The Indian Journal for Research in Law and Management

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2026

Editor-in-Chief – Dr. Muktai Deb Chavan; Publisher – Alden Vas; ISSN: 2583-9896

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work is properly cited.

BLUEPRINT FOR A GREENER INDIA: REVISITING THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Warisha Wasi

ABSTRACT

India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, launched in 2008 set out a national framework to balance economic growth with climate mitigation and adaptation. With substantial changes in India's circumstances in terms of per capita emissions and renewable energy capacity after eighteen years since the launch of NAPCC, it is crucial to revisit NAPCC to examine achievements of its original targets, to address implementation gaps and to determine the efficiency of the framework in contemporary times. The country has committed to net-zero emissions by 2070 and emerging priorities including green hydrogen, grid integration and climate induced disaster risks require India's national plan, a comprehensive framework with an enhanced institutional design. This article argues that a reformed NAPCC should move toward an outcome oriented, integrated approach with stronger participation from local communities emphasising the principle of equity and livelihood.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2008, India took its first step towards climate governance by launching a comprehensive strategy to address India's climate response. The National Action Plan on Climate Change emphasises a national strategy to build climate resilience while balancing economic growth with ecological sustainability. The plan comprises of eight core missions focusing on the promotion of understanding of climate change, adaptation and mitigation,

energy efficiency and natural resource conservation.[1] NAPCC serves as a policy framework, more as a national response to India's climate policy rather than serving as a statute, enabling flexibility in execution and coordination. On the other hand, it also means absence of enforceable obligations and lack of centralised tracking due to ministerial allocations in budgetary allowance.[2] Therefore, NAPCC deserves a second look after 18 years of its introduction in the light of India's international climate commitments and record-breaking heatwaves and other climate induced disasters. This article revisits the architecture of the plan, reviews its performance and situates it within India's evolving climate commitments since India has witnessed major changes in its economic situation and climate conditions. India is a party to United Nations framework for Climate Change, its Kyoto protocol and Paris Agreement. India had pledged to achieve fifty percent of its total electric power installed capacity from energy resources based on non-fossil fuels.[3]

THE NAPCC: ORIGINS AND STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

The plan was released on June 30, 2008 emerging from the deliberations of Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change. The plan revolves around eight National Missions headed by Nodal Ministry and reviewed by Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change and Executive Committee on Climate Change.[4] The NAPCC rests on sustainable development strategy emphasising the need to protect vulnerable population from climate change. The political oversight provided by Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change resulted in coordinated implementation undertaken by executive committee. India acknowledged the principle that developed nations should take lead on climate conservation and cutting of emissions due to their large cumulative share in emissions while developing nations like India should be

[1] Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 'National Action Plan on Climate Change' (10 December 2021) https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2021/dec/doc202112101.pdf accessed 26 September 2026.
[2] PRS Legislative Research, 'Performance of National Action Plan on Climate Change' (Committee Reports) https://prsindia.org/policy/report-summaries/performance-of-national-action-plan-on-climate-change accessed 26 September 2026.
[3] 'India Has Launched International Coalitions Such as International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) to Address Climate Change Challenges' (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, February 2023) https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1895857&reg=48&lang=2 accessed 26 September 2026.
[4] 'India's National Action Plan on Climate Change: Eight Missions for Climate Action' (Climate Change Academy, December 2025) https://climatechange.academy/introduction-to-climate-change/india-national-action-plan-climate-change/ accessed 27 September 2026.

provided support in transition to low carbon economies.[5] The centrally sponsored schemes implemented through sub-national policy frameworks called State Action Plan on climate Change (SAPCC) ensuring the addressal of context specific regional plans and mitigation of regional climate change related issues.

THE EIGHT MISSIONS: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The NAPCC successfully conceptualized the idea that a policy on climate can be formulated as a framework for development by outlining eight missions. These missions form a crucial part of the NAPCC in order to achieve key goals in climate change. However, the absence of statutory powers and independent audit contribute to implementation gaps for many these national missions.

National Solar Mission

1. One of the most notable and successful mission out of the eight missions is the National Solar Mission. With solar energy contributing largest share in India's renewable energy portfolio, its non-fossil fuel energy generation capacity crossed 50 percent in the year 2025. India achieved its 2030 target a way ahead of its stipulated time reflects its transition into clean energy. As India reached a milestone to generate 100 gigawatts (GW) in beginning of year 2025 marking highest expansion in renewable energy, India's installed solar capacity demonstrates genuine achievements. [6]

2. National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency
   With an aim to enhance India's energy efficiency particularly in energy intensive industries, it consists of four initiatives – Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT), Market Transformation for Energy Efficiency (MTEE), Energy Efficiency Financing Platform

[5] 'India's National Action Plan on Climate Change: Eight Missions for Climate Resilience' (Sustainability Shiksha, December 2024) https://sustainability.shiksha/challenges-to-sustainable-development/india-national-action-climate-change/ accessed 27 September 2026.
[6] 'India's Climate Ambitions' (Insights on India, 4 December 2025) https://www.insightsonindia.com/2025/12/04/indias-climate-ambitions/ accessed 27 September 2026.

(EEFP) and Framework for Energy Efficient Economic Development (FEEED).[7] In present times, National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency serves as foundation for carbon trading. However, the focus on industrial sectors under this mission left small and medium enterprises outside of efficiency umbrella framework.

3. National Mission for Sustainable Habitat

   The core objective of this mission is to address urban planning and buildings to enhance energy efficiency however, there are implementation gaps mainly due to rapid pace urbanization in India and state and municipal bodies are largely responsible to enforce these regulations.

4. The National Water Mission

   Aimed to ensure conservation and equitable distribution of water, The National. Water Mission has not produced any centralized framework as water governance is fragmented across various ministries and states. The mission's efficient rollout remains largely dependent on project clearance and financial allocation.

5. The National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem

   With an objective of protecting the Himalayas, this mission is working as a bridge between governmental organisations and civil societies to enhance ecological resilience in the Himalayan region. By assessing the vulnerabilities, this mission seeks to advance early warning systems and build infrastructural resilience across the Himalayan states.

6. The Green India Mission

   As the name suggests, the goal of Green India Mission is to increase India's green tree cover through afforestation across ten million hectares. The mission also aims to protect

[7] 'National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency' (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 10 August 2021) https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1744431&reg=48&lang=2 accessed 28 September 2026.

and restore India's ecosystem and habitat diversity.[8] However, competitive land use claims and implementation deficit impede Green India Mission objectives.

7. The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
   This mission promotes the climate resilience varieties of crops, micro irrigation and soil health. The focus on water intensive crops and resource rich regions have led to the concentration of progress in few regions of the country.

8. The National Mission for Strategic Knowledge on Climate Change
   This mission was intended to form the epistemic backbone of NAPCC by providing research on climate science and building knowledge networks but its research and data infrastructure do not complement with its aspirational objectives.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The NAPCC has attracted criticism since it was founded. A blog published by a civil society argues NAPCC lacks sincerity and a balancing approach to look at the bigger picture by acknowledging contributions of various sectors and social classes in India's contemporary and future emissions.[9] The lack of transparency and accountability mechanism are the main one of the main factors impeding the effective outcomes. Furthermore, the structural deficits account for the implementation gaps due to its institutional design affecting the outcomes. The absence of obligations which can translated into enforceable reporting to an independent body, is due to the fact that missions do not serve as statutory mandates.

The financing deficit reflected through underfunded missions. The lack of dedicated financing mechanism has resulted in competition for budgetary allocation for various missions under the plan. The absence uniform implementation of the plan due to the fact that many of the resources

[8] Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 'National Mission for a Green India (Under the National Action Plan on Climate Change)' https://moef.gov.in/uploads/2017/08/GIM_Mission-Document-1.pdf accessed 28 September 2026.

[9] South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, 'There's Little Hope Here: A Critique on India's National Action Plan on Climate Control' (SANDRP, 13 October 2015) https://sandrp.in/2015/10/13/sandrp-critique-of-indias-napcc-there-is-little-hope-here/ accessed 28 September 2026.

in the mission like water, forests lie with the states varying widely in various capacities and capabilities. Therefore, there has been a coordination deficit lacking transparent intergovernmental obligation.

The participation of local communities, most affected by the climate change will lead to the long-term success of NAPCC. The most vulnerable populations consisting of farmers, those working in informal sectors in urban cities are among the first victims of climate induced disasters yet they are rarely central to any plan aimed to combat climate change. Formal consultation processes at the local level, such as inclusion of local village bodies and climate committees will lead to improvement in adaptation while subsequently enhancing accountability. It will also help to ensure the allocation of funds reaching to the most deserving communities. Moreover, the incorporation of indigenous knowledge in formulating early warning systems and mitigating climate risks is crucial. An inclusive approach, treating citizens as partners in formulating and implementing plan consequently delivers positive outcomes.

India requires a comprehensive law, a legal framework climate statute in order to impose mandatory duties and responsibilities on various ministries to publish climate account audits. The informal coordination between Centre-state responsibilities can be replaced by establishment of a formalized framework. An effective accountability mechanism would ensure transparency for further mobilization of finance. The monitoring should be institutionalised through annual publication of progress reports. A diverse country like India should adopt a national plan that is enforceable and can be implemented at various levels of governance in order to translate policy aspirations into actions. An effective policy framework would not only lead in India’s transitioning into clean energy economy but will also result in fulfilling its international climate commitments.

CONCLUSION

The National Action Plan on Climate Change was, in 2008, a truly original attempt at incorporating climate policy into the workings of a large developing economy without forcing the two into opposition. Nearly eighteen years on, the experiment has yielded mixed results: a world-leading solar energy push alongside chronically underfunded missions on water, habitat

and agricultural sustainability; a state-level action-plan architecture that exists in principle in every State but varies widely in practice; and a set of Nationally Determined Contributions that have consistently exceeded their targets while independent analysts continue to characterise them as conservative. As India undertakes its newly submitted 2031-2035 climate commitments and prepares to announce its longer-term target of net-zero emissions by 2070, it is the NAPCC's institutional design rather than its public rhetoric that is in most need of revision. A greener India will not be the result of new missions, but of the accountability, financing, and federal coordination mechanisms required to conclude the ones already on the books.