

# Energy transition in India and Indo-German cooperation

## Strengthening civil society participation in the transition

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The mentioned deficiencies, challenges and recommendations were developed within the framework of the 2023 scoping exercise “Energy transition in India” and discussed with relevant key actors such as representatives from Indian and German think tanks, decision-makers in the German parliament and different ministries, academics, and activists from the field of energy transition in India, climate foreign policy, development, human rights, and environmentalism. Roundtables held in 2022 and 2023 in New Delhi and Berlin created a conversation on how to strengthen and harness the inclusiveness of the energy transition discourse on and in India, focusing on the role of civil society in decision- and policy-making. Results of the roundtable discussion are included in this paper. The scoping exercise was carried out by Laura Reiner and Nakul Sharma.

The Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Regional Office New Delhi and Asia Department Berlin intend to work in the identified areas and encourage actors in the field and civil society to join and collaborate in realising the recommendations. This briefing paper is intended as food for thought and a basis for discussion. More engagement and involvement of civil society in this policy area is necessary to make the energy transition in India inclusive, ecological, and, thus, truly equitable and sustainable.

### Key Points

- India is the third largest producer of renewable energy as well as emitter of greenhouse gases globally and its energy consumption is expected to grow faster than all major economies worldwide.
- India plays a crucial role in international and foreign climate policy debates and implementation.
- Numerous recent bilateral and multilateral agreements between India and international actors exemplify the increased international focus on India in the global energy transition and climate policy.
- Initiating a dialogue series with Indian actors and German and EU actors working on India is vital in overcoming negotiation deficiencies and bridging potentially diverging views.
- Conducting and initiating knowledge development and sharing of ideas concerning an inclusive energy transition in India supports to overcome knowledge gaps, especially regarding the situation on the local level in India.
- Creating a feminist energy transition platform in India, which consists of a knowledge hub and a solid network and emphasises the crucial nexus between Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 on gender equity and SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, while promoting an inclusive human rights approach.
- Prioritising India and its energy transition in the overall work of organisations and adapting an agile collaboration within and between institutions on a local, national, international, and global level is critical to supporting a fast transition.

### The need for an inclusive, people-centric, equitable and environmentally friendly energy transition

The climate crisis is coming to a head on an unprecedented scale. While it overshadowed the European summer with unprecedented deadly heat, fires, and severe weather, unbearable heat waves follow heavy rain in India, causing flash floods and landslides. These impacts of the climate crisis will increase rapidly in the following years, putting India’s development at risk while threatening Europe’s economy and the lives of millions. Historically the consumed emissions of Germany and the EU are many times higher than the emissions of India: While the EU consumed 22 per cent of global cumulative emissions until 2017, India consumed only 3 per cent.<sup>1</sup> For some years now, however, India has been the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases globally. India’s energy consumption is expected to grow faster than all major economies worldwide. As the third largest consumer of electricity and also producer of renewable energy, the most populous country in the world plays a crucial role in curbing the global climate crisis.

<sup>1</sup> Ritchie, H., 2019, “Who has contributed most to global CO2 emissions?”, Our World in Data, 1.10.2019, Accessed: 16.08.2023. <https://ourworldindata.org/contributed-most-global-co2>.

## Strengthening cooperation and partnership

Climate cooperation and partnership are vital to curbing the climate crisis and fostering climate justice. Precious are partnerships between past and current main emitters, like Germany, the EU, and the G7, and countries with high current and future demand, like India. Germany's new strategy for climate foreign policy is expected to encompass more climate and energy partnerships with countries of the Global South. The Government of India has announced ambitious targets in the pathway to net zero emissions by 2070 and is implementing several strategic programmes and frameworks to bolster energy transition. At the same time, many international stakeholders involved in the energy transition space are increasing their focus on India as a crucial player in international climate action and the global energy transition scene, and as a producer of renewable energy. This is visible through numerous recent bilateral and multilateral agreements between India and these international stakeholders. In the case of Germany, this encompassed a series of agreements within the framework of a Green Sustainable Development Partnership (GSDP) and other bilateral and multilateral agreements in preparation.

## Overcoming negotiation challenges

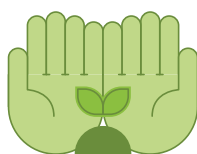
Bilateral and multilateral relations carry **extraordinary potential** and are of fundamental importance in curbing the climate crisis while ensuring climate justice. However, involved actors often face substantial difficulties and significant challenges in negotiating cooperation and partnerships. **Several deficiencies and challenges** were identified in Indo-German/ EU/ G7 relations, from a lack of informed dialogue and mutual cultural understanding to a partial lack of knowledge and experience – particularly on a technical level and on the country and local context. Moreover, a lack of gender equality and civil society involvement was detected.

## Recommendations for civil society engagement in the energy transition

The following recommendations were developed to overcome these challenges and increase and uphold civil society participation in the Indian energy transition.



INITIATING DIALOG



SHARING KNOWLEDGE



CREATING A FEMINIST ENERGY TRANSITION PLATFORM

### INITIATING DIALOG



#### What?

**Initiating a dialogue series** with Indian actors and German and international actors working on India.

**Convening various actors in different set-ups for a series of dialogues** on selected topics around the energy transition in India.

The dialogue series can be **theme-specific** and bring various actors and perspectives from different sectors together.

## Main questions for discussion are:

- What do we mean by “just” “energy sovereignty,” and “energy democracy” when we talk about the energy transition in India?
- What are the experiences on the ground, of people living in areas of large-scale renewable infrastructure constructions, and how can we ensure the upholding of their essential needs and rights?
- What action points help to ensure we re-phrase the German/ European/ Western narrative of development and about how energy transition should take place in India?
- What actions, tools, and agendas do we need to create a large and inclusive movement in India as well as in Germany/ the EU, which focuses on an environmentally conscious lifestyle in order to ensure a deliberate utilisation of our resources?
- How to ensure the validity of environmental and social impact assessments of large-scale energy transition projects in India, financed through Germany, the EU, and the G7?
- How to ensure that the environmental and ecological aspect of the energy transition and energy efficiency is at the centre of debates and actions?
- How to consider multiple sectors, such as buildings, transportation, and agriculture (agroecology), when discussing a successful energy transition in India?

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Such a dialogue series will **bridge potentially diverging views on the energy transition in India**. Establishing a new, truly relevant institutionalised format for India's energy transition will assure civil society's engagement in the energy transition in India and integrate different levels of the community into the conversation.

The dialogue series can be followed by a publication of the results in briefing papers and/ or other communication material.

The dialogue series could target German actors working in India to discuss the challenges and opportunities, for further negotiations and implementation.

### WHY?

Such a dialogue series would prioritise India's inclusive and holistic energy transition, enhance mutual understanding and dialogue between relevant actors, and bridge different and potentially diverging views within India and between India and Germany. Moreover, it creates space for alternative narratives and focused debates while following the vision of an inclusive, people-centric, equitable and environmentally friendly energy transition to meet climate mitigation targets. Cultural understanding, cultural diplomacy, and – from the German side – learning to endure contradictions are crucial here.

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE



### What?

**Conducting and initiating knowledge development and sharing ideas** about an inclusive energy transition in India.

**Developing policy papers**, think pieces, quarterly updates, reports, and briefings to enhance **local and holistic expertise and knowledge** within decision-making circles, civil society, and the public.

**Distributing information** material to decision-makers, expert circles, civil society organisations, and a wider audience / the public.

## Ideas for knowledge development and sharing are:

- Mapping positive examples of existing initiatives**, technologies, social innovations, and local energy governance already taking place in India.
- Tracking the financial flows** of German, EU, and G7 investments, loans, and aid to ensure that they are 100 per cent renewable and sustainable and that the money reaches the people, especially women and most marginalised groups.

“Such knowledge sharing will **increase local and cultural knowledge within policy decision-making circles and the wider public and create room for sharing practical experiences.** A regular and transparent flow of information to civil society and the public will be created, and awareness-raising across a more comprehensive community will be promoted.

## WHY?

Knowledge, information, and education – especially from a local, holistic, and civil society perspective – on energy transition in India are vital to achieving climate justice. Knowledge development and distribution are crucial for educational and awareness-raising purposes in India, Germany and in the EU. The lack of information and knowledge development is incredibly high, especially concerning the situation of the basic life of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of society bearing the main burden of the climate crisis. Moreover, the access to information for marginalised groups needs to be guaranteed.

## CREATING A FEMINIST ENERGY TRANSITION PLATFORM



## What?

Creating a feminist platform in India focussing on the potentials and challenges of energy transition in the sense of a feminist foreign policy and feminist development policy.

Link, emphasise, and develop the crucial nexus between the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equity** and **SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy for all** through:

- **Creating a knowledge hub** on the Feminist Energy Transition Platform for feminist research, analysis, and debate in the thematic realm of the energy transition.
- **Developing a solid network** on the platform for women working on energy transition in India and the region.

“Creating a feminist energy transition platform would help to ensure a strong feminist voice in the negotiations and decision-making debates to **enhance feminist perspectives in the energy transition**, to ensure a human rights approach, and to **question overall hierarchical systems of suppression.** It would lower barriers for feminist civil society actors and women working in the field of energy transition so that they can participate in the energy transition debates on podiums, policy forums, fair trade forums, and other platforms and networks.

## WHY?

The National Security Strategy of Germany highlights the crucial nexus between the climate crisis, the global energy transition, and women and marginalised groups. The civil society climate movement demanding a global energy transition toward renewable, democratic, and healthy clean energy is strongly driven by feminists. To sum it up, on the one hand, there is a vital component of gender inequity in the climate crisis; on the other hand, women and gender equity are crucial to climate action and climate solutions, as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) confirms.

## FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS



The recommendations of a bridging dialogue series, of the knowledge creating and sharing, and of a feminist energy transition platform feed into each other, and it is, therefore, recommended to **link them to each other so that they can scale each other up positively.**

The interdisciplinarity of the energy transition in India, affecting many different policies, demands **cross-learning** between and within actors and **agile and close working and collaborations** in and between diverse teams, institutions, and organisations – on local, national, international, and global levels.

The weight and speed of the policy field request the **prioritisation of India and its energy transition** in the overall work of institutions and invest more financial and human resources in **knowledge-creation, knowledge-sharing, and networking** in this field.