



The Wicked Challenge

Modern development often overlooks indigenous ecological wisdom and self-governance, leading to climate vulnerability, social disparities, and a lack of support for locally rooted, sustainable solutions.

BUT

Indigenous communities, rooted in traditional knowledge and cultural heritage, can lead scalable, low-cost, and sustainable climate solutions through sovereignty-led, community-driven approaches.

Evolving framework to empowering indigenous communities by cultivating sovereignty for sustainable climate solutions

Common agreement

Need for systemic change

Stress on rethinking frameworks to empower indigenous communities and move beyond fragmented efforts

Decentralization and local governance

Emphasis on local institutions, grassroots involvement, and community sovereignty

Integrating Indigenous Knowledge

Critique of current models

Challenging mainstream, urban-centric, or crisis-driven narratives

Sustainability through inclusion

Youth involvement, urban poor inclusion, and ecology-economy alignment



Speaker
Devjit Mitra
Director, Socratus Foundation

The crisis-oriented climate narrative generates fear: Called for rethinking climate change as a grammar—a system of meaning, not just crisis

Proposed a shift to a “flourishing orientation” focused on enabling regions to thrive

Advocated for a place-centered (rather than people-centered) framework



Speaker
Aruna Tirkey
Director - Ajam Emba Private Ltd.

Positioned food systems as a framework for community connection

The exclusion of the urban poor from food systems and related frameworks should be curbed



Speaker
Sanjay Singh
Secretary, Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan

Understanding climate issues at the ecosystem level

There is a need for strengthening local governance and integrating indigenous knowledge into policy

Call for transnational and pilot research, documentation, and dissemination of best practices

Strengthening the link between democracy and sustainability

Potential Solution

Shift climate narratives from fear-based crisis talk to a flourishing, place-centered approach

Strengthen local governance by empowering Panchayats and integrating indigenous knowledge

Build inclusive models through stakeholder dialogues, youth engagement, and reflecting lived experiences in frameworks

Align ecology with economy by promoting responsible consumerism, redefining profit, and adopting ecocentric development models

Ground institutions and think tanks in community realities, enabling academics and NGOs to co-create solutions with policymakers



Moderator
Anant Bhagwati
Partner, Bridgespan

Sovereignty-led sustainable development is closely linked to leadership building, particularly through strategic and thought leadership