Climate Disinformation in India:
Subverting Indigenous Peoples' Rights

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Climate Disinformation in India: Subverting Indigenous Peoples' Rights

Asia Centre

2025

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PREFACE

Asia Centre is pleased to present the report ***Climate Disinformation in India: Subverting Indigenous Peoples' Rights***, produced in partnership with International Media Support (IMS). This publication is part of a broader series assessing the impact of climate disinformation on Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. The series comprises one baseline study for each country and a regional report.

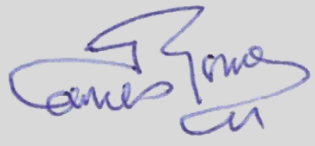
It unpacks the information disorder to identify the specific forms of climate disinformation and their corresponding impact on IPs' agency to protect their natural environment. The report provides targeted recommendations for a range of stakeholders, including the international community, INGOs, governments, local civil society organisations, IPs, the media and technology companies.

Climate disinformation is an increasingly pressing issue in the Asia-Pacific, emerging alongside the broader rise of disinformation that is taking place both online and offline. In the case of climate disinformation, both digital and offline channels spread false environmental narratives whose intent is to deceive the public, distort climate discourse, and weaken inclusive and effective responses to climate change and deforestation. Disinformation, deforestation, and IPs' rights have each been individually studied at national and international levels, however the impact of climate disinformation on IPs' ability to respond to deforestation remains under-researched. This forms the rationale for this project.

The dissemination of climate disinformation is particularly concerning for IPs, who often reside in forested areas most affected by these crises and are therefore disproportionately exposed to the environmental, social, and political threats they pose. This is where this series makes a meaningful contribution. It examines how climate disinformation circulates – both online through mass and social media and offline – through community-level interactions. It assesses both the direct consequences, such as exclusion from climate discourse, forced displacement, harassment, and criminalisation, and the broader contextual factors that enable such outcomes. In doing so, the series enhances understanding of how climate disinformation undermines Indigenous communities' ability to respond to climate change.

Asia Centre hopes that this report – and the others in the series – will, through the lens of climate disinformation, offer the international community, national governments, and local stakeholders a range of ideas on how to protect the environment and, in doing so, help secure the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous communities.

Sincerely,



Dr James Gomez
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In India, Indigenous Peoples' (IPs) rights are being systematically subverted.

Representing 8.6% (104 million) of the population (Census of India, 2011), Indigenous communities, officially designated as "Scheduled Tribes", are granted special legal protections that address their socio-economic disadvantages arising from historical marginalisation. However, government policies and business-oriented laws that have pivoted to support industrial development are threatening IPs' rights. Specifically, efforts to appropriate lands for development disproportionately impact IPs who rely on their ancestral lands and their natural resources for their survival and livelihoods.

Although IP communities resist efforts to undermine their legal protections, authorities and corporate entities often succeed in subverting these safeguards. These actors tactically rely on the media to disseminate curated climate disinformation, which is amplified by rapid digitalisation. Such false narratives are used to structurally justify the prioritisation of extractive projects, effectively downplaying or overlooking the subversion of IP rights.

The report makes three key contributions: it identifies the main forms of climate disinformation in India, examines their specific impacts on IP communities and sets out targeted policy recommendations for national and international stakeholders.

First, four forms of climate disinformation circulating in the media landscape in India are identified:

- One-sided coverage, where the media circulate disinformation by the state, by highlighting false ecological progress while omitting data on biodiversity loss, environmental impacts and displacement.

- Promoting false climate solutions, like afforestation and green credit programmes, which are dubbed as climate action despite their harmful ecological impacts and effects on IPs.

- Attributing environmental disasters to climate change, where state authorities deflect accountability for disasters arising from governance failures and poor infrastructure to climate change.

- Denialism of climate change and its causes, which relies on the suppression of scientific data, promotion of anti-renewable myths and the institutional erasure of climate-linked mortality, thereby sowing doubt and enabling the deflection of accountability.

Second, the report shows that the deliberate circulation of climate disinformation in the media subverts IPs' rights and legal safeguards in favour of state and corporate interests in five critical ways:

1. Bypassing IPs' rights to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) by deliberately spreading distorted information effectively marginalising IP voices from environmental decision-making.

2. Restricting traditional practices by promoting false state initiatives while claiming environmental legitimacy, thereby worsening climate adaptation and livelihoods.

3. Undermining IPs' forest conservation efforts, through the reframing of unsustainable top-down conservation efforts as climate action, thus enabling the loss of biocultural diversity.

4. Forced evictions and deterritorialisation, often enabled by the misrepresentation of environmental data in judicial rulings under the guise of ecological progress.

5. Legal persecution, Intimidation and physical violence, where IPs and environmental defenders are subjected to both online harassment and militarised control in order to suppress resistance to state or corporate projects.

Third, this report outlines a set of recommendations for action:

- United Nations (UN) bodies should conduct an audit of India's compliance with IPs' rights, investigate how state and corporate disinformation facilitates violations and support the ratification of relevant international laws and conventions.

- The government should strengthen legal safeguards for IPs by providing greater technical and administrative support to effectively implement the Forest Rights Act, ensuring robust FPIC protocols in all climate and development projects.

- International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) should support Indigenous-led audits of government programmes, submit evidence of digital surveillance to UN bodies, and help establish rapid-response legal networks and community fact-checking hubs in IP languages.

- Civil society organisations (CSOs) should establish a national database for eco-development displacements, offer mobile legal clinics for land rights and advocate for policies requiring IPs' representation in environmental bodies.

- The media sector should expose data manipulation in official forest reports, establish Indigenous-language fact-checking and leverage public broadcasting to boost digital literacy and amplify community voices.

- Technology companies should develop tools to detect disinformation targeting IPs, conduct transparent audits of algorithmic bias on their platforms and partner with CSOs to provide digital literacy and secure communication tools.

- IP communities should continue to document land-use violations using community mapping, file collective petitions to audit projects violating their rights and build alliances to establish Indigenous-owned media platforms to control narratives.

These recommendations advocate for a more equitable, rights-based and evidence-led environmental governance in India. They also call for accountability for violations of legal protections. They stress the importance of collaborative, multi-stakeholder initiatives to reform climate and conservation policies. This reform should be guided by a justice-oriented approach, grounded in transparency, legal accountability and the active involvement of IPs' voices.

Above all, India must not only refrain from subverting the rights of IPs but must actively affirm and safeguard them as a core legal and ethical obligation. This entails recognising IPs as rightful custodians whose knowledge, practices and enduring stewardship are indispensable to national climate resilience. Only by centring IPs' rights can India pursue climate strategies that are both ecologically sound and socially just.

ABBREVIATIONS

BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CAMPA	Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FCRA	Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (2010)
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
FRA	Forest Rights Act (2006)
FSI	Forest Survey of India
ILO C169	International Labour Organisation Convention 169
(I)NGO	(International) Non-Governmental Organisation
IP	Indigenous People
ISFR	Indian State of Forest Report
MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
PESA	Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (1996)
PIB	Press Information Bureau
PPVFRA	Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (2001)
SC	Scheduled Castes
ST	Scheduled Tribes
UAPA	Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (1967)
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

1. Introduction

Climate disinformation is aiding the subversion of Indigenous Peoples' (IPs) rights in India. Although there are several pieces of legislation that provide protection and safeguard the rights of IPs and Indigenous communities, these rights are being systematically eroded. This report examines the different types of climate disinformation and its various impacts on IPs that entrench this erosion of rights. It also outlines strategic measures essential for identifying solutions to counter climate disinformation and protect the rights of IPs. This chapter begins by providing context on the situation of IP, the threats posed by climate change and deforestation, the digitalisation of the media and the rise of disinformation in India.

1.1. Methodology

The research for this report consisted of three phases: desk research, field research and review. First, desk research was conducted between August and September 2025 to examine the state of IPs, climate change, media landscape and climate disinformation in India. The research was instrumental in defining terms and themes, framing the study's scope and identifying knowledge gaps. It drew on a range of primary and secondary sources in English and Hindi, including international and national legal frameworks, national development and climate strategies and reports by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and media outlets.

Second, during the field research phase, the Asia Centre team conducted 12 online key informant interviews (KIIs) between August and September 2025 to address knowledge gaps identified in the first phase. All respondents[1] were English and Hindi speakers and included representatives from Indigenous communities and Indigenous CSOs as well as professionals from the media and academic sectors (see Annexe I for respondent profiles).

Third, following desk research and interviews, a first draft was sent by the Asia Centre team to International Media Support (IMS) for an initial review on 25 September 2025 and received feedback on 6 October 2025. The report was also sent to two academics for an independent external review which was received on 18 and 24 October 2025. Thereafter, Asia Centre revised and sent the report for a second IMS review on 1 November 2025, and feedback was received on 17 November 2025. A national convening was held on 10 December 2025 in Kolkata, India, to validate the preliminary findings of the report. All feedback received was then incorporated prior to publication of this report.

Key Terms

"False information" can be understood through three interrelated concepts: **Disinformation, Misinformation**, and **Malinformation**. The key difference between them lies in the **intent** to deceive.

Disinformation refers to false information that is intentionally created and spread to mislead or manipulate audiences **(**United Nations Development Programme, 2022**)**.

Malinformation, while based on real information, is shared with harmful intent, often by distorting context, exposing private data, or weaponising facts to undermine individuals or groups (Ibid.)

Misinformation, in contrast, involves the sharing of false or misleading content without the intent to deceive; those sharing it may genuinely believe the information to be true (Ibid.).

[1] The identities of the respondents have been anonymised due to safety and security reasons.

Climate disinformation is false content deliberately spread to mislead people about climate change and deforestation for political, financial or ideological gain by those with vested interests in denying its reality or impacts (United Nations Development Programme, 2025).

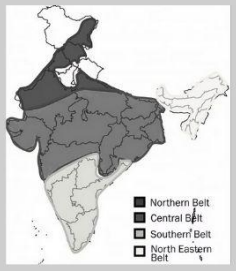
1.2. Background

The section examines two dimensions fundamental to comprehending the impacts of climate disinformation on IP in India. First, it provides an overview of IP communities in the country, detailing their demographic distribution, geographical locations, population concentrations, customary livelihood practices and ongoing conflicts over ancestral land rights. Second, it analyses the results of climate change and deforestation in destabilising and threatening these communities' traditional ways of life, given their residence in India's most densely forested and ecologically vulnerable regions.

1.2.1. Indigenous Peoples in India

As of July 2024, India's population is estimated to be 1.44 billion (Central Intelligence Agency, 2025), with IP constituting an estimated 8.6% (104 million) of the total (Census of India, 2011).[2] The Indian government recognises 730 ethnic groups as Scheduled Tribes (STs) (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024). They are commonly referred to as *Adivasis* ("original inhabitants" in Sanskrit) (EBSCO Information Services, 2025). These communities live across 11.3% of India's total land area of 3,287,263 sq. km (Dhristi IAS, 2023; National Portal of India, 2022) in 16 out of 28 states of India. The country's most tribal-populated area is the forested Central Tribal Belt, which includes the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh; and the Northeastern states of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2025).

Figure 1: India's Tribal Belts



(Synopsis IAS, n.d.)

India's STs are distributed across four distinct belts, each defined by unique geographies, livelihoods and cultural practices. The Central Tribal Belt spans nine states: Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. The Belt hosts 55% (57.37 million) of India's ST population, including the Gond, Bhil, and Santal tribes (LotusArise, 2021). These forest-dependent communities practice *podu* (shifting cultivation) and revere sacred groves and rivers in their animist traditions.

The Northeastern Tribal Belt covers eight states: Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Sikkim. It accounts for 12% (12.52 million) of STs, such as the Khasi

[2] This report references population data from the Central Intelligence Agency (United States of America) (2025) as it provides the most recent estimates, given that India's latest official census was conducted in 2011 (Census of India, 2011).

and Naga. Highland terrains here sustain *jhum* (shifting agriculture) and spiritual cosmologies tied to mountain deities and ancestral land stewardship (Ibid.).

The Coastal-Island Belt includes the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and coastal Odisha, home to 0.2% (0.21 million) of STs, like the Jarawa and Dongria Kondh. These groups rely on fishing and coconut cultivation, with spiritual practices rooted in coral reefs and monsoon cycles. The Western Himalayan Belt comprises Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, where 2.9% (3 million) STs, including the Bhotia and Gujjar, practice transhumance pastoralism and blend Buddhist-Animist rituals to navigate high-altitude challenges (LotusArise, 2021).

India has ratified major international treaties for upholding IP rights, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) (ratified in 1979) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) (ratified in 1979). India also signed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), but had a reservation that the term "Indigenous" applies to all citizens (2007).

However, it failed to ratify ILO Convention 169, which concerns IPs' rights (1991). Additionally, there have been ongoing concerns about the country's adherence to its international obligations. These include systemic failures to uphold legal protections for IP land and resource rights, leading to widespread displacement of IP communities from mining, infrastructure and industrial projects that have consistently been put forward as recommendations during India's Universal Periodic Review (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008; 2012; 2017; 2022). Reports of United Nations (UN) mechanisms have also regularly highlighted issues of forced evictions, lack of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and human rights violations in connection to extractive industries (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2017; International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2023).

At the national level, India's national framework for protecting IPs' rights is defined by a combination of constitutional provisions and specific legislation, though these are frequently undermined by conflicting laws. The Indian Constitution (1950) serves as the foundational document, recognising STs under Article 342 and providing limited autonomy in tribal regions through the Fifth and Sixth Schedules (Article 244). The Fifth Schedule applies to tribal areas across most states, whilst the Sixth Schedule grants autonomous councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram legislative, executive and judicial authority over land and resources.

To ensure their political voice, the Constitution mandates representation through reserved seats. Articles (330) and (332) reserve seats for STs in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of Parliament) and in state legislative assemblies, respectively, guaranteeing their participation in the law-making bodies.

Further protections are established through laws such as the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act (1996) (PESA) and the Forest Rights Act (2006) (FRA), which enshrine rights to self-management of forests and the requirement for community consent in land-based projects. Additionally, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (1989) offers legal safeguards against discrimination and violence, though its underutilisation has often left communities exposed to rights abuses during land acquisition.

However, many ethnic groups that would qualify as "Indigenous" are not officially recognised as STs, thereby failing to receive the necessary protections and benefits (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2023). Conflict between communities seeking the ST status and existing recognised tribes is a recurring issue in India, often stemming from fears over the dilution of economic benefits (IAS Gyan, 2025).

Furthermore, in practice, these protective measures are routinely superseded by older legislation that prioritises industrial and developmental interests. Laws such as the Coal Bearing Areas Act (1957) and the Land Acquisition Act (2013) enable the forced eviction of tribal populations to facilitate mining, infrastructure and other large-scale projects. This legislative conflict systematically weakens constitutional guarantees, creating an environment where the rights of IP communities are frequently compromised in favour of economic objectives, a reality starkly reflected in land conflict data.

Among documented disputes, 43% involve forest lands that are critical to constitutional protections. These protections are increasingly ineffective against national development priorities that impact IPs' livelihoods. Separately, 74% of disputes occur on common lands. On these lands, Indigenous communities' customary rights remain systematically unrecognised (Rights and Resources Initiative, 2016). The state leverages its authority to prioritise these development initiatives, systematically treating ancestral IP territories as expendable for broader economic goals. This pattern accelerates displacement and social conflict. Consequently, STs face severe and disproportionate impacts: in Schedule V districts, conflict rates are 1.5 times higher than the national average, and forest-dependent groups account for 30% of all affected populations (Ibid.)

Additionally, legislation such as the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) (2010) have been weaponised to stifle civil society advocacy of IP issues. The law employs imprecise and broad language, which has left it open to abusive and arbitrary application by the Indian authorities (The Wire, 2020) to stifle dissent. Since 2014, over 19,000 NGOs have lost their licences (Ibid.). Illustrative of this trend is the case of Greenpeace India, which had its FCRA license revoked in September 2015 following its documentation of environmental violations and the forced displacement of Indigenous communities due to industrial projects. The Centre for Policy Research had its FCRA registration suspended in February 2023 following allegations concerning its research on tribal rights in coal-rich regions (The Wire, 2023). The FCRA's 2020 amendment bars NGOs from redistributing funds to grassroots organisations, severely restricting community-led advocacy. Despite a 2020 Supreme Court ruling upholding NGOs' right to lawful dissent, the government continues leveraging the FCRA to silence critics of development projects affecting IP communities (The Wire, 2020).

In short, while India has established domestic legal frameworks that grant rights to IPs and adheres to certain international protections, systemic failures in implementation and conflicting legal frameworks persistently undermine these safeguards. The failure to protect IPs has been more concerning with climate change, as IPs are some of the most vulnerable communities due to their livelihoods being tied to nature. This is explored next.

1.2.2. Climate Change and Deforestation in India

India has experienced measurable climatic shifts over the past century, with the annual mean temperature increasing by 0.62°C per 100 years from 1901 to 2020. The maximum temperature rise, at 0.99°C per 100 years, has been significantly faster than the minimum temperature rise, which increased by only 0.24°C per 100 years (World Bank, 2021). The Northwest region has experienced a significant increase in minimum temperatures, rising at a rate of 0.27°C per decade over the past four decades.

In contrast, the rate of rise in maximum temperature is higher than the minimum temperature in regions like the East Coast, Interior Peninsula and Western Himalaya. Specifically, the Western Himalaya shows a positive temperature trend during the post-monsoon season, with values ranging from 0.2 to 0.5°C per decade. These observations highlight the regional variability in temperature trends across

different parts of India (Kumar et al., 2023). Under the high-emission RCP8.5 scenario,[3] mean warming could reach ~4.5°C by the 2090s, intensifying heat extremes in the Indo-Gangetic Plains and coastal zones (World Bank, 2021).

Table 1: Climatic Shifts and Temperature Trends in India (1901-2020)

Parameter	Details
Annual Mean Temperature Increase	0.62°C per 100 years
Maximum Temperature Rise	0.99°C per 100 years
Minimum Temperature Rise	0.24°C per 100 years
Northwest Region Minimum Temperature	Increased by 0.27°C per decade over the past four decades
Western Himalaya Post-Monsoon Trend	Positive temperature trend of 0.2 to 0.5°C per decade
Projected Mean Warming (RCP8.5)	~4.5°C by the 2090s, intensifying heat extremes in the Indo-Gangetic Plains and coastal zones

Source: World Bank, 2021; Kumar et al., 2023

These temperature trends can be associated with destabilised monsoon patterns. Summer precipitation has weakened in Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh since the 1980s, while Central India saw a 75% increase in daily extreme rainfall events (>150 mm/day) from 1950–2015 (World Bank, 2021). Semi-arid regions now face a 3% annual drought risk, a threat previously confined to the Indo-Gangetic Plain.

Concurrently, heatwaves have become five times more frequent and 30% longer since the 1950s, with frequency projected to quadruple by 2025 under current emissions (Prabhu et al., 2025). This projection appears to be materialising, as the State of India's Environment in Figures 2025 confirms 2024 was India's warmest year on record, with extreme weather events occurring on 88% of days, marking a sharp rise in both frequency and impact since 2022 (Down To Earth, 2025).

The report further notes that natural disasters induced by extreme weather emerged as the primary driver of internal displacement. With 5.4 million such displacements recorded, this was the highest climate-linked migration since 2013 (Ibid.). 2025 trends and 2024 data strongly indicate an acceleration consistent with or exceeding earlier projections.

Deforestation

Deforestation further compounds the climate concerns. India lost 2.33 million hectares of forest between 2001 and 2023, including 414,000 hectares of primary forests (Global Forest Watch, 2024). The Constitutional Conduct Group has labelled India the world's second-largest deforester, citing a 1,488 km^2 (148,800 hectares) decline in unclassified natural forests between 2021 and 2023 (Longley, 2024; Nitnaware, 2024).

Table 2: Tree Cover Loss in India Between 2002 and 2024[4]

[3] The RCP8.5 scenario refers to a high-emission pathway used in climate modeling to project future climate conditions. It assumes a significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions throughout the 21st century, leading to a substantial rise in global temperatures.

[4] Data for all three indices is available from 2002, the earliest common year, to 2024, the most recent year.

Year	Primary Forest Extent Remaining	Tree Cover Loss (% of total tree cover)	Tree Cover Loss Due to Deforestation (Kha)
2002	99.9%	0.15%	8.6
2005	99.7%	0.17%	11.1
2010	98.9%	0.15%	9.3
2015	97.5%	0.34%	17.5
2020	95.6%	0.40%	17.0
2024	94.6%	0.42%	17.7

Source: Global Forest Watch, 2024

However, these figures conflict with independent analyses. Satellite data from Global Forest Watch reveals a more nuanced picture: India retained 44.4 million hectares (444,000 km^2) of natural forest in 2020, declining marginally to 442,500 km^2 by 2024, a loss of 150,000 hectares (0.34% of total forest cover) over four years, representing 13.5% of India's land area (Global Forest Watch, 2024). As shown in Table 2, by 2024, the annual tree cover loss in India reached 150,000 hectares, accounting for 0.46% of the total tree cover. This loss resulted in the release of approximately 73.6 million metric tons of CO_2 in 2024 alone.

The primary forest cover declined from 99.9% in 2002 to 94.0% in 2024. Post-2020 losses were significantly influenced by infrastructure expansion: The Great Nicobar Island development project, approved by India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in late 2022, represents a large-scale infrastructure initiative aimed at enhancing strategic and economic capacity in the Bay of Bengal. Similarly, the Char Dham Highway project, initiated in 2016 and aggressively advanced post-2020, seeks to improve road connectivity to Himalayan pilgrimage sites in Uttarakhand (Land Conflict Watch, 2024).

Both projects have been pushed forward by central government agencies, NITI Aayog in the case of Great Nicobar and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for Char Dham. Despite facing significant legal and procedural challenges, environmental and social safeguards were circumvented in both instances: the Char Dham project was segmented to avoid mandatory environmental impact assessments, while in Great Nicobar, tribal reserve forests were de-notified to enable construction (Mukherjee, 2024).

These projects have had severe consequences for IP communities and ecologically sensitive regions. The Char Dham highway works have triggered landslides, damaged homes and disrupted the livelihoods of pastoralists and farmers, with inadequate compensation and consultation (Land Conflict Watch, 2024). On Great Nicobar, the Shompen and Nicobarese tribes face existential threats from deforestation, loss of ancestral territory and potential exposure to outside diseases, endangering their physical and cultural survival (Mukherjee, 2024). Additionally, both projects involve large-scale forest clearance of around 900,000 trees in Great Nicobar (Ibid.) and over 55,000 in Uttarakhand (Land Conflict Watch, 2024), posing irreversible risks to biodiversity and ecosystem stability in regions of high conservation value.

India's Compliance with Environmental Mechanisms

In response to climate change impacts, India has signed international climate agreements and adopted multiple laws and policies at the national level. At the international level, India signed and ratified international agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

(1992) (ratified in 1993), Kyoto Protocol (1998) (ratified in 2002) and Paris Agreement (2016), pledging to reduce emission intensity by 33–35% (below 2005 levels) by 2030 and expand forest carbon sinks. However, its Nationally Determined Contributions lack transparency in methodology and adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress. Furthermore, India's simultaneous expansion of coal mining infrastructure contradicts its international climate commitments, revealing policy incoherence between developmental and environmental objectives (Prabhu et al., 2025; Kuttappan, 2024).

The National Action Plan on Climate Change outlines objectives for renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. However, policies rely on administrative measures under the Environment Protection Act (1986) and Forest Conservation Act (1980), which lack mechanisms for tribal participation. FRA was enacted to recognise forest rights and redress historical injustices from colonial-era policies. It has, however, only approved 50.37% of claims nationally as of 2023, with implementation challenges including bureaucratic delays, stringent requirements such as 75-year residency proof for Other Traditional Forest Dwellers[5] and barriers like lack of awareness and geographical remoteness (Jahan, 2023). Contradictions also persist between policy commitments and implementation. India's National Forest Policy (1988) emphasises conservation and participatory forest management, mandating tribal inclusion in decision-making. However, the Draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification (2020) contradicts this by exempting large infrastructure and mining projects from mandatory tribal consultations, undermining their rights to FPIC under FRA. For instance, the Dongria Kondh tribe's 2013 legal victory, which halted bauxite mining in Odisha's Niyamgiri Hills through community consent, is threatened by the 2020 draft, which prioritises expedited project clearances over tribal rights. This policy clash perpetuates colonial-era marginalisation, where conservation rhetoric masks exclusionary practices. Such contradictions reveal systemic gaps in aligning India's environmental governance with its social justice commitments (Jolly & Singh, 2021; Ghosh, 2023)

EIA Notification (2020) exempts large projects from tribal consultations (Jolly & Singh, 2021). These contradictions between conservation commitments and industrial expansion are mirrored in India's energy sector, where coal extraction priorities clash with climate goals while deepening ecological and social inequities. India's coal expansion plans starkly contradict its climate commitments. The government plans to boost coal production to 1.5 billion tonnes annually by 2030. It has auctioned 91 new mines with 221 million tonnes/year capacity (Dialogue Earth, 2024). This conflicts with its Paris agreement pledge to cut emissions intensity by 45% by 2030 and reach net-zero by 2070. The steel sector emits 2.55 tonnes of CO_2 per tonne of steel, higher than the global average of 1.85 tonnes. Green hydrogen adoption is delayed until 2050. Meanwhile, banks like the State Bank of India fund coal projects under political pressure (Ibid.).

All in all, India's climate and ecological challenges reflect interconnected risks: rising temperatures, erratic monsoons, deforestation and policy gaps. Data indicate accelerating forest loss and institutional barriers to integrating traditional knowledge. While international commitments and national frameworks exist, their alignment with ground-level priorities remains inconsistent, perpetuating vulnerabilities for ecosystems and marginalised communities.

1.3. India's Digitalisation and the Rise of Disinformation

This section examines the emergence of climate disinformation in India, focusing on two drivers. First, rapid digitalisation, which reshaped media ecosystems. Second, the amplification of disinformation due

[5] The term "Other Traditional Forest Dwellers" refers to non-tribal communities who have historically lived in and depended on forests for their livelihoods but are not classified as Scheduled Tribes (STs). These communities include caste groups, pastoralists, or other marginalised populations who have inhabited forest areas for generations, often practicing agriculture, grazing, or other forest-based livelihoods.

to linguistic divides, politically-driven campaigns and corporate agendas. These factors collectively distort climate science, delay action and subvert the rights of marginalised communities, especially IPs.

1.3.1. Digitalisation of Media in India

India's media landscape has undergone a seismic shift from traditional analogue frameworks to digitised, multilingual networks since the accelerated internet adoption in 2015 (Digital India, 2015).

Languages in Media Landscape

Hindi, spoken by 57% of the population as a second or third language (44% as a first language),[6] dominates traditional and digital media, reflecting broader debates about linguistic hierarchy and inclusivity in public discourse (Das, 2025).

Major Indian Digital Media Outlets and Their Primary Publishing Languages

The Hindu	Published in English
The Times of India	Published in English (Main edition), with content also available in Hindi (Navbharat Times)
The Indian Express	Published in both English and Hindi
Hindustan Times	Published in both English and Hindi
Dainik Bhaskar	Published in Hindi
Amar Ujala	Published in Hindi
The Wire	Published in English with limited content also available in Hindi (via wire Hindi)
Scroll.in	Published in English

Major regional media in languages such as Bengali (8.03%), Tamil (5.84%), Malayalam (2.88%), and Telugu (6.99%) constitute another critical media segment as they represent the primary language for over a quarter of India's population. The digital revolution has significantly empowered these languages. For instance, watch time for Bengali content on YouTube grew by over 100% year-on-year, and channels in languages like Tamil and Malayalam collectively account for a dominant share of India's video consumption, showcasing a clear preference for culturally resonant narratives that match their demographic weight (Law, 2021). On the other hand, Indigenous-language media operates within a far more constrained space, in languages with low use percentage: Bhili/Bhilodi (0.9%), Santali (0.7%), Gondi (0.3%), Kurukh (0.2%) and Mundari (0.1%) (Dutta, 2016).

Legacy media outlets adapted by digitising their operations. For example, Times of India expanded its digital footprint with Hindi editions like Navbharat Times, which accounted for 22% of its digital traffic by 2025, while Dainik Bhaskar leveraged its 18 million-strong print readership to dominate regional digital news, reaching 45 million monthly active users in Hindi-speaking states (Exchange4Media, 2025). Nevertheless, print, radio and television still dominate information dissemination. For instance, television coverage reached an estimated 355 million individuals in 2025 (EY & All India Digital Cable

[6] Hindi statistics (44% first language, 57% total) derive from India's 2011 Census. The 2021 census remains delayed due to COVID-19 disruptions and political disputes over methodology, with fieldwork now rescheduled for completion by March 2027 (The Hindu, 2025).

Federation, 2025). All India Radio (Akashvani), with its 470 broadcasting centres, covers 92% of India's land area and 99.19% of the population, serving as a public broadcaster particularly in remote regions (Prasar Bharati, n.d.).

The Digital India initiative, launched in 2015, marked a turning point in connectivity. As illustrated in Table 4, internet penetration surged from 1% in 2000 to 57.6% by 2025, driven by affordable smartphones and data.

Table 3: Internet Penetration Index in India, 2000-2025

2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025[7]
1%	2%	8%	15%	43%	55.3%

Source: World Bank, 2023; Kemp, 2025

Table 4: Social Media Penetration in India from 2011 to 2025[8]

Year	Social Media	Facebook	Instagram	TikTok	X	Linkedin
2011	3%	2.2%	N/A	–	N/A	N/A
2017	18%	14%	4%	N/A	0.7%	1.5%
2022	32%	22%	16%	N/A	2.1%	7%
2025	38%	25%	20%	N/A	2.8%	9%

Source: Kemp 2011; 2017; 2022; 2025

By the start of 2025, India had 806 million internet users, accounting for 55.3% of the total population (Kemp, 2025). Social media adoption continued to grow significantly, with 491 million active users representing 33.7% of the population. Among these platforms, WhatsApp proved particularly dominant, with a remarkable 97.8% penetration rate among users aged 16 to 64, cementing its role as a critical channel for information dissemination (Ibid.). This influence is reflected in news consumption patterns, as 61% of social media users in India rely on these platforms for news access. YouTube leads as the primary news source (81%), followed closely by WhatsApp (67%), Facebook (57%), and Instagram (48%) (Reuters Institute, 2024; Times of India, 2024).

Public trust in news, however, remains fragmented amongst India's online, English-speaking news users, with a mere 36% expressing trust in news overall. Whilst legacy institutions such as DD News and The Hindu retain a degree of credibility, the market is overwhelmingly dominated by platforms, where users exhibit a complex and somewhat paradoxical relationship with trust; notably, trust in news encountered via search engines (45%) is higher than the average, while trust in news on social media (34%) is lower (Reuters Institute, 2024).
Since the mainstream media lacks the reliability to reflect IPs' realities, Indigenous-language media in major *Adivasi* languages play a vital role in amplifying marginalised voices. In regions such as India's Central Tribal Belt, these platforms are instrumental in legitimising Indigenous discourses, raising awareness of local issues, and challenging hegemonic narratives. For instance, during the COVID-19

[7] Data for 2025 is sourced from Kemp, which uses a different methodology and scope compared to World Bank data. Due to variations in data collection, definitions, and calculations, figures from these sources are not directly comparable.
[8] Social Media Penetration started to be available from 2011 in India.

lockdown, the citizen journalism platform CGNet Swara enabled *Adivasi* reporters to highlight the plight of stranded migrant workers, leading to direct government intervention (Khan & Manzoor, 2024). Similarly, in conflict zones like Chhattisgarh, such initiatives provide a critical counter-narrative to mainstream coverage by documenting issues like land rights and state violence (Ibid.)

Nevertheless, the reach of these languages is hampered by severe structural constraints, and their official percentage of speakers often belies their cultural significance and the targeted vulnerability of their communities (Dutta, 2016). This linguistic marginalisation has been amplified under the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which strategically prioritises Hindi in official communications to consolidate pan-Indian appeal, further sidelining both major regional and tribal languages (Kiran V, 2020). The disparity is further exacerbated by a significant linguistic digital divide, where over 80% of online content is in Hindi or English, while regional and Indigenous language media remain severely underrepresented, creating substantial barriers to digital inclusion for non-Hindi/English speaking populations (Sindakis & Showkat, 2024). The barriers are most pronounced for India's *Adivasi* communities, who face compounded exclusion. Research indicates that only 12% of IP households own a smartphone, digital literacy rates are below 15%, and 58% of IP villages lack reliable broadband access (Natuvilakkandy & Kumar K, 2018). Despite ongoing efforts to impart media and information literacy via online platforms, the focus continues to rest on skill acquisition rather than fostering critical thinking (Kumar, 2019).

Furthermore, this points to a starkly uneven digital revolution in which the persistent and multi-faceted digital divide continues to impede equitable access, particularly in rural and IP communities. The core of the issue is infrastructural; internet penetration in rural areas significantly lags behind urban centres, with only 20% of the rural population having access compared to over 50% in urban areas, primarily due to a reliance on often-unreliable mobile connectivity and a lack of fixed-line broadband infrastructure (Ibid.). While government initiatives like BharatNet aim to bridge this gap by providing broadband connectivity to rural gram panchayats, the 'last-mile' challenges of deployment, maintenance, and user adoption remain deeply entrenched, limiting their effective reach and impact (Ibid.).

This ecosystem of low trust and high concern creates a vulnerable environment for disinformation to thrive. The high, yet uneven, trust in familiar linguistic channels, whether national Hindi media, strong regional outlets, or hyper-local IP platforms, means disinformation tailored to these audiences can spread rapidly within insulated communities. The lack of monitoring and fact-checking in non-English/Hindi languages leaves vast segments of the population disproportionately vulnerable to manipulated narratives.

1.3.2. The Rise of Disinformation in India

India has witnessed an alarming surge in online disinformation, with 1,087 recorded cases of fake news and rumours in 2023, a 26.7% increase from the 858 cases reported in 2022 (News Laundry, 2025). This phenomenon is deeply intertwined with the country's political and social fabric, often spiking during major national events. Precedents were set during the COVID-19 pandemic, where surges in cases in states like Telangana (273 cases) reflected the weaponisation of digital tools during a national emergency (Indian Express, 2021). More recently, during the 2024 general election, platforms like YouTube were found to algorithmically amplify ads promoting baseless claims of voter fraud, bypassing their own content policies (NDTV, 2024; AccessNow, 2024).

This digital ecosystem is further characterised by widespread public anxiety, as 57% of respondents are frequently worried about distinguishing real news from fake, with specific concern over hyperpartisan content (51%) and false news (50%). Moreover, this environment of low trust and high concern is exacerbated by a palpable fear of repercussions, with 55% of users worrying that expressing political

views online could get them into trouble with the authorities, a concern that influences how they share and comment on news via dominant platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook (Reuters Institute, 2019). These challenges are compounded by systemic linguistic barriers such as critically under-resourced regional-language fact-checking (Singhal et al., 2022).

In response, the Indian government has adopted a range of legal measures and launched several official initiatives to combat disinformation. For instance, legislation like the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (2023) moves beyond previous public mischief provisions to combat the spread of disinformation, with Section 353 explicitly criminalising the deliberate creation and distribution of false information that threatens the State, incites enmity or causes public alarm. While aiming for simplification and efficiency, its success depends on effective implementation (MyGov, 2024).

State-led efforts to curb disinformation were also exemplified by the former establishment of fact-checking units within government departments and the promotion of a dedicated fact-checking portal run by the Press Information Bureau (PIB). For instance, the PIB Fact Check Unit (FCU) was initially promoted as a tool to proactively debunk viral misinformation; according to official reports, it has identified over 1,500 cases of fake news since its establishment in 2019 and handles public queries via a dedicated WhatsApp hotline (News On Air, 2025).

The FCU's function aligned with legal frameworks such as the IT (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules (2021), specifically Rule 3(1)(b)(v), which requires platforms to remove fake news, particularly government-related information flagged by central fact-check units (MEITy, 2023). However, this mechanism was characterised by the use of broad provisions, leading to accusations of overreach and selective enforcement (Panjiar & Waghre, 2023). The 2022 amendments to the IT Rules significantly increased platform compliance obligations, raising concerns about censorship and reduced user privacy (Ibid.).

Additionally, a significant institutional shift occurred with the 2023 amendment to the IT Rules (2021), which empowered the FCU to unilaterally label and mandate the removal of content about government actions which it deemed as "fake", bypassing judicial oversight under Section 69A (Ibid.). These changes introduce a new layer of government censorship by empowering official committees to decide on content removal (Panjiar & Waghre, 2022).

The FCU's period of operation had a notable impact. The transformation of the fact-checking mandate into a binding tool for state censorship resulted in a selective application. This enabled the state to target documentation of sensitive issues, such as IPs' displacement due to deforestation, while largely ignoring other forms of disinformation (IFF, 2023; The Wire, 2024). A senior journalist (KII10) stated,

> *"Handling the power to control disinformation is a very tricky business … it is a very slippery slope … it has to come from the civil society side and not from the government because the government's interest is to suppress information … they cannot be the judge, the jury and the executioners" (KII10).*

However, the FCU is currently non-operational following the *Kunal Kamra vs. Union of India* ruling that found it unconstitutional and violating freedom of speech. Hence, setting temporary boundaries on executive power in regulating the online sphere (Srivasta, 2025). However, the protective effect of this ruling could potentially be overturned by the 2025 IT (Amendment) Rules (MeitY, 2025). The amendment attempts to address harms from Artificial Intelligence (AI) by imposing intermediary due diligence and

safe harbour-linked obligations, thereby treating all AI-generated content as suspect (Gupta & Kumar, 2025). Consequently, rather than regulating high-risk AI uses across the entire value chain, the amendment introduces a disproportionate, censorial notice-and-takedown system (Ibid.).

Restrictions on the media sector imposed by these legal measures do not limit politically induced information manipulation. The ruling BJP's IT Cell has been widely documented for its coordinated disinformation campaigns, which prioritise Hindi in 72% of its social media output to consolidate pan-Indian appeal, often at the expense of linguistic diversity. This apparatus is further instrumentalised through sophisticated networks of cybertroopers, automated bots and fake accounts to systematically amplify state-aligned narratives and suppress criticism (Kiran V, 2020). Such repression from both state and party-aligned actors contributes to India's low rank of 151st out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2025).

As an alternative to government-based efforts, independent fact-checking organisations like Alt News and BOOM Live have emerged. Their work has been critical during national events, employing sophisticated open-source intelligence methodologies to debunk AI-generated deepfakes of political leaders and correct historical revisionism (Alt News, n.d.). However, the impact of these efforts is limited. They operate under the constant threat of legal retaliation, as starkly demonstrated by the sedition charges brought against Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair in 2022 for his work exposing a BJP spokesperson's remarks (The Guardian, 2025). This hostile environment, combined with a regulatory framework that seeks to suppress critical information, leaves fact-checkers ill-equipped to counter the rapid dissemination of disinformation from powerful pro-regime sources (AccessNow, 2024; Kiran V, 2020).

In this context, climate disinformation in India must be understood as a digital accelerant in the subversion of IPs' rights. Policies such as the continued reliance of coal (Montrone et al., 2021) remain the primary drivers behind land conflicts and resource extraction which threaten IP communities (Land Conflict Watch, 2024). The increasingly digitised public sphere has facilitated the weaponisation of disinformation to advance these agendas. Political actors and partisan outlets systematically exploit digital platforms to propagate false information, characterising dissent as "anti-national" and drowning out opposition (Das & K.B., 2025). This strategy manufactures consent for contentious projects by framing them as essential for national development, a process exacerbated by India's fragmented information landscape and weaponised digital spaces (Farhat, 2022).

In this context, climate disinformation mirrors political and economic tactics, with the media significantly enabling government- or corporate-spun narratives that work in conjunction with other sources of climate disinformation. This legal and rhetorical tactic reinforces official messaging and suppresses critical perspectives both online and offline.

Additionally, other forms of climate disinformation prevalent in Indian society pose particular challenges for IPs, who predominantly reside in the country's most forested and ecologically sensitive regions. In this regard, online disinformation does not merely circulate in isolation but amplifies and reinforces long-standing offline narratives and policy-driven distortions that the IP already face.

Chapter 1 has shed light on the systematic subversion of Indigenous identities and rights, which intensifies their vulnerabilities in the face of climate change and corporate-led resource extraction in India. Additionally, the chapter has examined how the digitalisation of media and the proliferation of organised disinformation campaigns have exacerbated the spread of climate disinformation, making them a critical threat to public and ecological integrity. Chapter 2 will define and categorise key forms of climate disinformation, establishing a foundational framework for the impact analysis on Indigenous communities that will be presented in Chapter 3.

2. Forms of Climate Disinformation

This chapter identifies four key forms of such disinformation: one-sided environmental data, promotion of false climate solutions, attribution of local environmental disasters to global climate change and denial of climate change and its causes. The first three fall under climate delayism,[9] while the fourth is a form of climate denialism.[10] These forms of climate disinformation spread through multiple media channels, originating from institutional and corporate sources.

All three forms of information disorder – mis- dis- and malinformation – are relevant to the Indian context. Disinformation and malinformation are actively used to shape narratives and overwhelm the information environment surrounding climate change with distortions and selective truths. Misinformation, on the other hand, is benign in its intention to deceive and its impact on climate narratives is negligible compared to the dissemination of disinformation and malinformation. In this context, the report, in Chapter 2, focuses on disinformation and malinformation – both of which are deliberately crafted to mislead or harm their intended audience. Their defining feature lies in their deceptive intent, which not only distorts facts but also undermines public trust, disrupts informed decision-making and can incite social or political harm.

2.1. One-sided Media Coverage

The first form of climate disinformation is the systematic, one-sided coverage of positive environmental statistics while suppressing negative environmental data. As a core tactic of climate delayism, this approach deceives the public by manufacturing a false narrative of progress, thereby legitimising inaction and obscuring the impact of extractive industries and unsustainable development models on the environment. As outlined in Chapter 1, these tactics qualify as both disinformation, for manipulating statistics to obscure ecological realities, and malinformation, for using ostensibly factual but one-sided data to construct a biased and incomplete picture that circumvents accountability. The suppression of information in government narratives is critically enabled by the media in two ways. Firstly, they exclude critical metrics that reveal the biodiversity loss and carbon sink degradation tied to land-use changes. Secondly, they selectively use factual metrics such as low per capita emissions and renewable energy milestones to distort systemic accountability for coal dependency.

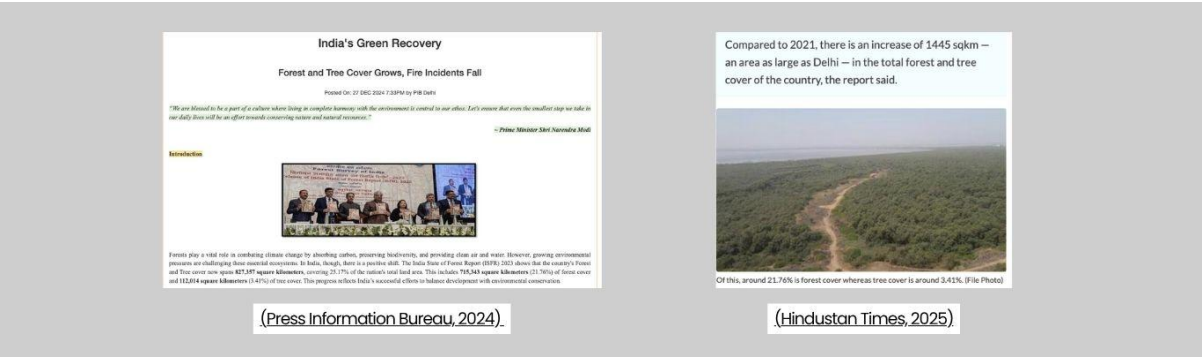
Firstly, distorted forest-related data is sourced from state institutions, particularly the Forest Survey of India (FSI). Operating under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the FSI is a key source of forest-related data and disseminates its findings through the India State of Forest Report (ISFR), the government's flagship biennial report used for national planning (FSI, 2021; FSI, 2023). The FSI's methodology has been heavily criticised for obscuring accelerating primary forest loss by overreporting plantation-driven "forest cover" gains. For instance, the ISFR reported an increase of 1,540 km^2 of forest cover between 2019 and 2021, a figure disputed by retired civil servants who argued the methodology was erroneous and misleading as it failed to distinguish between natural forests and plantations or urban green areas (The Wire, 2025).

Additionally, the flawed categorisation of monocultural plantations as forest growth has been used to mask unregulated deforestation over the past decade, a period that saw the loss of more than 3,132 km^2 of biodiversity hotspots in the North East (Syllad, 2025). This flawed categorisation masks the loss of 1.49 million hectares of natural forests between 2013 and 2023 and promotes schemes like the Green Credit Programme, which enables industries to replace biodiverse forests with ecologically poor

[9] Climate delayism refers to information that misleads the public and hinders effective climate action (Lamb et al., 2020).
[10] Climate denialism is the rejection of information concerning the existence of climate change and deforestation (Sethi, 2024).

monocultures (Mongabay, 2025). As will be discussed in Chapter 3.3, this statistical manipulation systematically undermines sustainable land practices, as ancestral territories are repurposed for commercial schemes that are misleadingly categorised as environmental progress (Mongabay, 2023).

This methodological opacity is referred to and amplified through government-aligned media and official channels, which frame India's forest cover gains with celebratory headlines, emphasising quantitative expansion whilst ignoring ecological degradation. The Press Information Bureau's (2024) release, "Forest and Tree Cover Grows, Fire Incidents Fall" (PIB, 2024), and similar uncritical reports in outlets like Hindustan Times (2025) and Indian Masterminds (2024), highlight initiatives such as the *Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam*[11] campaign that planted 1.4 billion trees. However, they omit expert warnings that 40,709 km^2 of forests have degraded since 2011 and that plantations lack the biodiversity and carbon sequestration efficacy of natural ecosystems (Nandi, 2025; Indian Masterminds, 2024).



(Press Information Bureau, 2024) (Hindustan Times, 2025)

Scientifically, this approach has proven ineffective. A 2025 Frontline analysis reveals that reliance on monoculture plantations under programmes like the Green India Mission has not curbed carbon loss in critical ecosystems like the Western Ghats (Frontline, 2025). This plantation-heavy strategy, which conflates orchards and monocultures with natural forests, risks undermining India's Paris Agreement commitment to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO_2 by 2030 (Government of India, 2022). Internationally, this framing projects India favourably in climate negotiations as a nation actively expanding its carbon sinks, despite evidence to the contrary (Agarwal, 2021).

Secondly, skewed narratives surrounding energy and emissions in national statistics, and later deliberately circulated in the media, parallel with forest data disinformation. India's climate discourse justifiably highlights its minimal historical contribution to cumulative CO_2 emissions (3% since 1850) and its low per capita emissions (1.9 tonnes) to frame itself as a "climate victim" of global emissions (Business Standard, 2024; Our World in Data, 2024). However, this portrayal obscures its coal-dependent energy system that supplied 70% of electricity and 75% of thermal power generation in 2005 (IEA, 2021; Ministry of Coal, 2020). Whilst India reported a 21% reduction in emissions intensity after 2005 and a 60% increase in renewable capacity by 2021, this period also saw a 25% expansion in coal infrastructure, a 35% rise in absolute emissions, and fossil fuel subsidies that eclipsed renewable investments by a factor of eight (Climate Action Tracker, 2024; Ministry of Coal, 2021; Mcfarlane, 2023).

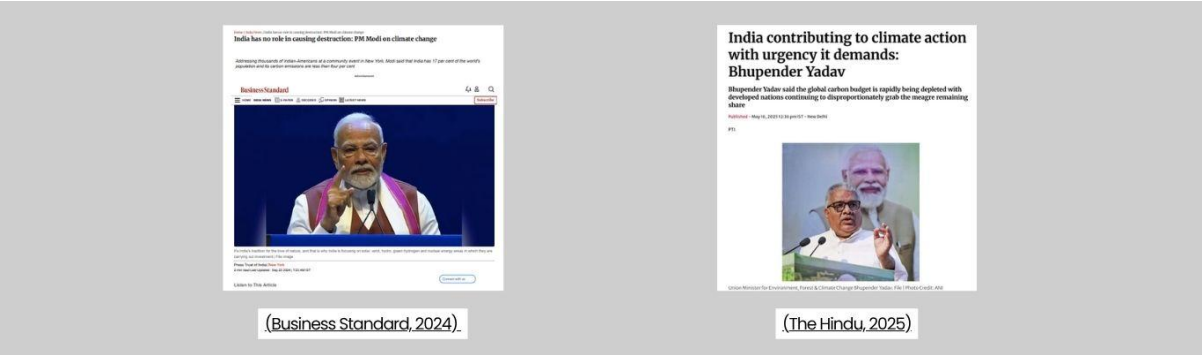
Current narratives perpetuate this duality, celebrating 200 GW of installed renewable capacity and "green jobs" whilst ignoring that 25–35% of bank portfolios remain tied to coal and that public institutions like the State Bank of India invest ₹1.3 trillion ($16 billion) annually in coal projects (Das, 2025; PIB, 2024). At Conference of the Parties28, India promoted its net-zero by 2070 pledge whilst avoiding the global doubling of coal subsidies that year (Reuters, 2023). This treatment of net-zero as a distant political target, rather than an urgent roadmap for a just transition, is precisely what indigenous rights advocates (KII11) critique,

[11] Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam: Hindi phrase meaning "A Tree in the Name of Mother"

> *"Net-zero is more than a distant political target … it is the urgent reality our communities face. This transition cannot be an emergency brake on an economy still running on coal. We must build a bridge from an economy tied to coal to a sustainable future … one that provides dignified livelihoods and leaves no one behind" (KII11).*

Domestically, state-aligned media echoed these one-sided information, asserting that India is the "only G20 country meeting Paris commitments" (Sukhija, 2024) and this framing aligns with the government's broader narrative, exemplified by Prime Minister Modi's emphasising India's lack of need to be accountable for causing destruction to global climate systems, which he supports by highlighting the nation's minimal historical contribution to carbon emissions less than 4% despite accounting for 17% of the world's population. By framing India as a climate victim rather than a perpetrator, this rhetoric leverages a disparity rooted in principles of equity and historical responsibility to deflect criticism of its ongoing reliance on coal and growing absolute emissions (Business Standard, 2024).

These claims are further challenged by the Reserve Bank of India's absence of mandates regarding coal exposure disclosures or phase-out timelines. This lack of oversight enables financial institutions to obscure risks linked to approximately USD 96.5 billion in stranded coal assets while pursuing vague renewable investments presented as "ESG progress"[12] (Das, 2025). The Climate Action Tracker has rated these policies as "highly insufficient", projecting a 70–80% increase in emissions by 2030, which aligns with a pathway of 2.7°C warming (Climate Action Tracker, 2024).



(Business Standard, 2024) (The Hindu, 2025)

Furthermore, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav's assertion emphasises that developed nations have disproportionately depleted the global carbon budget and thus bear the primary historical responsibility for the climate crisis. By framing India and other developing nations as victims of this inequity, he positions their climate actions as voluntary contributions to a problem they did not create, rather than obligatory reparations (The Hindu, 2023). This assertion has received criticism for conflating principles of equity with current inaction. The selective narrative leverages India's "historical emissions" and per capita equity claims to evade accountability for a financial system that continues to heavily subsidise coal at levels surpassing those for renewable energy (Das, 2025).

In short, India's environmental and climate strategy constitutes a systematic form of dis- and malinformation, leveraging selective data and partial truths to construct a deceptive media narrative of progress. By emphasising per capita equity and renewable milestones whilst sidelining coal dependency, ecological degradation and the displacement of IP communities, the government evades accountability for its role as a major emitter. This approach not only undermines domestic ecological

[12] ESG refers to the "Environmental, Social, and Governance" framework.

integrity but also poses a significant threat to global climate objectives, highlighting a critical disconnect between policy rhetoric and ground realities.

2.2. Promoting False Climate Solutions

The second form of climate disinformation is the promotion of false climate solutions, which functions as a strategy of climate delayism. This malinformation involves the media proliferating state-corporate narratives that decontextualise genuine data on afforestation targets and budgetary allocations to create a public illusion of ecological progress while excluding long-term impacts of these false solutions on IPs and the environment. This misrepresentation shifts focus from unsustainable industrial practices and their associated harms, thereby delaying the perceived urgency for genuine, systemic climate action.

In India, false climate solutions are often offered as sustainable options to downplay environmental concerns. In practice, however, they do not help climate resilience but instead harm the environment. These "solutions" often worsen social and ecological inequalities by displacing Indigenous communities, taking control of their shared resources and delaying effective mitigation efforts while claiming to be sustainable. This creates a deceptive illusion of environmental progress, enabling unchecked deforestation and industrial expansion under the guise of climate mitigation (Global Witness, 2022).

Firstly, the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), a policy framework initially propelled by demands from IPs and CSOs for ecological reparations, was institutionalised by the state yet implemented in a manner that subverted its original intent. Rather than upholding principles of restorative justice, CAMPA operates as a government-mandated forest substitution scheme, enabling industries to legitimise deforestation through the funding of often ecologically unsuitable plantations, thereby prioritising commercial interests over the rights and stewardship of forest-dependent communities (CAMPA, 2024). This centrally controlled approach systematically sidelines those most affected, as noted by an Indigenous rights advocate and academic (KII12) she said,

> *"If the central government has every right to do anything they want … we will be left with nothing … they don't look at the people who are living in the periphery who are using river resources, land resources every day for survival" (KII12).*

This framework prioritises corporate interests, as exemplified in 2021 when authorities approved coal mining across 1,898 hectares of biodiverse sal forests in Hasdeo Arand, Chhattisgarh, displacing Indigenous Gond and Oraon communities despite warnings from the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education about irreversible habitat loss (Mongabay, 2021). By 2022, civil society reports exposed CAMPA's systemic violations of Indigenous land rights and FPIC protocols, as plantations in ecologically dissimilar regions failed to replicate native forests' biodiversity (Global Forest Coalition, 2022). By 2024, CAMPA's monoculture teak and eucalyptus plantations in Chhattisgarh depleted groundwater reserves, worsening droughts and highlighting the program's ecological bankruptcy (OnlyIAS, 2024). Afforestation drives also failed urban ecosystems: in Mumbai's Aarey Forest, authorities felled over 2,700 trees for a metro project, promising compensatory plantations. However, 70% of saplings died within a year due to arid soil conditions, leaving local IP communities without restitution for lost livelihoods and saddled with ecological damage (Mundoli & Nagendra, 2024).

Secondly, the privatisation of ecological restoration, through initiatives like the Green Credit Programme, launched in 2023, privatised ecological restoration by enabling corporations like Indian Oil (11,890 hectares) and NTPC (1,853 hectares) to trade credits for eco-projects. As discussed in the previous section, data manipulation and statistical greenwashing systematically obscured deforestation. Between 2001 and 2023, India lost 23,300 sq km of natural forests, but the FSI masked this by reclassifying urban tree medians and orchards as "forests" (Srivastava, 2024). This statistical manipulation created a façade of progress, enabling authorities to greenlight destructive projects like the Mumbai-Delhi Expressway. The Mumbai-Vadodara stretch alone was approved to clear 39,000 trees and 2,100 hectares of land, including critical forests, amid diluted environmental safeguards (Hindustan Times, 2024). The policy's exclusionary practices included fencing "restored" sites to block Indigenous access under "anthropogenic pressure" clauses, dispossessing traditional land stewards (Sirur, 2024).

(Amar Ujala, 2025)

"UP First in the Country in Afforestation Through the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) Funds, Achieved 86% of Target in 2024-25"

(Naik, 2025)

Government-aligned media outlets entrench these false narratives by uncritically amplifying state-centric environmental claims while systematically omitting ecological and social critiques. This uncritical reporting enables the proliferation of such false solutions. As a representative of an Indigenous CSO (KII01) stated,

> *"The media's celebration of numerical targets like trees planted or funds allocated is a classic distraction technique. It reduces a complex ecological and social crisis to a simple, state-sponsored PR victory, effectively erasing the voices of displaced communities and the evidence of ecological failure from the public discourse" (KII01).*

Outlets such as Hindustan Times foregrounded quantitative metrics like budgetary allocations and tree-planting targets, exemplified by headlines proclaiming "Govt plans to replenish green cover, plant 100 million trees in state" (Hindustan Times, 2025). These reports valorised CAMPA-funded projects as conservation milestones, parroting official assertions such as "India's forest, tree cover at 25.17% due to large-scale plantation works" without interrogating the ecological validity of monoculture plantations or addressing Indigenous dispossession (Nandi, 2025). Similarly, Amar Ujala a print media outlet celebrated Uttar Pradesh's "86% afforestation target achievement" under CAMPA, framing compensatory plantations as environmental progress while erasing critiques of groundwater depletion and forest-dependent community displacement (Amar Ujala, 2025). This pattern extended to outlets like Jagran News, which lauded Chhattisgarh's construction of "73 lakh groundwater structures" under CAMPA, uncritically citing budget allocations (₹404 crore) and infrastructure metrics while omitting ecological harm and Indigenous displacement linked to compensatory afforestation (Jagran News, 2022). The Tribune further reinforced this narrative, reporting India's "85% achievement" of

afforestation targets (1.78 lakh ha) between 2019–24 and praising states like Gujarat for "full achievement" of plantation goals, despite survival rates as low as 40–75% in ecologically sensitive regions like Arunachal Pradesh (Press Truth of India, 2025; ETV Bharat, 2025). By equating tree-planting statistics and infrastructure projects with meaningful conservation, such reporting legitimised industrial deforestation under the guise of "eco-restoration" (Global Forest Coalition, 2022), thereby normalising the false equivalence between market-driven afforestation and systemic climate action.

This systematic omission and uncritical reporting constitute a form of malinformation, where selective quantitative metrics such as afforestation targets and budget figures are weaponised to manufacture a false narrative of environmental progress. By foregrounding state-centric claims while erasing ecological and social critiques, these outlets fundamentally erode public trust in both media and governmental institutions. This not only misleads the public but also creates a permissive environment for policymakers to green-light destructive projects under the guise of sustainability. Consequently, such malinformation actively undermines democratic accountability, legitimises ecological harm, and delays the urgent action required to address the climate crisis.

In short, India's delayist narratives and compensatory mechanisms function as false climate solutions. By prioritising industrial expansion, obscuring ecological degradation, and sidelining Indigenous rights, they perpetuate deforestation, entrench inequities, and delay the structural changes necessary for genuine climate action.

2.3. Attributing Environmental Disasters to Global Climate Change

The third form of climate disinformation is the deliberate and systematic attribution of domestic environmental disasters to global climate change and the failure to trace back to human contributions, thereby evading the public accountability of the state and corporations. This constitutes malinformation and a form of climate delayism, as it deflects blame onto global systems to circumvent responsibility for local policy failures, thereby postponing the necessary governance reforms and regulatory actions needed to prevent future crises. This disinformation is demonstrated through a consistent pattern of blame-shifting across four key case studies: the Chamoli rockslide, the Bengaluru floods, the Himachal Pradesh landslides, and the Assam heatwave. In each instance, authorities deliberately exaggerated the role of global climate change to conceal the primary responsibility of local governance failures.

Firstly, in February 2021, a catastrophic rockslide and associated debris flow in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand state, killed over 200 people and destroyed hydropower infrastructure (Nandi, 2021). Prime Minister Narendra Modi initially attributed the disaster to "climate change challenges". By framing the tragedy in this way, he tried to apportion the blame to India's broader international climate commitments, such as the pledge to generate 50 gigawatts of clean energy by 2030. This policy is central to the nation's climate action goals under his administration.

However, this narrative downplayed the significance of localised human factors that were highlighted by subsequent investigations. Investigations revealed reckless infrastructure expansion as the catalyst: 86% of Uttarakhand's hydropower plants were built in high-risk zones, destabilising slopes through tunnelling and blasting. Notably, the National Disaster Management Authority had previously warned of glacier lake outburst risks in 2014, yet approvals for projects continued under PM Modi's "50 GW clean energy by 2030" target (Ibid.). This act of disinformation, invoking global climate narratives while ignoring local ecological safeguards, set a precedent for subsequent disasters.

(Hindustan Times, 2021)

(The Hindu, 2022)

Secondly, echoing the pattern observed in Chamoli, in September 2022 when torrential monsoon rains submerged Bengaluru's tech corridors, media outlets like The Times of India framed the disaster as a dual crisis: "climate breakdown" from "unprecedented rainfall" and decades of mismanaged urban planning (Times of India, 2022). A human rights advocate (KII05) critiqued this focus on rainfall, stating that:

> *"Bengaluru's floods are a testament to a profound ecological amnesia. We have meticulously paved over the very lakes and channels that were designed to absorb and drain monsoon rains over centuries, replacing them with concrete and glass temples to the new economy. To then point solely at the clouds and call it a climate event is to ignore the deliberate, profit-driven dismantling of the city's natural drainage system that occurred under the watch of our planners and politicians" (KII05).*

Post-disaster audits exposed the decades of mismanaged urban planning severity: 74% of the city's lakes had been encroached by real estate projects from 2015 to 2024, while 1,200 km of stormwater drains were clogged with construction debris, direct consequences of authorities ignoring a 2020 directive to protect lake buffer zones (Press Truth of India, 2024). Prioritising IT infrastructure and high-rises over ecological safeguards, Karnataka's enforcement failures under its Lake Conservation Act had erased 79% of water bodies and 88% of vegetation since 1973, crippling flood resilience (Paliath, 2024). Officials later acknowledged that "unplanned urbanisation," along with poor priorities, contributed to the crisis. They indicated that weak governance and poor groundwater management allowed unchecked real estate development. (Ibid.).

Thirdly, the July 2023 Himachal Pradesh landslides, which triggered over 300 slope failures, were initially labelled "climate-induced" due to the Himalayan region's vulnerability to "global heating's deadly impacts" (Kamal, 2023). However, as with Chamoli and Bengaluru, investigations uncovered human-driven causes: hydropower projects in ecologically fragile zones had illegally cut slopes without reinforcement, with 86% operating in high-risk zones (Mongabay India, 2020). Ecologists stressed that tourism and infrastructure projects disregarded the region's geography, diverting forests and wetlands (Frontline, 2023). Despite these revelations, PM Modi leveraged the disaster at the 2023 G20 Summit, calling it "a warning shot from Mother Earth" (Lynch, 2023), a strategic act of disinformation that diverted attention from local accountability.

Fourthly, mirroring the earlier cases, a record heatwave in April of 2024 devastated Assam state's tea-growing regions, with national media initially highlighting global climate change's role in "altering agricultural yields" (Times of India, 2024). Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma echoed this narrative,

linking the crisis to "global temperature rise" (ibid). Yet, as audits revealed, systemic mismanagement resulted in unchecked groundwater extraction via borewells, and state policies promoting water-intensive monoculture plantations had exacerbated water scarcity. Crucially, the Central government's 2022 dilution of EIA rules allowed unchecked industrial exploitation (Down to Earth, 2023). By 2025, Sarma's government removed climate references from policies, instead subsidising water-intensive processing units (Economic Times, 2023), much like the post-disaster pivots in Uttarakhand, Bengaluru and Himachal Pradesh.

The trajectory from the Chamoli rockslide (2021) to the Assam heatwave (2024) demonstrates the systematic application of climate disinformation as a tool of delayism. In each case, authorities and aligned media engaged in a consistent pattern of attributing these domestic disasters primarily to global climate change. This tactic intentionally puts a vague notion of "climate change" as a forefront to evade accountability for local policy failures. Oscillating between climate alarmism and developmental critique normalises a culture of impunity, where ecological safeguards are diluted in favour of growth-centric rhetoric and meaningful accountability is perpetually delayed.

2.4. Denialism of Climate Change and Its Causes

The fourth form of climate disinformation is the outright rejection of climate change and its anthropogenic causes. As defined in Chapter 1, this qualifies as disinformation and a form of climate denialism, as it entails the deliberate dissemination of false or misleading claims – often originating from state or corporate narratives – through the media to reject scientific consensus. This is achieved through three primary strategies: the suppression of environmental data, the propagation of anti-renewable energy myths and the institutional erasure of climate-linked mortality.

Firstly, the suppression of environmental data is a longstanding tactic. For instance, in a 2015 parliamentary session, then Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar asserted that 87% of Himalayan glaciers were stable, citing a disputed ISRO study. This assertion directly contradicted warnings of accelerated ice loss and was challenged by glaciologists, who noted the study excluded critical data. Scientists in Uttarakhand provided concrete evidence to the contrary; researchers at the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology documented alarming melt rates, including the Dokriani Glacier shrinking 18 metres between 2000 and 2015 and the Chorabari Glacier losing 8% of its area since 1960, while also noting the Gangotri Glacier's annual retreat of approximately 20 metres.

These experts criticised the government study's methodology, pointing to a lack of recent structural analysis and emphasising that observational knowledge from communities living near the glaciers contradicted its findings (Times of India, 2015). This critique aligns with former glaciologist Anil V. Kulkarni condemned the claims as "scientifically untenable", stressing that glacier mass balance, not just length, determines retreat (Scroll, 2019). Field observations published in The Times of India further revealed reduced snowfall and rising ice lines, with scientists warning that dismissing such evidence "risks water security for millions" (Times of India, 2015).

This example, while dated, remains critically relevant, as it established a precedent for the state-sponsored data denialism and scientific suppression that continues to characterise India's approach to climate governance today. The tactics of minimising environmental crises and manipulating official findings to evade accountability have since evolved and intensified, particularly in the monitoring of extreme heat mortality and air pollution impacts.

(Scroll, 2019)

(Firstpost, 2022)

This pattern of denialism continues as government-backed studies downplayed Himalayan glacier melt, claiming "natural snow cycles offset ice loss" (Firstpost, 2022). This narrative, amplified by pro-establishment media, clashed with findings of "accelerated snow cover loss threatening water security for 750 million people" (Roy, 2021).

Secondly, the propagation of anti-renewable energy myths emerged to protect fossil fuel interests. Concurrently, climate disinformation targeting renewable energy proliferated in India, with viral claims falsely asserting that "solar panels cause droughts by absorbing sunlight" (Climate Fact Checks, 2022). This echoed other prevalent myths debunked in the article, such as panels being ineffective in cold weather, exclusively imported from China, or damaging to roofs.

Fact-checkers and government agencies systematically countered this disinformation, clarifying that solar infrastructure leverages light, not heat, and has "no measurable impact on rainfall," while the domestic industry led by companies like Tata Power Solar and Adani Solar was already offsetting 50 million tonnes of CO_2 annually. These disinformation tactics, which ignored the proven affordability and minimal maintenance of modern sustainable systems, strategically exploited public apprehension to create regulatory and adoption delays. This ultimately served to protect fossil fuel interests by hindering India's progress toward its 750 GW solar potential and its goals for energy independence and reduced household electricity costs (Ibid.).

Thirdly, in 2024, denialism via climate disinformation escalated to the level of institutional erasure of climate-linked mortality. During record-breaking 52°C temperatures, the National Disaster Management Authority instructed states to classify heat-related deaths as "due to pre-existing conditions", attributing only 200 fatalities to heatwaves despite independent estimates exceeding 2,500 (Down to Earth, 2025). Experts exposed methodological flaws, including diagnostic bias, exclusion of marginalised groups, and the India Meteorological Department's revision of heatwave thresholds by 2°C, a move termed "statistical gaslighting" (Ibid.). This re-classification of data enabled authorities to evade accountability, mirroring earlier refusals to link air pollution to mortality. A senior journalist (KII10) explained:

> *"This is not about scientific debate; it is about the systemic manufacturing of doubt. When you alter methodologies, suppress field data, and redefine thresholds, you are not conducting science, you are engaging in a deliberate campaign to erase inconvenient truths and absolve policymakers of accountability" (KII10).*

Furthermore, in 2025, the government rejected the World Health Organisation's air quality guidelines, declaring that the "no safe pollution threshold applies to India's unique conditions" (Press Trust of India,

2025). This dismissal of peer-reviewed studies attributing 1.6 million annual deaths to PM2.5 pollution relied on contested arguments of “genetic tolerance” and “developmental trade-offs”, while restricting access to hospitalisation records (Ibid.).

In short, the outright rejection of climate science and its anthropogenic drivers constitutes a deliberate and multifaceted form of climate disinformation. Through the suppression of environmental data, the propagation of anti-renewable energy myths, and the institutional erasure of climate-linked mortality, state-backed denialism has systematically undermined scientific consensus and public understanding. These strategies have not only eroded accountability and delayed critical climate action but have also deepened vulnerabilities for India's most climate-sensitive populations.

All in all, Chapter 2 explored the key forms of climate disinformation, constituting a mixture of disinformation and malinformation. The first three forms categorised as “climate delayism” are one-sided environmental data, promotion of false climate solutions and attribution of local environmental disasters to global climate change. The fourth and final form categorised as “climate denialism” is the denial of climate change and its causes, enabling the state to deflect responsibility in managing the environment and caring for IP communities. Chapter 3 examines how the types of climate disinformation identified here legitimise land grabs, diminishes IPs’ traditions, erode climate resilience through policy-driven resource exploitation and institutionalise the silencing of dissent among Indigenous populations disproportionately bearing the crisis.

3. The Impact on Indigenous Peoples

Based on the key forms of climate disinformation identified in Chapter 2, this chapter examines its multifaceted impact on IPs' ability to protect the natural environment their livelihoods are tied to in India. Asia Centre has identified five distinct impacts: subversion of IP's rights to FPIC, restricting traditional practices and impacting livelihoods, undermining IP's forest conservation efforts, forced evictions and deterritorialisation and, lastly, intimidation, legal persecution and physical violence. Jointly, these mechanisms demonstrate how climate disinformation justifies dismantling legal frameworks to sever IPs' ecological relationships and dispossess them of their land, heritage and way of life.

3.1. Subversion of IPs' Rights to FPIC

The first impact of climate disinformation is the legitimisation of subverting Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) mechanisms. First, this section explores how the dismissal of community decision-making is a form of offline disinformation that restricts IPs from accessing information through genuine consultation periods, thereby enabling corporate and state entities to monopolise control over resources IPs are culturally and economically tied to. Second, one-sided environmental data, greenwashing and false climate solution narratives – that reach the public – disrupt their scrutiny over violations of IPs' FPIC rights. These mechanisms collectively mask the state and corporate's extractive agenda, thereby enabling their violations of legal safeguards that dispossess IPs of right-based governance.

India's legal framework, including FRA, protects IPs' rights to forest resources, traditional knowledge, and agricultural innovation. This act, in particular, empowers Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) with the authority to manage community forest resources, emphasising autonomous decision-making (PIB, 2011). This autonomy extended by FPIC guarantees IP communities the right to give or withhold consent to any project affecting their lands, territories or resources. It must be obtained freely (without coercion), prior to project approval and based on full and accessible information about the project's impacts (Ibid.). This principle is also embedded in the spirit of FRA and PESA (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act) (1996) and is essential for upholding community-led governance pathways. However, the subversion of these laws by state and corporate actions will be explored in the cases below to demonstrate the mechanism by which climate disinformation is being used to negate FPIC.

Firstly, the state's dismissal of community decision-making is an offline form of disinformation directed at IPs. By keeping IPs unaware of the consequences of operations on their land, the state or corporate entities are better able to advance their own interests over the needs of the IPs. This is exemplified by the state of Odisha's actions preceding the 2013 Niyamgiri ruling, which enabled authorities to violate the Dongria Kondh *Adivasi* community's right to FPIC by restricting consultations for a bauxite mining project (Amnesty International, 2013). Only 12 out of over 80 affected villages were included, and a six-week deadline was imposed, severely hindering their traditional decision-making processes (Ibid.). This violation, against both the Supreme Court's mandate and the FRA (2006), directly threatened the community's sacred sites and cultural ties to their lands in favour of industrial initiatives. These restrictions doubled down with paramilitary forces intimidating community members, including firing upon villagers bathing in streams and restricting access to areas essential for their subsistence practices (outcomes of intimidation and violence will be further explored in Chapter 3.5) (Ibid.).

To note, all 12 gram sabhas unanimously rejected the mining proposal, a decision later upheld when the Supreme Court dismissed all appeals against this community verdict (Deepak, 2025). This victory established a legal precedent affirming the decisive role of gram sabhas in protecting IPs' rights under

FRA (Amnesty International, 2013). However, new challenges emerged through the Forest Conservation Amendment Bill (2023), as it seeks to shields development initiatives while risking further alienation of tribes from their sacred landscapes, thus threatening to undermine the very rights protected in the Niyamgiri case. As a climate rights advocate (KII04) explained,

> *"The greatest tragedy is not the absence of laws, but the state's masterful subversion of them. We have a progressive legal architecture designed to empower communities, but it is systematically dismantled through bureaucratic obstruction, the weaponisation of older colonial laws and the creation of legal facades that allow industrial extraction to proceed. This is a deliberate institutional strategy to maintain control over land and resources by rendering people's rights unenforceable" (KII04).*

Secondly, climate disinformation distorts facts, hindering public scrutiny of FPIC violations experienced by IPs. This is exemplified by the approval of the Great Nicobar Island mega-infrastructure project, which was granted environmental clearance in November 2022 despite bypassing mandatory legal safeguards, including FPIC requirements of the local Gram Sabhas (Sheksaria, 2025). The project's approval was driven by one-sided coverage in Indian media that framed the transhipment port as necessary for national development (Ibid.). However, this approval represents a direct violation of PESA, as it fails to establish mechanisms for equitable benefit-sharing from the exploitation of the island's unique biodiversity, as enshrined in the Biological Diversity Act (Ibid.). This case highlights how the circulation of this climate denial tactic gives cover to the approval of ecologically harmful development projects that simultaneously undermine statutory protections and community rights.

In another case, the push for the 3,097 MW Etalin Hydroelectric Project in the ecologically rich Dibang Valley, being greenwashed as "clean energy" and of national importance on mainstream media, allows project developers to get away with circumventing thorough environmental regulations and FPIC processes (Saikia, 2025). Despite the Forest Advisory Committee's initial rejection due to the project's requirement to clear approximately 280,000 trees and divert over 1,150 hectares of pristine forest, it received environmental clearance by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in July 2025, permitting its resumption (Ibid.). The project is strategically portrayed as a vital source of "clean energy" and a matter of national security to justify its continuation, despite the destruction of a critical carbon sink (Saikia, 2025). This framing has facilitated breaches of the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 and sidestepped the FPIC requirement from IP communities. As a result, false climate solutions legitimise the state's prioritisation of such projects, revealing a systematic pattern of endangering both natural ecosystems and IP cultures.

Similarly, in the Nilgiris, "eco-tourism" has been presented as a sustainable climate solution via media platforms. However, unchecked "eco-tourism" contributes to environmental degradation and cultural erosion, dispossessing IPs of their rights (Krishna, 2023). The rapid expansion of tourism infrastructure, including illegal resorts and hotels, has degraded critical shola grassland ecosystems, vital carbon sinks and depleted groundwater reserves, directly contradicting the narrative of sustainability used to promote such development (Ibid.). This disinformation facilitates regulatory bypassing, resulting in failed enforcement of the Environment Protection Act (1986) through insufficient monitoring, weak penalties and approval of projects without mandatory Environmental Impact Assessments or public consultations (Ibid.). The resulting system, where developers proceed with construction first and seek

regularisation later, not only accelerates ecological harm but also violates the FRA by commodifying IPs' sacred sites into commercial attractions without their FPIC (Ibid.).

Through these examples, a consistent pattern of legal subversion and FPIC violations emerges: the government employs bureaucratic mechanisms, including the selective non-enforcement of environmental regulations and circumvention of mandatory FPIC under PESA, through various justifications to create a façade of compliance whilst systematically transferring control over resources from communities to corporate and state entities.

3.2. Restricting Traditional Practices and Impacting Livelihoods

The second impact of climate disinformation is the restriction of traditional practices and the consequential undermining of IPs' livelihoods. This occurrence manifests through two key mechanisms. First, narratives of greenwashing and false climate solutions are utilised to promote state-backed technocratic solutions within the agricultural sector while undermining IPs' traditional practices. Second, IPs' traditional practices are undermined by the distortion of ecological realities, incited by narratives that attribute natural disasters to climate change and deny its scientific data. This downplays the urgency to uphold rights that protect their use of traditional practices. These mechanisms collectively dispossess IPs of their statutory rights to manage resources because external interventions are prioritised, overriding legally mandated protections. This has accelerated the erosion of resilient traditional systems and increased climate vulnerability due to the loss of biodiverse, adaptive practices.

India's legal framework, including the Biological Diversity Act (2002), protects India's biological heritage and IPs' traditional knowledge, ensuring equitable benefit-sharing. Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (2001) (PPVFRA) safeguards agricultural innovation, granting farmers rights to their traditional seeds. The state's failure to uphold these rights will be explored in the following cases.

Firstly, the maladaptive technocratic solutions – institutionalised by policy frameworks such as the National Adaptation Plan (PebbleGalaxy, 2024) – are being promoted by the state and reported uncritically in the media through greenwashing narratives. They are promoted as far more efficient and environmentally friendly than the traditional practices of IPs. This legitimises the subversion of IPs' rights that uphold and recognise their traditional land practices and stewardship.

For instance, in April 2024, the Andhra Pradesh government targeted the Konda Reddi community's *podu* (shifting cultivation) systems. *Podu* systems, which incorporate drought-resistant millets and mixed cropping to enhance soil fertility and biodiversity, were systematically dismissed as "backward" and juxtaposed to "modern" state agricultural policies (Ibid.). The government agricultural outreach programmes promoted water-intensive cash crops and hybrid seeds, which represent a violation of PPVFRA that safeguards farmers' rights to save, use and exchange traditional seeds. This approach also ignores the mandate of the National Policy for Farmers (2007), which emphasises the integration of traditional wisdom into agricultural practices. This violation is part of a broader pattern, as a senior researcher (KII09) states:

> *"There is a systematic devaluation of Indigenous knowledge happening under the guise of modernisation. The state promotes a market-driven agricultural model that is fundamentally incompatible with traditional ecological practices. By dismissing practices like seed saving and polyculture as "backward", policymakers are not just eroding cultural heritage, they are actively dismantling a sophisticated, time-tested system of climate resilience that we desperately need" (KII09).*

In another case, narratives of false climate solutions were used by authorities to illegally displace the Mishing's flood-resilient bao rice. In its stead, hybrid monocultures were promoted by framing high-yield hybrids as "climate-smart" solutions while dismissing locally adapted bao rice as "unproductive". As a result, policymakers actively obscure the ecological suitability and legal protections of traditional varieties (Ghosh, 2018). This constitutes a clear violation of the community's right to save and exchange seeds under Section 39 of PPVFRA. The consequences are stark: during the 2017 Brahmaputra floods, hybrid crops in Mishing villages suffered 60–70% yield losses, whilst bao rice sustained minimal damage (Lotha et al., 2024). By prioritising ecologically unsuitable hybrids, the state not only breaches seed laws but also contravenes the FRA, which secures community rights to livelihood resources and occupation of forest land.

The use of such narratives extends to Arunachal Pradesh's Ziro Valley, where state-backed hybrid rice and fertilisers, misleadingly marketed as "climate-resilient", systematically displace the Apatani community's integrated rice-fish farming system, a biodiverse practice protected under the Biological Diversity Act (2002) (Hussain et al., 2018; Lotha et al., 2024). This substitution not only violates the Act's principles but also erodes a proven adaptive agroecological system. As a result, it enables the systematic erasure of legally protected traditional agroecology, catalysed by disinformation that favours industrial agriculture and obscures its role in escalating vulnerability. These technocratic approaches not only ignore IP knowledge but also hinder IP climate adaptation strategies, as short-term fixes like hybrid crops or invasive plantations disrupt long-term ecological resilience (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, n.d).

Secondly, narratives that distort ecological realities downplay the urgency to uphold legal safeguards that protect their traditional practices. For instance, disinformation campaigns in the media have attributed local natural disasters to global climate change, thereby marginalising the Mising community's sustainable practices. This approach shifts blame away from state governance failures – such as logging bans that prevent access to bamboo crucial for building climate-resilient *chang ghar* traditional houses – and instead portrays the community's vulnerability as an unavoidable consequence of global warming (Guha, 2021). By obscuring the role of policy in creating risk, these bans violate FRA. Similarly, traditional flood forecasting practices, which the Biological Diversity Act safeguards from misappropriation, are marginalised. Meanwhile, state initiatives continue to prioritise concrete embankments and relocation programmes that disrupt ecosystems (Lotha et al., 2024; Guha, 2021), promoting them as superior solutions despite contravening laws designed to protect IPs' knowledge and autonomy (Ibid.).

Similarly, narratives that deny established climate science also disregard environmental realities intrinsically linked to IPs' cultural practices. For instance, the Tangkhul Naga's reliance on bio-indicators like plant flowering cycles to forecast agricultural timelines is dismissed as unscientific. Despite its historical reliability, state interventions characterise this knowledge as illegitimate, which constitutes a clear violation of the state's mandate to protect such practices from erosion under the Biological Diversity Act (Chanthingla Horam, 2023). In this case, disinformation serves to legitimise top-down interventions that replace legally protected, ecologically attuned practices with externally controlled alternatives, thereby escalating agricultural vulnerability.

Ultimately, state-led modernisation in India consistently prioritises maladaptive projects, thereby dispossessing IPs of the country's legal frameworks that are designed to protect their agroecological systems. Climate disinformation is used to misleadingly frame state-aligned climate solutions as superior agricultural adaptations, while downplaying laws that protect IPs' traditional practices. With these restrictions violating protective legislation like the FRA and PPVFRA, the state undermines IPs'

livelihoods, weakens local climate resilience and consolidates control over resources in the hands of state and corporate actors.

3.3. Undermining IPs' Forest Conservation Efforts

The third impact of climate disinformation is the systemic undermining of IPs' forest conservation efforts. This subversion derives from the misuse of environmental laws, legitimised by one-sided state-aligned conservation rhetoric that constitutes a false climate solution. This results in two outcomes. Firstly, legitimising the ban on IPs to access their lands while evading accountability and rehabilitation obligations. Second, the supplanting of IPs' stewardship with state-led conservation initiatives. Both of these outcomes point to the effective legitimisation of dispossessing IPs' rights that protect their agroecological systems. This dispossession is achieved by reframing unsustainable, top-down conservation as climate action, collectively enabling the erosion of biocultural diversity and the dispossession of IPs' rights.

Climate disinformation enables authorities to weaponise environmental laws, like the Wildlife (Protection) Act (1972), to replace traditional practices with state-aligned conservation methods. This is due to official narratives omitting the community's role in conservation through one-sided data coverage. As such, media representations tend to prioritise animal protection over human stewardship, since it disregards FRA, which legally upholds their rights to protect, regenerate and conserve forest resources. It also contravenes rehabilitation safeguards under the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (2013). As a result, IPs face two consequences: the bypassing of IPs' FPIC and the supplanting of IPs' stewardship. These outcomes will be explored in the following paragraphs, demonstrating how climate disinformation ultimately dismantles the community-led conservation system, accelerating both cultural erosion and biodegradation (David, 2024).

The first outcome of prioritising environmental laws over IPs' legal rights is legitimising access bans for IPs to their lands. The case of Kuno National Park illustrates this, where "conservation" narratives, presented through one-sided coverage in the media, acted as a false climate solution. This approach facilitated the restriction of the Sahariya *Adivasis* community from their traditional lands. (David, 2024). Since September 2022, the Sahariya, officially designated as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, have been prohibited from accessing their ancestral forests following the introduction of African cheetahs, a project notably absent from India's National Wildlife Action Plan. This exclusion has effectively undermined sustainable stewardship practices of IP communities residing in the area, including cyclic resin tapping from chir trees and seasonal harvesting of non-timber forest produce, which have historically maintained ecological balance and biodiversity (Ibid.).

Similarly, the case of the Van Gujjar community near Corbett Tiger Reserve showcases how false climate solutions enable the non-implementation of protective laws for IPs. On 15 December 2021, the Nainital High Court directed the forest department to allocate land and monetary compensation to affected families; however, this ruling remains unimplemented (Chettri & Broome, 2023). This inaction systematically dispossesses IPs' pastoralists of their legally recognised habitat and seasonal grazing rights under Sections 3(1)(d) and (e) of FRA. By framing their exclusion as necessary for conservation in the media, authorities were empowered to obscure the erosion of community-led stewardship and the dismantling of sustainable pastoral traditions. This approach not only violates IPs rights but also undermines biocultural diversity, prioritising rigid protected-area management over proven, adaptive ecological practices (Ibid.). It demonstrates how seemingly "green" initiatives serve to legitimise unsustainable top-down conservation models and evade accountability for rights violations and ecological mismanagement.

The Indian government prioritising state-led environmental efforts at the expense of IP stewardship points to the government monopolising conservation. This has implications beyond goals to mitigate climate change. Essentially, the media relies on the state's statistical manipulation of environmental data on official documents to legitimise their ownership of climate mitigation efforts. This is exemplified by the Forest Survey of India's (FSI) controversial reclassification of "forest cover", which included monoculture plantations, urban parks and even invasive species like Prosopis juliflora under the category. This inflated India's official forest cover to 21.7% by 2021(Jha, 2022), serving a strategic purpose, as a journalist (KII04) explained:

> *"The inflated data creates a veneer of legality for land grabs, effectively manufacturing legal impunity for the state and sidestep[ping] constitutional safeguards for tribal [IP] rights. In this way, the flawed data acts as a smokescreen for dispossession" (KII04).*

This use of one-sided environmental data, firstly, masks forest loss on paper, thereby enabling authorities to divert attention from state-backed industrial resource extraction, which is a significant driver of ecological degradation (Down to Earth, 2022). Secondly, this reclassification undermines informed environmental policy, with FSI's definition directly contradicting the broader ecological interpretation of "forest" established by the Supreme Court for conservation purposes under the Forest Conservation Act. Thirdly, it erodes the rights of forest-dwelling communities by violating the FRA, which ties forest rights to biodiverse habitats that support traditional livelihoods, not monocultures. As a result, legal criteria are selectively enforced to underreport community land rights while systemically omitting evidence of IP stewardship. Simultaneously, this reframing enables the state to claim its compliance with conservation commitments through what critics argue is a form of institutionalised greenwashing (Ibid.).

These actions reveal a pattern of states leveraging conservation rhetoric to delegitimise the sustainability of IPs' traditional practices, even as mounting evidence demonstrates how Indigenous knowledge enhance biodiversity protection. This contradiction is starkly visible in Odisha, where Community Forest Resource titles legally recognised under Sections 3(1)(i) and 5 of FRA have empowered Gram Sabhas to exercise their statutory rights to manage, conserve and sustainably use forest resources. For instance, in villages like Kalikaprasad, the granting of Community Forest Resource titles has enabled communities to regenerate degraded forests and curb illegal logging through traditional practices, tangibly improving forest health and biodiversity (Dubey, 2025). Yet, despite these documented successes, state forest departments continue to suppress such community-led initiatives, as seen in the seizure of trucks carrying kendu leaves under Gram Sabha-issued transit permits. This incident directly violates the FRA's provisions that legally grant communities authority over minor forest products (Section 3(1)(c)) and forest governance (Ibid.).

The second outcome of the state's reliance on conservation rhetoric, as a false climate solution, is the supplanting of IPs' stewardship with state initiatives. This is starkly illustrated in the state's systematic undermining of the Jenu Kuruba *Adivasis'* forest conservation practices in Nagarhole Tiger Reserve (Iyyer, 2025; Martin, 2023). On 5 May 2025, the Jenu Kuruba community initiated a decisive reoccupation of their ancestral lands at Karadikallu Attur Kolli Haadi, directly challenging conservation policies that frame exclusionary measures such as monoculture plantations and physical barriers as ecological progress while disregarding their sustainable stewardship (Iyyer, 2025). The community, recognised for generations of symbiotic honey harvesting and biodiverse cultivation that maintained forest health, faced persistent rejection of their FRA claims, with authorities using satellite imagery from post-displacement periods to delegitimise their historical presence and ecological role (Martin, 2023).

This reliance on disinformation not only suppresses IPs' knowledge but also enables commercial land-use expansion, notably coffee estates that exacerbate pollinator decline and habitat fragmentation (Ibid.). As described by one human rights advocate (KII06):

> *"What we are witnessing is not conservation but a form of green colonialism. The state, in collusion with commercial interests, uses the language of environmental protection to systematically dispossess tribal communities. They are not evicted for the sake of tigers or trees, but for the sake of hotels, mines, and plantations. The forest dweller is first criminalised, then evicted, and the empty forest is then offered to industry for "sustainable development", a cruel irony that inverts the very meaning of the term" (KII06).*

By violating the legal protections meant to uphold IPs' autonomy and conservation rights, these policies accelerate cultural and ecological erosion (Iyyer, 2025).

Collectively, these cases demonstrate how state-led conservation frameworks, reinforced by false climate solutions, ban IPs from land use and replace community-led conservation with exclusionary state control. By inflating forest cover data and promoting "green" intervention, authorities legitimise IPs' dispossession of the FRA, thereby disrupting IPs' role in contributing to biodiversity (Martin, 2023; Mongabay, 2023; David, 2024). Such narratives not only violate statutory rights but also entrench a colonial model of conservation that prioritises profit over ecological and cultural integrity.

3.4. Forced Evictions and Deterritorialisation

The fourth impact of climate disinformation is the forced eviction and deterritorialisation of IP communities. This outcome manifests in two primary ways. First, narratives of false climate solutions are strategically circulated to delegitimise IP stewardship and land rights in favour of state-led conservation initiatives. Second, one-sided environmental data are selectively used to portray IP communities as encroachers, justifying their forced evictions. Together, these mechanisms systematically dispossess IPs' land rights, exacerbating their economic and social vulnerabilities by undermining their stewardship, livelihoods and cultural pride.

India's legal frameworks, like the FRA, empower Gram Sabhas (village councils) to verify land claims. Nevertheless, state forest departments maintain control, undermining community authority (Nandwani, 2023). This is further compounded by strict evidentiary standards and misinterpretations of eligibility for Other Traditional Forest Dwellers, effectively narrowing rights (Ibid.). The 2022 Forest Conservation Rules further legalised this exclusion by removing the mandatory Gram Sabha consent for forest land diversion. For example, in Odisha, arbitrary enforcement of a 75-year occupancy clause led to over 140,000 claim rejections by 2023, disproportionately affecting nomadic communities like the Van Gujjars (Panda, 2023). Within this context, the cases below will demonstrate how climate disinformation catalyses and legitimises the institutionalisation of forced evictions of IPs.

Firstly, false climate solution narratives are deliberately employed to solidify and rationalise state-controlled forest management (discussed in Chapters 3.2 and 3.3) that often results in forced removals of IP communities from their ancestral lands. Environmental laws such as the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) and the colonial-era Indian Forest Act (1927) further these disinformation narratives. This is exemplified by the 2020 eviction of Korku *Adivasis* from Maharashtra's Melghat Tiger Reserve (Iyer, 2021). Their displacement was legitimised by government agencies and state-aligned media promoting

Project Tiger as a progressive ecological conservation, with authorities publicly championing the expansion of protected tiger habitats and eco-tourism initiatives such as the Vairat safari and a approximately USD 4.19 million skywalk. However, these sources omit data on the violent use of bureaucratic mechanisms resulting in forced evictions (Iyer, 2021).

This weaponisation of the Wildlife Protection Act to override IP rights claims under FRA obscures the reality of cultural erosion and state-sanctioned violence against forest-dwelling communities (Iyer, 2021). It not only perpetuates a form of climate disinformation that prioritises statist control and commercialised conservation over genuine sustainability and justice; as demonstrated it also legitimises forced eviction of IP communities. This systemic disinformation campaign aligns precisely with the pattern of bureaucratic sabotage described by a senior journalist and researcher (KII03), who explained:

> *"The tragedy of the FRA is not just its poor implementation, but its active sabotage by the very bureaucratic machinery meant to uphold it. The law's revolutionary potential is being neutralised by a thousand cuts, endless delays, deliberately opaque procedures, and the constant moving of goalposts designed to frustrate and exhaust claimants until they abandon their rights. It is a masterclass in maintaining the status quo through administrative violence" (KII03).*

Another case in Gujarat demonstrated how evictions were also justified under the pretext of conservation, while failing to live up to their environmental promises. For instance, the state expelled approximately 3,000 Māldhārī families from Gir National Park, a habitat they had co-managed sustainably with Asiatic lions for centuries (Housing and Land Rights Network, 2023). In practice, the displacement primarily facilitated the expansion of tourism infrastructure, a commercial undertaking which resulted in 92% of families being rendered homeless without compensation (Ibid.). This constitutes a form of false climate solutions, whereby evictions are misleadingly framed as ecological imperatives. Additionally, the state obscures its role in the potential environmental degradation stemming from increased construction and human activity, all while professing ecological virtue (Ibid.).

Secondly, forced evictions are also justified and enabled by a strategic deployment of one-sided climate disinformation narratives in media that frames forest-dependent communities as encroachers rather than conservators. In one case in February 2019, the Supreme Court mandated the forced evictions of over 1.8 million tribal and IPs' households across 21 states and promoted it as a legitimate conservation strategy (The Guardian, 2019). This directive was catalysed by petitions from wildlife NGOs alleging "encroachment" on protected forests (Ibid.) and advancing a disinformation narrative framing communities as threats to forests while obscuring both the state-led bureaucratic failures and the ecological value of IP stewardship. The ruling exposed the fragility of legal safeguards when pitted against sustained and coordinated media disinformation campaign (The Guardian, 2019).

Similarly, the Uttarakhand Forest Department's 2023 campaign against the Van Gujjars starkly illustrated the use of one-sided media coverage that frames IP communities as "encroachers" of forest protection. The misleading narrative provided the pretext for issuing eviction notices to over 400 households in the Terai region, despite their pending FRA claims and documented presence since the 1920s (Land Conflict Watch 2025; Lakshman, 2023). The department demolished homes, temples and *mazars* (shrines), framing the acts as clearing encroachments while omitting the devastating social and ecological consequences of dispossessing communities. This action was subsequently justified by

officials who claimed the exercise was merely to inform Van Gujjars that "anti-forest activities would not be tolerated". However, this claim is contentious since there had been a systemic failure to process FRA claims (with only 184 individual land titles being granted out of 3,587 claims by 2024) (The Hindu 2023; Amnesty International 2024).

Climate disinformation is also used to justify evictions of IPs in urban spaces. In Delhi, over 25,000 tribal families were displaced from informal settlements in 2023, with 68% left homeless and 92% denied compensation, violating both the FRA's urban provisions and the constitutional Right to Life under Article 21 (Housing and Land Rights Network 2023; Amnesty International 2024). This was driven by one-sided environmental data, which relied on selective legal framings of urban IP settlements as encroachments requiring "beautification" and "slum clearance", while omitting their historical presence and socio-economic role.

In short, climate disinformation and legal manipulation converge to justify forced evictions and land seizures. Conservation and afforestation are framed as moral imperatives to conceal systemic rights violations and administrative sabotage. By portraying IP communities as obstacles to environmental progress, the state institutionalises deterritorialisation, perpetuating cycles of displacement, impoverishment and cultural disintegration under the guise of ecological restoration.

3.5. Legal Persecution, Intimidation and Physical Violence

The final section analyses how climate disinformation in India is systematically weaponised to criminalise and repress IPs and environmental defenders. This analysis is structured in two parts: first, legal persecution; and second, intimidation and physical violence. Both impacts derive from one-sided environmental coverage and the denial of climate change causes, typically through scapegoating IPs and environmental defenders. This suppression of transparency, ultimately, enables actors to weaponise the law and punish resistance for the sustenance of extractive projects. This deliberate suppression of transparency allows powerful actors to weaponise the law and penalise resistance, thereby enabling the continuation of extractive projects. Consequently, this encourages the increasing subversion of IPs' rights, a process entrenched by the violent silencing of dissent and the undermining of constitutional protections, which ultimately erodes both the democratic participation and the very survival of IPs.

3.5.1. Weaponising Legal Tools

Two key mechanisms enable the strategic weaponisation of legal systems to criminalise IPs and environmental defenders. First, one-sided media coverage portrays state-led projects as matters of "national interest", thus enabling the criminalisation of opposition. Second, obscuring systemic causes of climate change enables the government to delegitimise environmental defenders' concerns as a matter of "Maoist extremism", justifying their legal persecution as a consequence. Together, these mechanisms subvert the rights of IPs and environmental defenders by criminalising resistance to industrial projects, negating legal safeguards, ensuring impunity for corporate actors and enabling forced deterritorialisation through coercive judicial means that sow a climate of fear.

Firstly, one-sided media coverage is used to depict mining operations as matters of "national interest", legitimising the criminalisation of IPs and environmental defenders. For instance, in 2021, operations of the Rowghat Iron-Ore Mines in Chhattisgarh accelerated dramatically following the establishment of a security camp in Khodgaon village (Bhattacharya and Ajeet, 2022). The state and Steel Authority of India Limited, India's largest public-sector steel company, managed to bypass the mandatory Gram Sabha consent despite its requirement outlined by PESA and FRA. This rhetoric not only legitimised displacement and repression, it also enabled the criminalisation of protestors for opposing the mining

operations in sacred areas (Ibid.). By framing the project as a matter of "national interest", the state ignored the Adivasi's demand for lawful processes, thereby obscuring the real motivation behind the forced deterritorialisation (Bhattacharya and Ajeet, 2022). These cases are not isolated incidents, but rather part of a systemic pattern where the law becomes a tool for enforcing existing social hierarchies (KII06). Through criminalisation and forced displacement, *Dalit*[13] and *Adivasi* communities continue to face exploitative and dangerous conditions, illustrating how the climate crisis amplifies entrenched caste and ethnic inequalities (KII06).

Secondly, narratives that deny causes of climate change is weaponised to charge environmental defenders and IPs as "Maoist extremists"[14] instead, further validating their criminalisation under the pretext of national security. This is coupled with the suppression of scientific data and critical voices to avoid state and corporate accountability, which enabled the heightened abuse of draconian laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (1967) (UAPA) during the same period (Citizens for Justice and Peace, 2025).

For instance, since 2022, Journalist Rupesh Singh has been prosecuted on charges of alleged Maoist affiliations, arranging funds for them. However, his arrest followed his journalistic work on displacement, industrial pollution and alleged state excesses. In 2025, he was denied bail under UAPA, a law infamous for its stringent anti-terror provisions and low threshold for detention, merely for reporting on security force atrocities, illustrating how legal mechanisms are weaponised to shield perpetrators and suppress accountability (Ibid.).

Regarding IP activists, in March 2021, the wrongful imprisonment of Hidme Markam, a prominent *Adivasi* rights activist, illustrates the abuse of national security-oriented legislations. She was detained for two years in Chhattisgarh on politically motivated charges of sedition and criminal conspiracy (Adani Watch, 2023). These charges were levied in retaliation for her opposition to the Adani Group's iron-ore mining operations on sacred Indigenous lands. She was arrested in 2021, shortly after speaking at a Women's Day event (Adani Watch, 2023). Authorities falsely accused her activism of being linked to "Maoist extremism", a common tactic used to justify applying harsh laws against human rights defenders (Ibid). Although acquitted in 2023 due to a complete absence of evidence, her prolonged incarceration exemplifies how legal processes are themselves used as instruments of punishment, silencing dissent, instilling fear and enabling extractive projects to proceed unchallenged (Adani Watch, 2023).

Similarly, in May 2017, authorities in Odisha arrested Kuni Sikaka for actively opposing the land grabs and environmental destruction caused by illegal mining (Sachdev, 2021). The police agreed to Sikaka's release under the condition of surrendering as "Maoist extremism", a label that effectively delegitimises resistance to Vedanta's mining project (Ibid.). Simultaneously, the mining operations were promoted as "developmental", erasing ecological and cultural harms (Ibid.). Hence, climate disinformation legitimises the suppression of local resistance by reframing resistance as antithetical to national security, as senior journalists (KII03) noted:

[13] Dalits are officially recognised as Scheduled Castes, explored in Chapter 1.2.1.

[14] The Maoist insurgency is a protracted armed conflict led by Maoist insurgents in central India. It is crucial to distinguish that while this insurgency operates in these regions, the vast majority of IPs' resistance to land acquisition is peaceful and lawful. The government, however, frequently conflates this legitimate dissent with Maoist sympathy to justify repressive security measures and enable resource extraction. At the same time, many IPs remain caught between the coercion of armed Maoist groups who may forcibly demand their support and the repression of state forces (Deutsche Welle, 2025).

> *"The nexus between the government and the corporate has become very strong, a dynamic that leads to a common tactic: The people who are living in the tribal (Indigenous) communities for a much longer period of time … are being labelled as insurgents" (KII03).*

3.5.2. Intimidation & Physical Violence

This subsection examines the systemic targeting of IPs and environmental advocates through physical violence and intimidation. The analysis reveals how climate disinformation catalyses two key forms of physical repression in India. First, digital harassment, including the defamation of environmental activists in online spaces, is a tactic used by state- and corporate-aligned entities who deny their role in causing climate change to protect their reputations. This creates conditions that enable intimidation and surveillance in the offline environment (The Ecologist, 2025). Second, one-sided environmental media coverage is used to legitimise the militarised securitisation of IP lands, enabling the violent displacement and human rights abuses of IPs. These mechanisms collectively subvert IPs by creating environments of fear and impunity, systematically silencing dissent through both physical and digital means.

First, digital harassment against IPs and activists often arises when environmentalists expose the role of state and corporate entities in contributing to climate change. This exposure challenges the perceived integrity of these entities, which is typically protected by narratives that frame extractive projects as vital for "national interest". To shield such false narratives from dissent, perpetrators deny their contribution to causes of climate change by framing activists as extremists in retaliation via social media platforms. A case that clearly illustrates this tactic concerns a woman environmental defender, Sharanya, working for an NGO advocating for environmental protection in the Odisha region. Facing ongoing targeting, she was accused by an organised trolling campaign of being sponsored by foreign corporations to brainwash IPs into opposing mining operations in the region (Global Witness, 2025). These unsubstantiated claims aimed to undermine her credibility and advocacy efforts. Additionally, intimidation efforts extended to circulations of her and her coworkers' pictures, including the dissemination of their personal information on WhatsApp (Index of Censorship, 2025). As a result, the NGO's personnel faced accusations of being left-wing extremists, leading to police complaints and subsequent visits by the police to their private residences (Global Witness, 2025).

Moreover, this online defamation campaign continued their attack in waves by targeting Sharanya's family as well. This included the dissemination of false rumors that they had committed serious crimes (Ibid.). As such, climate disinformation – in the form of coordinated trolling campaigns targeting environmental defenders – achieves the erosion of their reputation, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation for both the victims and the people surrounding them.

Similarly, in 2021, a young climate activist was arrested under conspiratorial accusations for resharing an online "toolkit" tweeted by Greta Thunberg. The tweet contained information on demonstrations and rallies related to the farmers' protests,[15] thereby sparking widespread outrage (Aljazeera, 2021). In response to the escalating outrage on X, the government accused those discussing the case of sensationalising the news and launched investigations into their online profiles for alleged malicious intent (Ibid.). The Delhi Police even targeted the Indian arm of Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future movement on X, by accusing them of collaborating with individuals seeking to establish a separate state

[15] The farmer protests refer to a year-long protest that began in November 2020 against the government's move to introduce controversial agricultural reforms (BBC, 2024).

in northern Punjab, the region from which many of the protesting farmers come from (Ibid.). As such, the state's online reactionary response highlights how environmental defenders are singled out and subjected to online harassment with unsubstantiated allegations that intend to damage their reputation.

As demonstrated above, coordinated online harassment campaigns systematically target activists and IP women, who are disproportionately exposed to risks and intimidation due to the intersection of gender and political activism. This difficulty is echoed by KII07, which observes that:

> *"The law is wielded not as a shield for the vulnerable, but as a weapon against them. For Indigenous women defenders, this legal persecution is doubly brutal; it attacks their activism and exploits their gender. They face not just arbitrary charges, but also gendered slurs, threats of sexual violence, and the constant burden of protecting their families, all designed to break their resolve and silence their leadership" (KII07).*

Casteist, Islamophobic, homophobic, misogynistic and transphobic slurs are weaponised to attack the full identities of marginalised activists, ensuring the abuse is both personally devastating and socially damaging. These results in severe consequences, where victims endure psychological trauma including depression, anxiety and helplessness. Additionally, the abuse extends to their families, jeopardises their livelihoods, and threatens their physical safety (Hussain, 2022).

Second, state and corporate entities have legitimised industrial expansion and its violent consequences by disseminating biased environmental information in the media. These narratives consistently overlook the aggressive displacement that result from state-led land acquisition. For instance, since 2023, violence experienced by IPs has coincided with intensified militarisation and security operations in central India's mineral-rich regions, notably Jharkhand, Odisha and North Telangana (Sharma, 2025). This intense militarisation is supported by sophisticated propaganda efforts. By promising that mining will bring employment, infrastructure and development to what they label "backward" regions, the state achieves the facilitation of corporate access to resources (Deutsche Welle, 2025).

The successful legitimisation of state-led land acquisition, in turn, resulted in the use of forced harassment to restrict IPs from land use and displace them. For instance, IPs from Khatima tehsil in Udham Singh Nagar district protested against forest officials for allegedly razing their crops with bulldozers (Lalwani, 2019). However, they were filed with a First Information Report (FIR) by the police, using false narratives to label them as "encroachers" on official documents while hindering access to their lands by erecting fences to establish a plantation (Ibid.).

Similarly, members of the Barela *Adivasi* community from Siwal village in Buhanput, Madhya Pradesh, have repeatedly faced threats and physical violence for sowing crops, facing restrictions on their land use (Ibid.). Additionally, in July 2019, forest officials allegedly fired pellet guns at members of the Barela *Adivasi* community who protested against an eviction drive (Ibid.). After the incident, the police filed an FIR against 153 *Adivasi*s, including a dead man. The report also described them as "encroachers" who had allegedly cut trees (Ibid.). This demonstrates how state authorities scapegoat IPs as forest destroyers, utilising one-sided coverage to distort their advocacy to uphold legally recognised rights.

In response to these patterns of systematic repression, IP communities have mobilised significant and sustained resistance to assert their legally recognised rights. On 21 November 2019, a large-scale

demonstration was held at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar, where communities from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand and West Bengal collectively denounced the systematic rejection of Forest Rights Act (2006) claims (Ibid.). This was culminated by a smaller movement in 2016, from Jharkhand's Khunti district. They strategically deployed stone slabs to inscribe provisions from PESA as means of resistance against state-led land acquisition, which later spread to Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh (EPW Engage, n.d.). This public mobilisation contributed to heightened scrutiny of state practices, pressuring the Supreme Court to halt its own eviction order in February 2019. This marks a significant, though temporary, judicial acknowledgement of procedural failures in the settlement of forest rights (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, by August 2024, reporting indicated that structural mechanisms continued to favour state and corporate interests: budgetary allocations for tribal welfare were sharply reduced, legislative protections such as the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act were targeted for dilution in states like Jharkhand, and legal instruments, including sedition charges, were routinely employed to criminalise dissent in *Adivasi*-majority regions (O'Brien, 2024). Thus, although IP communities sustain a determined, multi-state defence of their rights to Jal, Jangal, Aur Zameen[16], the prevailing trajectory suggests that state and corporate actors are leveraging bureaucratic obstruction, legislative manipulation, and coercive enforcement to maintain the upper hand in this deeply asymmetrical conflict.

Furthermore, armed conflicts remain concentrated in North-Eastern territories and Naxalite-affected areas to "clear" and secure access to minerals, thereby heightening human rights abuse cases. Additionally, these areas were previously under significant Maoist influence, therefore, security operations officially labelled "anti-Maoist" campaigns have led to a sharp rise in armed encounters (Sharma, 2025). For example, Chhattisgarh alone reported 287 alleged Naxalites killed in 2024, a figure widely contested by local villagers and activists who maintain that many victims were in fact innocent *Adivasi* civilians (Ibid.). Nevertheless, by framing their dissent as anti-development or pro-Maoist in the media, the state legitimises the extrajudicial targeting of opposition (Ibid.). For *Adivasi* communities, these policies create an impossible dual threat: they are caught between the demands of armed Maoist groups, who may coerce their support, and the repressive actions of state forces (Ibid.). The state leverages anti-insurgency campaigns against Maoists to suppress opposition to extractive projects, further jeopardizing the rights of *Adivasi* communities (Deutsche Welle, 2025).

On the other hand, Maoist armed opposition groups (AOGs) have also targeted IPs on charges of being "police informers" (IWGIA, 2024). For instance, in Manipur, North-East India, AOGs have been implicated in the killings of IPs, particularly Kuki-Zo tribals (Ibid.). This violence stems from ethnic clashes with the majority Meitei community, which began in 2024, following the Meiteis' demand for Scheduled Tribe status (Ibid.). Notable incidents include the alleged torture, stabbing, dislocation of limbs and close-range shooting of three Kuki tribal men on August 18th in Ukhrul district by suspected militants (Ibid.). Additionally, suspected militants in Kangpokpi district are believed to be responsible for the deaths of another five Kuki-Zo men (Ibid.).

Both examples demonstrate that IPs remain caught between state security forces and Maoist armed opposition groups, both of which contribute to cycles of violence and displacement. National security narratives that routinely suppress dissent while obscuring economic objectives contribute to the compounded marginalisation of IPs – targeted by both state and non-state actors. This coincides with security discourses enabling the normalisation of violence, thereby eroding the rights of IPs to land and safety.

In short, disinformation not only delegitimises IP resistance but also fuels the criminalisation and violence faced by environmental defenders. By framing activists as extremists and IPs as encroachers,

[16] "Jal, Jangal, aur Zameen" translates to "Water, Forest and Land".

authorities weaponise law and media to suppress dissent both online and offline, thereby entrenching a systemically selective enforcement of laws that tend to subvert IPs's rights. These representations provide a pretext for intimidation, gendered violence and legal persecution targeting IP defenders, alongside the militarisation of their lands and communities.

Chapter 3 has demonstrated how climate disinformation systematically dispossesses the rights of IPs in India by subverting legal protections, distorting environmental narratives and legitimising extractive governance. Across documented cases, it manifests through the denial of FPIC, suppression of traditional livelihoods, dismantling of community-led forest stewardship, forced evictions and the criminalisation of environmental defenders. These narratives, presented as climate solutions or pro-national development, portray IPs as obstacles to progress while concealing ecological harm and enabling land appropriation under the pretext of sustainability. Building on this analysis, Chapter 4 explores strategies to safeguard IPs, highlighting their central role in advancing equitable, inclusive and genuinely sustainable climate action.

4. Recommendations

This chapter presents a series of actionable recommendations to address climate disinformation and safeguard the rights of IPs in India. Grounded in the findings of this report, these recommendations aim to support more inclusive and evidence-informed climate governance. They are directed at key stakeholders who play critical roles in countering disinformation, protecting IP rights and ensuring IPs' meaningful participation in climate action.

The United Nations and International Human Rights Mechanisms should:

- Support India to ratify International Labour Organisation Convention 169 and withdraw reservations to UNDRIP, ensuring FPIC for projects to protect the rights of IPs.

- Establish an independent expert task force to conduct a comprehensive audit of India's compliance with the UNDRIP, specifically investigating how state and corporate climate disinformation campaigns facilitate violations of Indigenous land, resource, and self-determination rights.

- Conduct country visits by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of IPs, with an explicit mandate to investigate state-driven re-categorisation policies and document their gendered impacts, with a specific focus on protecting Indigenous women's rights to safety and equality.

- Support CSOs to publish an open database tracking climate disinformation case affecting IPs, including false "green energy" claims and legal weaponisation to defend the right to accurate information and protection from forced displacement.

- Convene state-level summits to address intra-national hydropower disinformation, focusing on documented cases where state-corporate narratives falsely frame destructive projects as "climate solutions".

- Provide technical support for satellite-based audits of India's forest cover to counter FSI's flawed metrics and uphold the right to accurate environmental information.

The Government of India should:

- Repeal the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act (2023) and legally redefine "forests" to exclude monocultures, urban parks, and plantations to protect the right to habitat and cultural lands.

- Revise FSI methodology to differentiate natural forests from commercial plantations and disclose biodiversity loss and carbon sink degradation in ISFR reports, ensuring the right to accurate environmental information.

- Expedite FRA implementation by simplifying claim procedures, eliminating the 75-year residency requirement for Other Traditional Forest Dwellers, and deploying mobile legal aid units to remote IP regions to secure the fundamental land and forest rights of IPs.

- Define separate criteria of FPIC for all projects in Schedule V areas, penalising violations to uphold the right to consent and self-governance.

- Amend CAMPA guidelines to ban non-native species in afforestation. Allocate funds to IP-led forest regeneration to protect the right to a healthy environment and traditional ecosystems.

- Establish a judicial commission to review unlawful evictions and restore lands to *Adivasi* and *Dalit* communities, coupled with the passage of an Amnesty Bill to protect them from prosecution and legal harassment arising from their rightful reoccupation and defence of their territories.

- Integrate Indigenous agroecology into the National Action Plan on Climate Change, over state-backed hybrids to protect the right to food sovereignty and traditional livelihoods.

- Prosecute entities misusing the Green Credit Programme to privatise IP lands to protect the right to land and resources from privatisation.

- Integrate protections for digital rights and freedom of expression into climate policy, ensuring counter-disinformation efforts are transparent and evidence-based, safeguarding IP rights to participate in public discourse free from persecution.

INGOs should:

- Back Indigenous-led audits of CAMPA plantations to uphold the right to monitor projects affecting their well-being.

- Submit reports to the UN Human Rights Committee reviewing India's compliance with ICCPR, documenting how surveillance of environmental activists violates the rights to privacy and freedom of expression.

- Establish rapid-response legal networks to challenge UAPA misuse to uphold the right to legal defence.

- Partner with IPs to map disinformation networks, including corporate-funded think-tanks promoting "developmental necessity" of coal and state-aligned media labelling displacement evidence as "fake news" to defend the right to a fair public narrative.

- Support community fact-checking hubs in IP languages to debunk false encroachment allegations and on CAMPA's ecological harms to secure the right to access information in native languages.

- Call on multilateral banks to review loans to ensure they do not fund projects that violate FPIC.

CSOs should:

- Create a national eviction database tracking all displacements under "green" pretexts to defend the right to habitat and protection from forced displacement.

- Launch mobile legal clinics to assist IPs in filing Forest Rights Act claims and right to information requests to audit CAMPA funds to empower communities to exercise their legal land and information rights.

- Produce documentary evidence of disinformation, including FSI's flawed satellite metrics and corporate greenwashing, to uphold the right to accurate information.

- Train IP journalists to report on algorithmic bias amplifying anti-Indigenous narratives on social media and instant messaging platforms and ecological impacts of monocultures to defend the right to a fair media landscape.

- Advocate for policy reforms, including banning sham environmental assessments and mandating Indigenous representation in FSI and MoEFCC to secure the right to participation.

Media Sector should:

- Draw attention to FSI's data manipulation through an investigative series comparing ISFR reports with satellite data to defend Indigenous land and resource rights from erasure by flawed data.

- Launch Indigenous-language fact-checking desks to debunk state narratives and corporate greenwashing to uphold the right to information in one's language.

- Collaborate with CSOs to publish oral testimonies of IPs displaced by "green" projects to uphold the right to be heard.

- Dialogue with tech platforms to disclose algorithmic amplification of anti-IP content to defend the right to a non-discriminatory digital space.

- Train journalists in IP languages in constructive journalism techniques to not only report on legal repression and ecological maladaptation but also to highlight community-led solutions, restorative justice, and adaptive practices.

- Create legal defence funds for reporters conducting investigative work on the relationships between corporate and state entities, such as Adani's coal imports labelled "clean energy" and PIB's censorship of displacement evidence.

- Produce regional documentaries highlighting IP-led solutions to protect the right to cultural preservation.

- Proactively investigate and highlight climate disinformation targeting IPs to uphold the right to truthful public discourse.

- Address low digital literacy by using All India Radio's 99% population coverage to teach how to identify disinformation to secure the right to digital empowerment.

- Amplify Indigenous voices through inclusive hiring practices and translation to uphold the right to self-representation.

Technology Companies should:

- Implement transparent and carefully designed AI tools to detect disinformation targeting IPs, such as bots promoting “green growth” narratives in a way that protect the right to a safe information environment while avoiding algorithmic surveillance and censorship.

- Ensure platform accountability through transparent audits of algorithmic bias and government ad spends on social media and instant messaging platforms prioritising state-corporate narratives.

- Partner with CSOs to create multilingual fact-checking bots for rural users to defend the right to access information in native languages.

- Make available secure communication tools for activists to uphold the right to privacy and safety.

- Host digital literacy workshops teaching IP to verify environmental clearances using right to information legislation and report hate speech inciting violence against IP to secure the right to digital self-defence.

Indigenous Communities should:

- Document land-use violations using community mapping and smartphones by recording videos of illegal logging/evictions to exercise the right to monitor their territories.

- Revive traditional warning systems to counter state maladaptation to uphold the right to traditional knowledge and practices.

- File collective petitions to audit CAMPA plantations and prosecute entities violating FPIC to exercise the right to seek remedy.

- Conduct intergenerational workshops to preserve agroecological knowledge to protect the right to cultural heritage.

- Build alliances with INGOs and CSOs to establish and fund Indigenous-owned and operated media platforms. These platforms will amplify authentic narratives, strengthen inter-community networks to share verified climate information, and counter divisive state-corporate propaganda, thereby fundamentally strengthening the right to self-determination and narrative sovereignty.

- Lobby panchayats to reject projects lacking FPIC to uphold the right to FPIC and local governance.

- Use right to information legislation to expose disinformation, including FSI's plantation data masking natural forest loss and EIA violations in Great Nicobar, to exercise the right to information.

- Develop and amplify community-led monitoring systems and early-warning networks that build ecological resilience through local governance and traditional knowledge sharing.

5. Conclusion

In India, constitutional provisions and statutory safeguards in laws such as FRA and PESA, which serve to protect and promote IPs, are being systematically subverted.

This subversion of IPs' rights is driven by an economic and industrialist paradigm that promotes business and corporate expansion. As part of this paradigm, extractive legislative frameworks including the Coal Bearing Areas Act (1957) and the Land Acquisition Act (2013) enable the state to treat IP lands as resources for economic growth rather than as inviolable ecosystems central to cultural and ecological integrity. Despite persistent resistance from IP communities and intermittent legal victories, the struggle remains deeply unequal, as structural mechanisms consistently privilege state and corporate interests over IP rights.

The digital transformation of India's media landscape since the late 2000s, marked by the widespread adoption of internet and social media, exacerbates this trend. This shift has facilitated the proliferation of climate disinformation, which mirrors and reinforces these structural biases. State-aligned channels, utilising both digital and traditional media platforms, disseminate narratives that distort facts about climate change and deforestation. This misreporting achieves to protect the integrity of structurally prioritised extractive projects. As a result, this intensifies the adverse impacts of the extractive political-economic structure by legitimising violations of IP rights and deepening systemic inequities.

Climate disinformation in India plays a central role in delaying and denying the realities of climate change in four primary ways: state-aligned one-sided false narratives omitting evidence of ecological damage; false climate solutions rebranded exploitative practices as "green growth"; local disasters being attributed to global climate change by reframing local governance failures as inevitable; and outright false narratives denying climate change and its causes.

This enables states and corporations to undermine IPs' ability to protect their natural environment and assert their rights through five interconnected mechanisms. First, the subversion of FPIC, using climate disinformation to legitimise projects without community approval, thereby nullifying legal safeguards under FRA and PESA. Second, restrictions of traditional practices and livelihoods, as government policy systematically replaces IP agroecology with maladaptive models, ignoring the protections of the Biodiversity Act and PPVFRA. Third, undermining forest conservation efforts, as government agencies uses disinformation to falsely incriminate IPs for "encroachment" and erase their stewardship contravening FRA. Fourth, climate disinformation legitimises forced eviction and displacement from ancestral lands by falsely justifying land grabs that violate the FRA, PESA and the Right to Fair Compensation Act. Fifth, legitimising the intimidation, legal persecution and physical violence, where climate disinformation is used as evidence against activists to criminalise them under repressive laws like UAPA; while authorities subject them to discriminatory online harassment and under-enforce protective instruments such as the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Whilst these findings form the core of the report, the research has also surfaced three critical insights that extend beyond the immediate evidence. First, climate disinformation in India operates as a deliberate governance strategy. It provides narrative cover for the state's systematic disregard of legal protections, enabling bureaucratic obstruction, colonial-era legal weaponisation and judicial harassment that render IPs' rights unenforceable. Simultaneously, in the digital sphere, disinformation is strategically deployed to portray dissent as anti-national, shaping public opinion and manufacturing consent for extractive development.
Second, the digital sphere has increasingly become an apparatus of state–corporate control rather than a space for pluralism and civic empowerment. The monopolisation of fact-checking through state

institutions, coupled with algorithmic bias and the marginalisation of IPs' languages, allows dominant actors to dictate what constitutes "truth". Corporate lobbies and state agencies collaborate to frame extractive and infrastructure projects as "green" or "sustainable", transforming climate communication into a coordinated public relations tool. This alliance conceals ecological destruction, delegitimises IPs' resistance and narrows the democratic space for debate on environmental justice.

Third, beyond physical dispossession, climate disinformation perpetuates erasure of IP knowledge by delegitimising their knowledge systems and replacing them with state-controlled narratives of conservation and development. By portraying IPs as obstacles to progress rather than stewards of ecological balance, the state nullifies their agency and dismantles legal frameworks intended to protect them. This displacement normalises the expropriation of IPs' lands under the guise of sustainability, transforming disinformation into a central mechanism of rights dispossession in India.

Together, these insights underscore the urgent need for a reimagined approach to climate governance in India, one rooted in justice, legal pluralism and the dispossession of IPs' rights. Addressing climate disinformation must become central to national debates on information integrity and environmental policy.

The imperative lies not in drafting new legislation, but in countering the deficient implementation of existing frameworks and resisting the promulgation of laws that subvert them. What is required is a genuine political commitment to uphold and enforce these existing protections as the foundation of equitable ecological governance. Only through legal accountability and truth-based communication can India build a climate future that safeguards both its environment and the rights of its IPs.

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Annexe I: List of Respondents

Interview Code	Respondent's Background	Date of Interview
KII01	Representative of an Indigenous CSO	27 August 2025
KII02	Representative of an Indigenous CSO	29 August 2025
KII03	Woman journalist	1 September 2025
KII04	Representative of a media platform	5 September 2025
KII05	Representative of an academic institution	6 September 2025
KII06	Representative of a human rights NGO	8 September 2025
KII07	Representative of an academic institution	8 September 2025
KII08	Journalist	10 September 2025
KII09	Researcher	13 September 2025
KII10	Independent journalist	15 September 2025
KII11	Representative of an Indigenous CSO	18 September 2025
KII12	Representative of an Indigenous CSO and an academic institution	19 September 2025

Asia Centre is a civil society research institute in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC).

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