



TARAGram Yatra 2022

Co-creating Green and Inclusive Economies

22–24 November, 2022

Agra | Bundelkhand | Mirzapur | New Delhi

BACKGROUND

The year 2022 marks the 10th edition of TARAGram Yatra.¹ Since its inception in 2010, the Yatra has become a platform for social innovators, changemakers, and policymakers to come together to experience on-ground action and deliberate to advance a compelling, practical, and solution-oriented vision for the well-being of people and the planet. The *Yatra* is a unique experience of social impact and learning of both theory and practice. It introduces the *Yatris* to the intertwined factors, i.e., economic prosperity, equitable opportunity, healthy and productive environment, and participatory governance, important for India's green and inclusive growth.

In 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world, India announced its ambition to become a \$5 trillion economy and global powerhouse by 2024-25. At the COP26 summit in Glasgow, India had set a seemingly conflicting target to cut its net carbon emissions to zero by 2070. While we may seem to be on our way to becoming a \$3trillion economy already, challenges such as poverty and joblessness, with more than 32 million individuals unemployed still prevail. Furthermore, the country is still home to millions of people who cannot meet essential needs such as food, water, and shelter. We are using resources at a rate 70 per cent above its bio-capacity. The surging energy demand that is fuelling economic growth has propelled India to the top three carbon polluters. About 30 per cent of India's total land is already degraded while desertification is devouring India's soil. India also finds itself in the midst of a dramatic journey of urbanisation. As per UN World Urbanisation Prospects, India's urban population is expected to double to 814 million people. Given the growing demand for resources by different sectors, there are increasing stresses on our ecosystem with the over-utilisation of natural resources.

The quest for the well-being of people and the planet is challenging. The challenges are not just due to the scale and intensity of the problems as aforementioned, but also the intertwined nature of these challenges. For instance, if the exploitation of resources as an issue is dealt with in isolation, its

¹ The *Yatra* – a journey or pilgrimage that one takes with friends and colleagues to attain higher goals – brings together top-level practitioners and policymakers from across the world.

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precautionary measures may harm the poorest of the society by reducing access and creating barriers to sustainable alternatives for those who are the most dependent on natural resources.

Under an umbrella theme of ‘Co-creating Inclusive and Green Economies’, TARAGram Yatra 2022 will be focussing on resource efficiency and circular economies; livelihood security and inclusive entrepreneurship; and climate resilience and ecosystem restoration. The *Yatra*, comprising a mix of dialogue and field visits to Agra (Uttar Pradesh), Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh), Orchha (Bundelkhand), and Delhi, will be organised from 22 November, 2022 to 24 November, 2022. It will have a mix of *Yatris* from academia, business, civil society, and government, and will engage in deep discussions about social and institutional change experiments at the grassroots, providing a learning–sharing knowledge co-creation opportunity while networking and experiencing real India.

Dialogue

The deliberations of the TARAGram Yatra 2022 seek to answer the following questions:

1. Who are the actors in the transition? How can the micro and small-scale sector be a part of the transition to greener economies, have a stake in the process, and have a definitive role in designing the solutions?
2. In the transition to greener economies, what may be the trade-offs? Who is likely to lose and how may we offset or mitigate the losses? What precautions must, therefore, be built into the innovations and policy strategies?
3. What can policy learn from practice? What are the lessons from the innovations and experiments at the grassroots level that need to be mainstreamed into policy? And how may policy enable the sustainability and replication of good practice solutions at scale?

Yatra 1: Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy

Plastics, which were once considered a convenient replacement for natural materials, have now become one of the most hazardous items for the environment. Regardless to say, plastic still is a unique material that is cheap, versatile, lightweight, resistant, and offers many functionalities. Plastic can be more of a protector than only a polluter, provided it is managed properly and complemented by the circular economy strategies in terms of reduction, recycling, and recovery, and thereby preventing leakage into the environment.

Development Alternatives has been leading the discourse and action related to plastic waste management in India. Through its robust experience, technology solutions, innovative approaches, and extensive stakeholder connections, Development Alternatives intends to bring a ‘transformational’ change in this sector.

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To address the concerns of the circular economy in plastics in India, the *Yatris* will travel to Agra where they will immerse themselves to understand the challenges from the perspectives of various actors in the plastics value chain, and will be exploring innovative and entrepreneurial solutions in this regard. The *Yatra* in Agra comprises visits to the plastic segregation and recycling sites and technical sessions, engaging local stakeholders, industry, and government. Through this, the *Yatris* will deliberate on the culture and social circumstances of the plastic waste scenario in the city, which may have lessons for a large part of India.

Yatra 2: Livelihood Security and Inclusive Entrepreneurship

India's impressive growth trajectory has not translated into a corresponding increase in jobs. For the country, the development of micro-entrepreneurship is the key to catering to the needs of millions of unemployed labour force. However, micro-enterprises are highly vulnerable to external shocks and require a conducive support system to thrive.

Development Alternatives' (DA) social innovation methodology and tools are realigning the current ecosystem of economic development and job creation and resetting the growth trajectory to make it more inclusive.

With this theme, we will introduce the *Yatris* to the experience of the aforementioned social innovation methodology, which includes listening, co-creation, prototyping, and learning in their journey to Mirzapur. The key areas where the *Yatris* will work collaboratively are – Understanding and learning the emerging entrepreneurial needs of the youth and women; Building an inclusive ecosystem leading to solutions in the form of systemic prototypes that are creating changes in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem; Identifying leverage points that will accelerate entrepreneurship led job creation.

Yatra 3: Climate Resilience and Ecosystem Restoration

Bundelkhand is one of the most vulnerable and backward regions in India. The per capita income of the region is almost half as compared to India's national average. Various natural and human made factors, including the change in climatic pattern, unsustainable use of natural resources along with several other factors, have turned Bundelkhand slowly into a desertified region. The climatic impact in Bundelkhand and the high degree of dependence of the local economy and communities on natural resources including land and water have made the local population highly vulnerable. It is further exacerbated by various gaps in governance, information, and knowledge among the local population.

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Additionally, seasonal migration for work, extreme forms of malnourishment, low levels of literacy, small and/or marginal land holdings, insecurity of stable income, limited access to technologies, lack of industrial development, and a decent livelihood are some of the key developmental challenges faced by the region. All these challenges are interconnected.

To address these challenges, we initiated several interventions in the region. Our interventions revolve around land and water management, afforestation, clean technology-based livelihood options, capacity building of local institutions, enabling communities to fulfil basic needs of drinking water, sanitation, shelter, and energy, supported through enterprise development, and skill development for job creation. Our model in this region is based on the principles of initiating community-led action, creating a sense of community ownership of services, and sustainability.

In this regard, the focus of the Bundelkhand chapter of the TARAGram Yatra will be to give exposure to *Yatris* to the participatory information and knowledge development models of Development Alternatives and initiate discussions on the scope of the models to build community resilience at the local level and exchange outstanding on-ground success stories.

Saar Sangam – Seeking Policy Solutions through Practice

Post Covid-19, the theme of this year's *Yatra* was chosen to address the critical issue of resilience. The pandemic taught us that nature has the power to regenerate itself, and it is we who must learn to live with nature in harmony and not attempt to alter the scheme of things. Thus, it is important to create a world in which communities are resilient, adaptive, and in sync with nature. With the theme 'Co-creating Green and Inclusive Economies', the *Yatra* will conclude at the plenary 'Saar Sangam – Seeking Policy Solutions through Practice' in New Delhi.

In this event, the *Yatris* will converge from the three geographies (Agra, Mirzapur, and Bundelkhand) after a highly immersive experience. They would bring with them learnings that will form a launching pad for the discussions in the plenary. Present at the plenary will be the leading global experts, who will steer the breakout sessions with the *Yatris* geography-wise to understand their learnings and visualise them in the national and global contexts. The three breakout sessions will then merge into a panel discussion, which will address the main issue by factoring in the learnings from each *Yatra*.

The discussions to be held in the plenary will be transformed into a proceedings report, which will be shared with policymakers for adaptation at scale.

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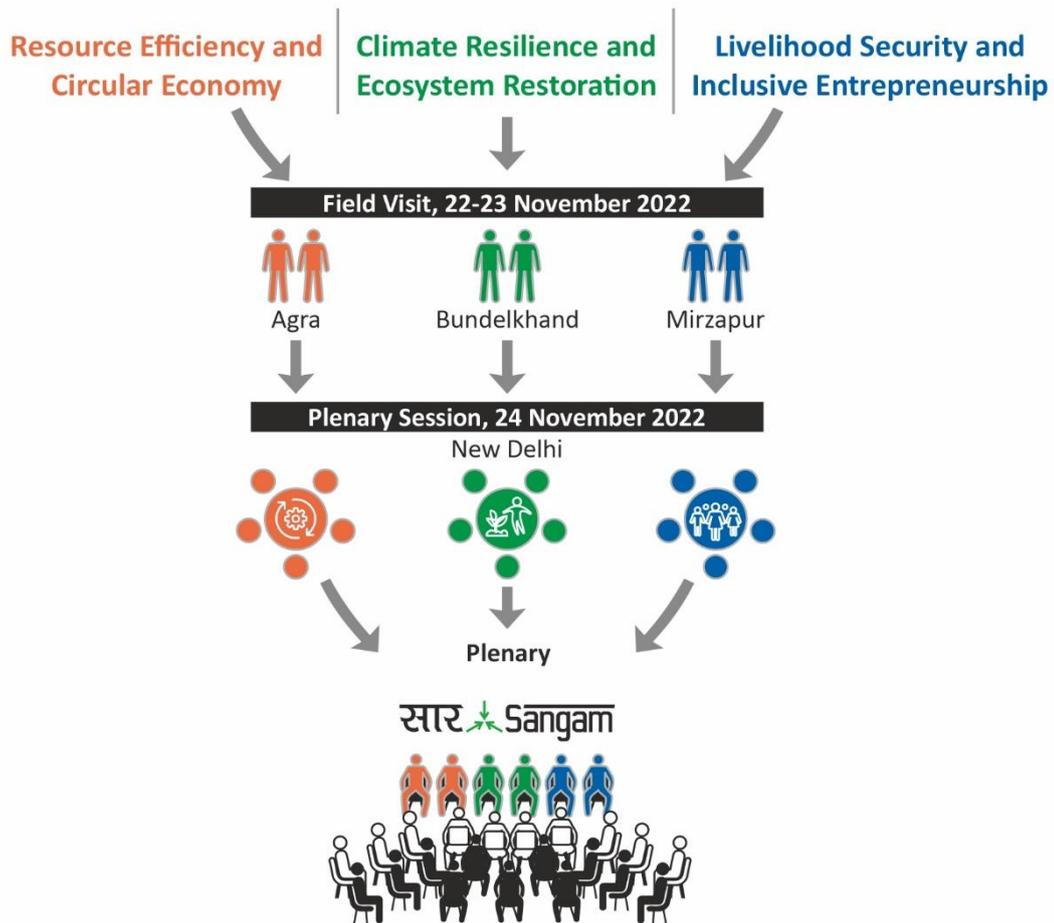




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