Plenary Session
Sovereignty Sustainability and Climate Change Resilience

Objective: To explore the role of philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in advancing sovereignty, sustainability, and climate resilience by promoting indigenous lifestyles and fostering equitable, community-centered development

Speaker
Sameer Shisodiya
CEO, Rainmatter Foundation

Representing the place and people is Swaraj

Climate change must be understood through lived experiences

Decision-making needs to shift to communities, especially those with indigenous knowledge

Success in climate efforts is not measurable in typical terms — it's about starting a movement

We should be mindful of rigid project control by funders - focus on tools and processes, not just outcomes

If funders don't align with your goal, move on

Speaker
Shraman Jha
CEO, Hindustan Unilever Foundation

CSR is evolving, rooted in Gandhian values of profit with purpose.

There is an ongoing debates about social license to operate among corporates.

Co-creation — corporates should work with NGOs using their ground knowledge

India's CSR law as a way to cultivate voluntary corporate responsibility, not just taxation

Agree that "Grassroot actions do not fit into CSR". There should be equal, respectful partnerships that embody Swaraj.

Speaker
Shaifalika Panda
Trustee and Founder CEO, Bansidhar and Ila Panda Foundation

We work with 300–400 villages, with 70% indigenous beneficiaries

Emphasis on education and capacity building for community ownership

There is a need for contextual, geography-specific solutions — cannot consider the designs from Tier-1 cities as-it-is

There should be flexibility in timelines and funding — different villages evolve at different paces

Call for a mindset shift among funders, NGOs, and communities

Moderator
Deval Sanghavi
Co-founder and Partner, Dasra

India's comprehensive law on CSR is a positive step, as only a few nations have such wide-reaching legislation

Common agreement
- Emphasis on shifting power and decision-making to local communities
- Effective climate resilience and development require adaptive planning and patient timelines
- Traditional funding models and outcome-based metrics don't fit the realities of climate action
- The relationship between funders and implementers must be based on mutual respect and co-creation, not top-down control