

# Role of NGOs in Mitigating Climate Change in Gujarat

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2026.150300109>

Received: 28 March 2026; 03 April 2026; Published: 22 April 2026

## ABSTRACT

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges, and India's western state of Gujarat faces distinctive risks due to its semi-arid geography, long coastline, and industrial profile. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become crucial actors in bridging local realities with national and global climate policies. This study explores the empirical role of NGOs in mitigating climate change across Gujarat. Drawing upon secondary data from the Gujarat State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC), the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), and reports from organizations such as SEWA, Vasudha Foundation, and TERI, the paper identifies how NGOs implement renewable energy solutions, afforestation, water conservation, and community-based resilience programs. The findings demonstrate that NGOs not only complement state interventions but also pioneer bottom-up innovations that strengthen climate governance. The study concludes with policy recommendations to institutionalize NGO participation within Gujarat's climate framework.

**Keywords:** Climate change, NGOs, Gujarat, mitigation, renewable energy, community resilience, adaptation, SAPCC, India

## INTRODUCTION

### Background and rationale

Climate change is no longer an abstract environmental issue—it manifests through rising temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, extreme weather, and disrupted livelihoods (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2022). India, being a developing country with vast ecological diversity, faces complex climate challenges. Gujarat, one of India's most industrially advanced states, presents a unique case of both vulnerability and leadership in climate mitigation. The state's long coastline (over 1,600 km), arid regions, and urban-industrial centers such as Ahmedabad and Surat make it particularly sensitive to climate-induced stressors such as drought, flooding, and heatwaves (Government of Gujarat, 2021).

While government-led frameworks like the **Gujarat State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC)** provide policy direction, effective mitigation at the community level often depends on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These organizations operate at the intersection of science, society, and policy—facilitating behavioral change, mobilizing local resources, and innovating low-cost climate solutions. Their decentralized structures enable them to reach marginalized groups that formal government systems sometimes overlook (Sharma & Gupta, 2021).

This research investigates the **role of NGOs in mitigating climate change in Gujarat**—empirically analyzing interventions, impacts, and institutional dynamics that shape their work.

### Problem statement

Despite progressive state-level climate strategies, the **implementation gap** between policy formulation and local execution remains significant. While Gujarat has launched renewable energy and green development programs, their success depends on micro-level adoption and behavioral change—areas where NGOs play a vital role. Yet, there is limited empirical research documenting the **actual scope, effectiveness, and challenges** of NGO-led

mitigation in Gujarat. This study fills that gap by integrating empirical data, project reports, and climate indicators to evaluate NGO contributions.

### Objectives of the study

1. To analyse the nature and scope of NGO-led climate mitigation initiatives in Gujarat.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of NGOs in implementing renewable energy, afforestation, and sustainable livelihood programs.
3. To assess the partnership between NGOs and the state government in climate governance.
4. To identify challenges and recommend policy measures for enhancing NGO engagement.

### Significance of the Study

This study contributes to existing literature in multiple ways. First, it provides a state-specific empirical analysis of NGO-led climate mitigation in Gujarat, addressing a gap in localized research. Second, it integrates quantitative and qualitative evidence to assess the effectiveness of NGO interventions. Third, it advances the understanding of collaborative climate governance, highlighting NGOs as key actors in bridging policy and grassroots implementation. Finally, the study offers policy-relevant insights that can inform climate strategies not only in Gujarat but also in other climate-vulnerable regions of India.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Climate change and mitigation in India

India is among the top five global emitters of greenhouse gases but also among the most climate-vulnerable nations (World Bank, 2023). National frameworks—such as the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**—outline missions for solar energy, sustainable agriculture, and energy efficiency. Yet, local-level mitigation relies heavily on community participation and non-state actors (Ghosh & Raj, 2020).

### The Gujarat context

Gujarat's geography exposes it to multiple climate risks. The **IMD (2023)** reports a **rise of approximately 0.8°C in mean annual temperature** over the last five decades. Rainfall patterns have become erratic, with frequent droughts in the north (Banaskantha, Kachchh) and flooding in the south (Valsad, Bharuch). Coastal districts like **Bhavnagar, Porbandar, and Kachchh** face sea-level rise, salinity intrusion, and cyclones (Government of Gujarat, 2021).

Despite these challenges, Gujarat has emerged as a leader in **renewable energy**—hosting more than **13,000 MW of installed solar and wind capacity** (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy [MNRE], 2024). NGOs have played a crucial role in promoting adoption and awareness at the grassroots level.

### NGOs and climate change mitigation: Theoretical overview

NGOs are defined as **voluntary, non-profit, and community-driven organizations** that work independently from the government but often in partnership with it (Lewis, 2014). In climate governance, NGOs fulfill multiple roles:

- **Implementers:** delivering projects like reforestation or renewable energy.
- **Catalysts:** mobilizing local participation.
- **Advocates:** influencing policy and corporate accountability.

- **Monitors:** ensuring transparency and environmental justice.

The **theory of collaborative governance** (Ansell & Gash, 2008) provides a useful lens—arguing that effective environmental outcomes emerge when public institutions and civil society share decision-making responsibilities.

### Empirical studies on NGO interventions

Several empirical studies in India highlight NGO contributions:

#### Expanded Empirical Studies on NGO Interventions

Recent literature provides strong evidence of NGO contributions to climate mitigation in India and globally:

- Agarwal & Narain (2019) highlight that community-based natural resource management led by NGOs significantly reduces carbon emissions through sustainable agriculture.
- Jain et al. (2021) found that decentralized renewable energy models implemented by NGOs improve rural energy access while lowering fossil fuel dependency.
- Kumar & Singh (2020) emphasize the role of NGOs in promoting climate-resilient agriculture in semi-arid regions like Gujarat.
- Gupta et al. (2022) demonstrate that NGO-led afforestation projects contribute to carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation.
- Sharma (2021) identifies NGOs as key actors in bridging climate policy and grassroots implementation.
- IPCC (2022) recognizes civil society organizations as critical stakeholders in achieving mitigation targets.
- UNEP (2021) reports that NGO partnerships accelerate adoption of clean technologies in developing countries.
- World Resources Institute (2020) highlights the effectiveness of NGOs in climate governance and monitoring frameworks.
- TERI (2021) shows measurable reductions in emissions through NGO-led microgrid systems.
- SEWA (2022) integrates gender and climate action, showing improved sustainability outcomes.

Despite these contributions, there remains limited state-specific synthesis focusing exclusively on Gujarat, which this study aims to address.

### Conceptual framework

The conceptual model for this study situates NGOs within three interrelated domains of climate mitigation:

Domain	NGO Contribution	Example
Technological	Adoption of renewable and efficient technologies	SEWA solar pumps
Ecological	Reforestation, mangrove restoration	WWF, Grow Trees
Socioeconomic	Livelihood diversification, awareness, training	Deepak Foundation, Vasudha

### Climate Profile and Mitigation Context of Gujarat

#### Climate trends and vulnerability

Gujarat's geography stretches from the arid Kachchh plains to the humid coastal regions of south Gujarat, making it highly climate-sensitive. According to the **Indian Meteorological Department (IMD, 2023)**, the state's **average annual temperature increased by 0.8°C between 1961 and 2020**, with a sharper rise in post-monsoon and winter months. The **average maximum summer temperature** in north Gujarat often exceeds **42°C**, with heatwaves increasing in frequency over the past two decades (IMD, 2023).

Rainfall data show increasing variability:

- Mean annual rainfall: **~700 mm**,
- Coefficient of variation: **~35%**, indicating irregular distribution,
- Frequent droughts in **Banaskantha, Kachchh, and Surendranagar**,
- Excess rainfall and floods in **Valsad, Bharuch, and Navsari** (Government of Gujarat, 2022).

The **State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC, 2021)** highlights that **45% of Gujarat's coastline** is categorized as "*high or very high risk*" due to sea-level rise, storm surges, and salinity intrusion (Mahapatra et al., 2020). Coastal vulnerability is particularly acute around **Bhavnagar, Porbandar, and the Gulf of Kachchh**, where industrial infrastructure and fishing livelihoods coexist with fragile ecosystems.

### Sectoral emissions and mitigation priorities

Gujarat contributes about **8% of India's total greenhouse gas emissions**, largely from the energy and industrial sectors (Central Pollution Control Board [CPCB], 2023). However, the state also leads in **renewable energy**, with installed capacity exceeding **13,500 MW (9,000 MW solar and 4,500 MW wind)** (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy [MNRE], 2024).

The state's mitigation strategy focuses on:

1. **Renewable energy expansion**
2. **Energy efficiency in industries**
3. **Coastal and ecosystem restoration**
4. **Sustainable agriculture and water management**

NGOs play a catalytic role in operationalizing these objectives at the local level.

### Empirical Findings: NGO Contributions

This section presents the empirical evidence of how NGOs contribute to climate mitigation in Gujarat, structured by thematic domains.

#### Renewable energy and low-carbon livelihoods

##### SEWA's Solar Energy Initiatives

The **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)**, founded in Ahmedabad in 1972, has become one of the most influential NGOs linking women's empowerment with climate action. Through projects such as **Project Surya** (in collaboration with UNEP and ReNew Power), SEWA trained **3,500 women** between 2020 and 2023 in solar technology maintenance, installation, and entrepreneurship (SEWA, 2023).

**Empirical data from SEWA's internal monitoring (2023) show:**

- Replacement of **diesel-powered salt pumps** with **solar pumps** in 22 coastal villages of Kachchh and Patan.
- **Annual fuel savings:** 1.2 million liters of diesel.
- **Estimated CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction:** ~3,200 tonnes per year.

- **Income increase for workers:** 15–20%, due to lower energy costs and better productivity.

These outcomes illustrate the dual benefits of emission reduction and livelihood resilience — consistent with **co-benefit frameworks** proposed by the IPCC (2022).

### TERI's Microgrid Projects

The **Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)** has implemented solar microgrids and clean cookstove programs in rural Gujarat. Their 2021 evaluation report indicates:

- 35 microgrids established in Kachchh and Banaskantha districts,
- Reaching **4,200 households**,
- Resulting in a **42% decline in kerosene consumption** and **29% improvement in local air quality indicators** (TERI, 2021).

These empirical findings underscore that decentralized renewable projects, when facilitated by NGOs, produce measurable emission reductions and community-level sustainability.

### Ecosystem restoration and nature-based mitigation

#### Mangrove and afforestation projects

NGOs such as **WWF-India**, **Grow Billion Trees Foundation**, and **Green Planet Foundation** have undertaken mangrove restoration in the Gulf of Kachchh and plantation drives in Saurashtra.

A 2022 field report from WWF-India documents:

- **Restoration of 1,200 hectares of mangroves** between 2018–2022 in Jamnagar and Bhavnagar,
- **Sequestration potential:** 7.8 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>/ha/year (WWF-India, 2022),
- **Reduction in coastal erosion by 20–25%** in monitored sites.

Similarly, Grow Billion Trees Foundation (2023) reported the planting of **2.4 million trees** across 12 districts of Gujarat since 2020, with an estimated **carbon offset of 130,000 tonnes** assuming 70% survival rate.

#### Case Study: Coastal Community Involvement

Qualitative interviews with local NGOs in Dwarka district revealed a participatory model of mangrove planting involving fisherfolk and women's cooperatives. NGOs acted as intermediaries for technical guidance and seedling procurement, while local residents provided land and maintenance labor. Respondents emphasized that community participation was key to **survival rates exceeding 75%**, compared to below 50% in top-down plantation projects.

#### Water resource management and sustainable agriculture

Gujarat's recurrent droughts make water conservation a critical adaptation and mitigation domain. NGOs like **Deepak Foundation** and **Sadguru Water Development Foundation** implement **watershed management, check dams, and micro-irrigation** systems.

Empirical results (Deepak Foundation, 2022):

- Constructed 96 check dams in Dahod, Panchmahal, and Narmada districts.

- Increased groundwater recharge by an average of **1.4 meters per year**.
- Enabled **climate-smart agriculture practices** for 5,200 farmers, leading to reduced fertilizer and diesel use.

Farmers reported average yield increases of **18–22%**, contributing to both livelihood improvement and indirect emission reductions via resource efficiency.

### Capacity building and community awareness

#### Vasudha Foundation and climate literacy

Vasudha Foundation’s *Community Climate Dialogues* (2021–2023) reached **25,000 rural citizens** through climate workshops in Ahmedabad, Anand, and Bhavnagar. Surveys revealed that **68% of participants** adopted energy-efficient lighting or waste segregation after NGO intervention (Vasudha Foundation, 2023).

These behavioral changes—though micro-level—demonstrate measurable mitigation potential when aggregated. Empirical behavioral metrics confirm theories of environmental psychology suggesting that **awareness-based interventions** are essential precursors to sustained climate action (Steg & Vlek, 2009).

#### Data Synthesis: Quantitative Overview

NGO/Project	Type of Intervention	Area/Districts	Estimated CO <sub>2</sub> Reduction (tonnes/year)	Beneficiaries	Key Outcomes
SEWA – Project Surya	Solar pumps for salt workers	Kachchh, Patan	3,200	4,500	Fuel saving, women’s income rise
TERI Microgrids	Solar electrification	Banaskantha, Kachchh	1,850	4,200 households	Reduced kerosene use
WWF-India	Mangrove restoration	Jamnagar, Bhavnagar	9,300	2,000	Erosion control
Grow Billion Trees	Afforestation drives	Saurashtra, North Gujarat	130,000 (lifetime)	50,000+	Urban and rural tree cover
Deepak Foundation	Watershed management	Dahod, Narmada	2,100	5,200 farmers	Water security, productivity
Vasudha Foundation	Climate literacy & policy	Statewide	Behavioral emission cuts (indirect)	25,000 citizens	Awareness, adoption of efficiency

### Policy Implications

The findings from Gujarat’s NGO sector indicate that non-state actors are critical intermediaries between communities and government frameworks for climate adaptation. Policy implications derived from this research are multi-layered:

#### Integrating NGOs into formal climate governance.

Gujarat’s Climate Change Department should institutionalize partnerships with NGOs through formal Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for project design, monitoring, and evaluation. This integration will ensure that local knowledge and community outreach mechanisms directly influence state-level adaptation policies.

### **Decentralized climate financing.**

Evidence from SEWA and AKRSP projects reveals that micro-finance and community-level revolving funds help rural women and farmers adopt renewable energy and water-efficient technologies. Policies must create localized “Climate Action Funds” to replicate such models statewide.

### **Capacity-building and knowledge transfer.**

NGOs such as CEE and GES have accumulated rich field data on renewable energy education and biodiversity management. Policy frameworks should formalize data-sharing platforms and training programs that allow cross-learning between government agencies, universities, and NGOs.

### **Inclusion and gender-sensitive adaptation.**

SEWA’s experience demonstrates that climate action without gender equity reproduces social vulnerability. The Government of Gujarat’s climate policy should embed gender analysis within every adaptation and mitigation project appraisal.

### **Sustainable agriculture and ecosystem restoration.**

Policies encouraging regenerative farming, promoted by DSC and AKRSP, can reduce emissions while enhancing soil carbon storage. Incentive schemes—such as payments for ecosystem services—should be expanded to reward smallholders engaging in climate-friendly agriculture.

### **Monitoring, evaluation, and transparency.**

NGOs should be granted access to public climate datasets and, in return, publish open-access annual reports of emission reduction outcomes. This will align community action with India’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on empirical data and stakeholder consultations, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Establish a **State-NGO Climate Consortium (SNCC)** to coordinate adaptation and mitigation projects across Gujarat’s districts.
2. Develop a **Climate Knowledge Portal** integrating NGO case studies, datasets, and impact assessments for public and academic access.
3. Expand **CSR-NGO partnerships** for renewable energy and water management projects.
4. Encourage **joint research** between universities and NGOs on local carbon-sequestration techniques.
5. Promote **policy literacy campaigns** for rural communities, empowering them to engage in climate planning and grievance redressal.
6. Institute performance-based grants should be introduced to incentivize NGOs based on measurable climate outcomes. These grants would reward organizations achieving targets such as carbon emission reduction, renewable energy adoption, water conservation, and community participation.

### **The types of institutions targeted include:**

- Grassroots NGOs working in rural and tribal areas
- Research-based NGOs and policy think tanks

- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Social enterprises engaged in climate solutions
- Academic institutions collaborating on climate research

Performance indicators may include:

- Quantifiable emission reductions
- Number of beneficiaries impacted
- Area under afforestation/restoration
- Adoption rate of clean technologies
- Community participation levels

Such a funding model would enhance **accountability, transparency, and efficiency**, ensuring that financial resources are directed toward high-impact climate interventions.

### Limitations of the Study

This study has certain limitations. First, it relies primarily on secondary data sources, which may limit the depth of field-level validation. Second, the analysis focuses on selected NGOs and may not fully represent all organizations working in Gujarat. Third, quantification of emission reductions is based on reported estimates rather than independent measurement. Finally, time and resource constraints restricted extensive primary data collection. Future research should incorporate longitudinal field studies and comparative analysis across states.

### CONCLUSION

This empirical study demonstrates that NGOs in Gujarat play a transformative role in mediating climate mitigation and adaptation. Through participatory governance, community mobilization, and localized technological interventions, they bridge the gap between policy design and grassroots realities.

Organizations like **CEE, AKRSP, SEWA, DSC, and GES** exemplify innovation in renewable energy education, watershed restoration, gender-responsive climate action, and sustainable livelihood creation.

However, fragmented coordination and limited funding constrain their potential. Strengthening institutional collaboration between NGOs and state agencies—supported by transparent funding mechanisms and data sharing—will accelerate Gujarat’s transition toward climate resilience.

In conclusion, empowering NGOs as co-architects of climate policy, rather than peripheral implementers, is essential to achieving India’s broader sustainable-development and net-zero commitments.

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