roadmaps rely on a panoptic lens that often overlooks the risks and lived climate impacts on marginalised communities. Data and maps rarely represent poor neighbourhoods and, as a result, solutions proposed are seldom compatible with the realities of those settlements.

Nearly every macro-level CAP is guilty of this. "The Chennai Climate Action Plan lays out strong commitments on paper — flood management, water security, heat resilience — but these rarely translate into

meaningful change for the urban poor," notes Varsha Jayaseelan, project lead, ClimACT, an initiative by the Chennai-based collective INHAR, which works towards a bottom-up understanding of vulnerability and adaptation. "The plan treats vulnerability as a technical issue, but in reality, it's deeply social and spatial."

CCAPs, developed and implemented by communities and civil society organisations, address localised climate impacts and are reinforced by inclusive, participatory models of governance that demand collective accountability. These frameworks seek to redress the disproportionate burden borne by communities that have contributed least to the climate crisis.

In March 2022, around when the Mumbai Climate Action Plan was unveiled, YUVA unveiled the framework for its own CCAP. "It emerged from demands voiced by the urban poor we work with, seeking ways to

cope with unmanageable heat, flooding, landslides and air pollution, which have become permanent conditions of life in low-income neighbourhoods," says Roshni Nuggeshalli, YUVA's executive director.

The plan unfolds in four steps: climate hazard mapping to identify city-level hotspots facing multiple climate hazards; rapid assessment to understand these hotspots and to identify pilot bastis for intervention; vulnerability assessment in selected bastis; and finally, the CCAP, in which micro-climate solutions are co-created with residents.

Community climate action planning in rural areas takes a slightly different route (see box). According to the UNDP's Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report released in Oct 2024, 84% of the world's multidimensionally poor live in rural areas, even though these areas account for only 55% of the global population. Relevant and accessible adaptive mechanisms can help blunt climate risks that might otherwise push many more rural households into poverty.

### Coping Vs Adaptation

While adaptation and mitigation have come to define the two-fold path to climate survival, the responses of the poor are better captured by a third term: coping, which encapsulates immediate and provisional strategies. "Coping operates in the short term, while adaptation is a long-term, systemic shift. If a toilet lacks a proper sanitation line, diverting waste directly into the ocean to

prevent the community from flooding is a coping measure — what some would even call maladaptation. Channelling it into a formal sewage treatment plant is adaptation," explains Nuggeshalli. "By that same logic, ACs that cool glass skyscrapers are maladaptive solutions, too."

Done right, she adds, climate adaptation would mandate environmentally friendly building materials and design and revise zoning laws to safeguard green open spaces.

Until then, CCAPs must work with available tools. YUVA's framework responds to varying levels of community need and urgency around heat and flooding with a graded palette of short-, medium- and long-term solutions. Diverting wastewater from a public toilet into nearby mangroves, while undesirable, is treated as a necessary short-term solution. "The long-term solution would be to notify the basti so that the city's sewage lines could be legally extended there. But even if that were possible, it would take decades," says Dulari Parmar, project lead, climate justice, at YUVA.

Meanwhile, the poor cope. But coping systems can also heighten risk and vulnerability as Jayaseelan discovered during her research in

**What's needed is co-created adaptation — where communities define priorities, and institutions hold systems accountable**  
—VARSHA JAYASEELAN  
PROJECT LEAD, CLIMACT

Photos: YUVA India, Gunvanta Ramteke, MHT



Perumbakkam, a large re-settlement site on Chennai's outskirts. "Families store water in unsafe containers, build temporary roofs to reduce heat, or share costs for private water tankers. These actions show resilience — but also reveal how adaptation itself can become another risk when institutional support is weak." What's evident is that neither top-down nor bottom-up planning by itself can address climate vulnerabilities. "What's needed is co-created adaptation — where communities define priorities, and institutions hold systems accountable," Jayaseelan says.

### Lessons And Limitations

To succeed, climate plans require links across every level of govt — from neighbourhood development bodies to state and national climate cells — or they may end up as half-measures and abortive experiments.

"For issues like water, sanitation, roads, etc, you have to work at the city level to solve community-level problems," says Bharti Mahendra Bhonsale, senior programme manager at the Mahila Housing Trust (MHT), an Ahmedabad-based organisation that mobilises low-income communities to improve their urban built environments. "The women measured pipe diameters, timed how long it took to fill a 10-litre bucket, and documented the impacts of water shortage. The groups then mapped the city's wells and borewells and applied to the Amalner Nagar Palika to rejuvenate them using water-harvesting techniques. They also sought individual household water connections."

### Decentralised But Integrated

Climate causes, risks, and impacts are linked: heat affects health, health undermines livelihoods, livelihoods impact incomes, incomes shape housing, and housing loops back to health. Poverty and the climate crisis create a double burden, says the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report: "Poverty drives exposure to climate hazards. These, in turn, reinforce and prolong poverty." An estimated 92% of the world's multidimensionally poor experience two or more climate risks each year.

Jayaseelan says that's exactly why we need to move beyond siloed planning and bring climate thinking into everyday governance, urban housing, transport, budgeting, and social protection. And for that, insti-

### COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

## BIODIVERSITY CENSUS AND CLIMATE-PROOF INCOMES

Farmers in 53 villages of eastern Maharashtra's Chandrapur and Gadchiroli have adapted to the vagaries of climate change — unpredictable rain, floods, hailstorms and unprecedented heat — through community-based assessments, which helped devise tailored solutions.

"Villagers collect and sell mahua flowers in Jan-Feb. Last year, prolonged cloud cover affected the trees. And so, a family that would have earned around Rs 20,000 in flower sales barely made half that amount. Also, unseasonal rains brought pests that damaged the tuvar (toor) crop, hitting villagers who had long been self-sufficient in food," said Manish Rajankar, director, Foundation for Economic and Ecological Development (FEED).

A climate resilience project — initiated around two years ago under the nonprofit CORO's village development plan (VDP) — analysed climate impacts and documented local biodiversity and natural resources. Pramod Waide, VDP lead, says this helped them "trace and project how changes in these resources affect food security and livelihoods".

For instance, they counted the standing mahua trees, projected future population growth of the village, and estimated the number of trees they would need to plant to sustain future livelihoods. After calculating costs for this and other interventions — such as scaling climate-resilient millet cultivation and building value chains for processed agricultural produce and non-timber forest products — 10 gram sabhas applied for aid to Maharashtra's tribal development department's Shabari Corporation, and were each given Rs 50 lakh to implement solutions.

CORO volunteers and local villagers conduct a biodiversity census



## WOMEN COME TOGETHER, BOOST CITY'S WATER TABLE

In Amalner, in Maharashtra's Jalgaon, solutions to meet the water needs of informal settlements improved water security for the whole city as the community and the civic body linked arms.

"Women-led community action groups from 11 bastis developed water resilience plans for their neighbourhoods by calculating demand against the supply received through civic taps," says Bharti Mahendra Bhonsale, senior programme manager at Mahila Housing Trust (MHT), an Ahmedabad-based techno-social organisation that mobilises low-income communities to improve their urban-built environments.

"The women measured pipe diameters, timed how long it took to fill a 10-litre bucket, and documented the impacts of water shortage. The groups then mapped the city's wells and borewells and applied to the Amalner Nagar Palika to rejuvenate them using water-harvesting techniques. They also sought individual household water connections."

tional alignment is crucial. "Climate goals often sit in one department while development decisions sit in another. Integrating these through city-level climate cells or cross-sectoral coordination platforms can make plans operational, not just aspirational," she says.

A good starting point, says Parmar, would be to integrate climate planning and spatial planning. "Climate action plans, heat action plans, disaster management plans — none of them are in conversation with spatial planning, such as a city's development plan (DP)," she says. "Spatial plans, in turn, don't understand a city's vulnerability and risks in terms of climate."



MHT members and residents of Jalgaon's Amalner discuss water security

The intervention led to formal water connections for 382 households, while the civic body expanded its property tax base as homes were formalised. The city's water table also rose by 1.3m over three years. The same approach was later applied to heat stress and sanitation, with communities identifying and quantifying problems on the ground, co-developing solutions with MHT, and seeking municipal approval for implementation.

The other gap is finance. Money for community-level interventions led by nonprofits typically comes from CSR funding, development grants or a community corpus. Govt funds and services are contingent on the legal status of settlements. In Guwahati, YUVA's climate work in an area called Narengi was recently halted midway after the settlement was threatened with eviction.

"Funding flows to large infrastructure projects, while small-scale, community-led adaptations remain under-supported. We can unlock real change if local adaptation is recognised as part of climate finance," Jayaseelan says.

## ED: Mamata took away key evidence, obstructed probe

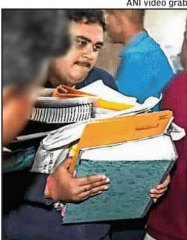
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She took away key evidence, including physical documents and electronic devices. The above actions have resulted in obstruction in ongoing investigation and proceedings under the PMLA," the probe agency's complaint says.

Mamata, who said Thursday's raids amounted to "a vendetta crime", visited Jain's Loudon Street apartment around noon and stayed there for around seven minutes before leaving with a green folder, a hard drive and a mobile phone.

ED officials had split into three groups and reached Jain's home, I-PAC's Sector V office and another businessman's home in north Kolkata's Posta between 6.05am and 6.30am. Only two employees were then at the I-PAC office. Jain was at home with his family.

The chief minister said she realised "something was amiss" after being unable to reach Jain over phone. "I sometimes call Pratik or others for party matters. I called this morning, but he did not respond. Later, I learned that his phone was not with him; ED had taken it away. I suspected they had also taken away all our party documents on poll strategy. That was when I decided to go there."



An Enforcement Directorate official collects documents from I-PAC's office in Kolkata on Thursday

Kolkata police commissioner Manoj Varma reached the Loudon Street address on her orders by 11.30am to check on Jain and confirm the visitors' identities. Mamata turned up at I-PAC's 11th-floor office in Godrej Waterside, which was still being searched, around 12.45pm. Some of the police personnel with her trooped out a little later, carrying sheaves of documents to a car parked in the basement.

"ED's forensic team came and transferred data relating to elections and SIR from our offices when no one was there. They have taken away our hard disks and papers. It is my duty to check on my people when they are in trouble. We are sober, cultured people. But that is not our

weakness. I won't tolerate our stuff being snatched," the CM told reporters outside the Sector V building. "Shah should fight the polls democratically if he wants to win. We get notices when ever elections are near. Notices are not sent to BJP, which has all the money and muscle power."

DGP Rajeev Kumar arrived at the Sector V office with other senior police officers as Trinamool workers descended in droves, led by state fire services minister Sujit Bose and Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation mayor Krishna Chakraborty. ED requisitioned additional CRPF personnel.

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee didn't budge from there for nearly four hours, leaving only around 4.20pm after ED officials concluded their search of Jain's home and allowed him and his family to step out. They reached the Sector V office around 3.30pm, escorted by a police team.

Trinamool sources said Mamata spoke to Jain for about 45 minutes before leaving for a scheduled event. The ED team left the Sector V office at 5.20pm, after which I-PAC employees were allowed to enter the office.

(Additional reporting by Srishti Lakhotia)

## Didi slams ED 'theft', to hit streets today

Kolkata: Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee responded to ED moving Calcutta HC against her for "obstruction" during Thursday's raids on I-PAC's office and its director Pratik Jain's residence and the group's office, setting up a face-off with the agency that also approached the same bench alleging obstruction.

According to details available on HC's website, TMC's petition names Union govt, ED and IPAC as respondents. Sources said TMC has raised concerns over alleged access to party's confidential materi-

"They lodged a false case against me. If they try to steal from my home, will I not try to prevent it? They stole everything — all data, including the SIR list. If someone tries to kill you, will you not try to defend yourself?" Mamata said.

TMC functionaries and workers held a series of protests statewide. Friday's rally from Jadavpur 8B bus stop to Hazra Crossing in south Kolkata is scheduled to begin at 2pm. The entire TMC brass, barring "those busy with crucial SIR work", will be in attendance. "Many people sought our help for SIR. Even that data has been stolen (during ED search of I-PAC addresses). More you try to disturb me, more I will retaliate," the CM said. "This (the protest) is a reaction to their action."

## TMC, I-PAC challenge legality of ED searches, agency moves court against 'obstruction'

Srishti Lakhotia &amp; Dwaipayan Ghosh | TNN

Kolkata: TMC and I-PAC moved Calcutta high court Thursday challenging the legality of ED searches at the political consultancy's chief Pratik Jain's residence and the group's office, setting up a face-off with the agency that also approached the same bench alleging obstruction.

According to details available on HC's website, TMC's petition names Union govt, ED and IPAC as respondents. Sources said TMC has raised concerns over alleged access to party's confidential materi-

al linked to special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, including information on booth-level agents, and documents connected to preparations for the 2026 Bengal polls.

ED searched Jain's home on Loudon Street near central Kolkata's Park Street and I-PAC's office in Sector V, the city's IT hub in Salt Lake on the eastern fringe. The searches were linked to an alleged coal scam. Tension flared outside Jain's home when central forces accompanying ED allegedly asked personnel from Shakespear Sarani police station — which covers the

Park Street area — to remain outside the main gate. A verbal confrontation followed. Shakespear Sarani police is preparing to register a suo motu case against ED and CRPF, alleging obstruction of police work. Jain's family is also considering a separate complaint, alleging family members were forcibly detained and that ED entered private areas without notice.

Another suo motu case is being considered by Electronic Complex police station, which has jurisdiction over Sector V alleging ED did not inform local police before the operation at I-PAC's of-

fice. ED has criticised Kolkata police for what it described as "overactivity".

The court battle unfolds against the backdrop of TMC's long-running and electorally successful association with I-PAC that began in 2019. Over the next six-and-a-half years, TMC recorded a 100% strike rate with I-PAC on board, sweeping the 2021 assembly elections, winning the 2023 panchayat polls and retaining dominance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Bengal.

After the 2021 assembly polls, Kishor exited to pursue his own political plans, but I-PAC stayed on.

## Amid oppn outcry, CPM questions Didi's role

Rohit Khanna &amp; Sarthak G | TNN

Kolkata: Opposition parties accused BJP of weaponising central agencies after ED searches at I-PAC's office and the home of its chief Pratik Jain over alleged links to a coal scam triggered Thursday a fierce political showdown in Bengal. ED has not publicly responded to the allegations.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said the action showed BJP was "losing badly in Bengal" calling the search "the first proof" of its anxiety over the 2026 assembly elections.

CPM and Congress condemned BJP but also questioned CM Mamata Banerjee's

### Intervention shows she has lot to hide: BJP

BJP said on Thursday that Mamata Banerjee's dramatic intervention in ED raids on I-PAC over a money-laundering probe clearly indicates she has a lot to "hide", with there being secrets which she does not want revealed. BJP's Sambit Patra emphasised that it was probably a first in India that a CM entered the scene of an ED probe and allegedly tried to destroy and steal evidence. "This is extremely condemnable. Mamata used Bengal police to carry out her intent," he said, recalling that Madan Mitra, TMC MLA and former minister, had linked I-PAC to corruption in 2025. TNN

conduct during the search. Pradesh Congress president Subhankar Sarkar flagged the timing, asking why I-PAC, active in Bengal for years, was targeted now. "Are they trying to intimidate Pratik Jain? Are they trying to get hold of documents that Jain has?" he said.

CPM state secretary Mohammad Salim raised legal concerns over Banerjee's presence. "We saw her taking out files and laptops. We saw police loading documents in a Trinamool net's car. That cannot be beyond question," Salim said, demanding cases against "er-

rant officials and the CM".

Sarkar alleged a BJP-Trinamool binary aimed at deflecting attention from "joblessness, inflation and livelihood", and from alleged harassment of Bengali-speaking people in other states. He pointed to past cases, including Saradha and Narada, claiming Trinamool politicians allegedly switched sides under pressure.

BJP hit back sharply. Leader of opposition in state assembly Suvendu Adhikari called Banerjee's visit to Jain's Loudon Street residence during the ED search "unethical, unconstitutional and direct interference".