

Press Release

Odisha launches a Climate Change & Just Transition Forum to enable climate-resilient and people-centric development

26 November, Bhubaneswar: The sixth edition of the Odisha Vikash Conclave (OVC) opened today with a strong call for climate-resilient development, which is also just and inclusive for the people of Odisha. Marking a major milestone at the Conclave, iFOREST, along with leading civil society organisations of Odisha, and CYSD, announced the launch of the first-of-its-kind civil society-led 'Odisha Climate Change and Just Transition Forum'.

Odisha faces rising climate risks, growing heat stress, and rapid urbanisation, all of which affect people's lives and livelihoods, and well-being. These challenges demand proactive and inclusive planning, backed by strong policies, to ensure a just and orderly transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in Odisha. This will also be important for achieving India's net-zero goals, as Odisha is one of India's top industrial states with key industries such as coal mining, thermal power, steel, aluminium, etc.

The Climate Change and Just Transition Forum will bring civil society organisations, community institutions, academia, and technical experts on one collaborative platform to support climate-resilient planning, design innovative solutions for local communities to diversify the economy and create employment opportunities, enhance green skilling opportunities, and build local capacity in districts, blocks, and panchayats. climate resilience and guide Odisha's transition.

Inaugurating the event, **Chief Secretary of Odisha, Shri Manoj Ahuja, IAS**, said, "We must build a system that allows us to work collectively for the state's progress, enabling every citizen to contribute—that is, people-centric development. My key takeaway from OVC 2025 is the philosophy of collaboration; that is the road to reform."

Announcing a dedicated Transition Fund and Energy Transition policy, **Energy Secretary, Shri Vishal Kumar Dev, IAS**, Government of Odisha, emphasised that the energy transition is not just about renewable energy development. "It is about jobs, inclusive development, and ensuring a transition that benefits all. We are formulating a comprehensive Energy Transition Policy that addresses all of these. Also, a dedicated Transition Fund will be created to support workers and communities through the shift," he said.

Speaking at the event, **Srestha Banerjee, Director, Just Transition and Climate Change, iFOREST**, said, "Climate change is no longer just a scientific concern—it is a development issue. Our new Climate and Just Transition Forum aims to bring citizens, industry, and institutions together to

embed climate considerations at the heart of development planning, at the state and district levels”.

J. Jagadananda, Co-founder of CYSD, highlighted the significance of this collective effort. “We stand at a critical intersection of demographic transition and climate resilience. To realise Odisha’s ambitious vision, we need hands on the ground, institutions that work together, and partnerships built with purpose. OVC is a space for collective imagination, and institutionalising a Just Transition & Climate Forum is a major step forward,” he said.

During the Conclave, iFOREST released a flagship report titled ‘Building Odisha’s Green Workforce – Strengthening the Skilling Ecosystem and Enabling Integration in the Emerging Economy’.

The study shows that workforce development is central to achieving a just energy transition, so that Odisha’s youth and workers can be employed in emerging green economic sectors, such as renewable energy, electric vehicles, and green manufacturing, etc.

iFOREST study finds that currently, there is a huge demand-supply gap in the state’s green workforce. Sectors such as solar and EV are expanding rapidly, yet a majority of new entrants lack the necessary skills: nearly 70% of EV workers and 46% of solar workers have no sector-specific training. Besides, the survey of training institutes also shows that despite Odisha’s extensive network of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and more than 350 short-term skilling centres, green skilling has not been integrated into mainstream technical education.

The report recommends the following:

1. Odisha needs to develop a Green Jobs and Skills Mission, including time-bound strategies, to ensure holistic workforce development.
2. Establish Regional Green Skill Hubs, with a focus on regions to be potentially impacted by the energy transition.
3. Establish District Green Skill Councils to map opportunities, identify skill gaps and design localised skilling plans.
4. Integrate green skilling in the curriculum of ITIs, polytechnics and develop a dedicated green Train-the-Trainers programme.

iFOREST also convened three key sessions at OVC 2025, which received strong participation from civil society, practitioners, and institutional partners. The themes included Just Transitions for Inclusive Development; Integrating the workforce in the green economy; and Reimagining Market Systems for De-risking Livelihoods and Regenerative Growth.

About iFOREST

The International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST) is an independent non-profit research and innovation organization working on pressing environmental-development challenges in India, with a core focus on states and districts.

We conduct independent evidence-based research, develop new knowledge and innovative solutions, and engage with stakeholders to increase awareness, drive collective action and implement and scale-up solutions.

Visit: <https://iforest.global/> for more information.

For Media Queries

Shriya Mohan

Communications Lead

+91 7042144726