

fair travel



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Program Dossier



*f*air travel with India's IT Companies

A non-profit program for combatting climate breakdown by reducing excessive flying

An opportunity

India's Information Technology enterprises, acting collectively, can combat climate breakdown. Our climate-change work with Large Indian IT Companies since 2015 has unearthed a realistic possibility, founded on science-based analysis, that adopting a more responsible and fair business travel approach can lead to climate-healing benefits similar to that of planting 1.8 million trees by 2025. But for this to happen, India's IT companies must travel lightly and fly thoughtfully.

Backstory

In 2019-2020, flights taken by a typical Indian IT Company with 200,000 employees emitted 110,000 tonnes of climate pollution: that's the climate impact from chopping down 0.5 million trees. A science-based projection for NASSCOM's 2800+ Indian member companies has revealed that they collectively emit approximately 2.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gasses per year, that's 10 million trees lost per year; lost forever from just Indian IT industry's acts of flying.

"an average return flight from Bangalore to Mumbai emits Climate Pollution (i.e. Greenhouse Gasses) that erases the benefit of 100 trees; that's each passenger personally chopping down 1 tree at the end of the return flight"

Globally, the Air Travel industry is becoming a target of significant government and civil society actions which are unearthing its hidden truths and neglected climate destruction. These actions are escalating in 2020, gathering momentum across all sections of society; they are no longer spearheaded by just traditional climate activists. They include school children, mothers, and grandparents, all saying 'enough' to excessive flying that's imperiling the future of life on earth. Consider just 2 of many global movements underway in 2020:

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- ‘Flight-shame’ or ‘flygskam’, started in Sweden in 2018, picking up pace all over the world in 2020. The movement has already led to dramatic reductions in airline trips in Europe and business air travel is a particular target of this broadly popular campaign.
 - On February 27, 2020, a vigorous civil-society led court battled against the aviation industry led to this ruling by the UK Court of Appeals: the planned 3rd runway project at Heathrow airport was illegal and incompatible with the Government’s own pledge to curb carbon emissions in according with the Paris Climate Deal. The court’s ruling is the first major ruling in the world to be based on the Paris climate agreement and is inspiring challenges against other aviation capacity expansion projects in Europe and Asia, including India.

It is clear, the days of Indian IT employees flying uninterruptedly across at least Europe and UK without facing significant disruption are numbered; they and their company’s top management facing severe social pressure through Twitter and Instagram campaigns (as has happened to the Textile Industry in the last few years) to curb excessive flying and climate destruction, is a rapidly escalating reality.

Indian IT Industry as thought leaders

Large IT companies in India (eg. Infosys, Wipro, TCS), have demonstrated thought leadership to mitigate their climate impacts in FY 2020-2021. Some IT companies have established ‘green’ criterion to be met by vendors/suppliers, some have set internal targets to switch to climate friendly recycled paper. Procurement of energy from renewable resources and replacing conventional lighting systems with LED technology are other initiatives underway.

*“‘Green’ initiatives by Indian IT companies are gradually emerging, however **air travel remains untouched** despite widespread awareness amongst sustainability officials in these companies that air travel is the single largest hotspot of climate pollution emerging from their operations. **An industry known for ‘innovation’ in India sticks to business-as-usual mode when it comes to excessive flying**”*

Despite these alarming climate impacts from excessive flying, there is hope for the IT industry to become climate-protectors. Pilot versions of the FairTravel program undertaken at a large IT

company in India, from 2015 to 2020, have resulted in a 15-20 % reduction of its climate impacts from air travel over 3 years.

The Program

FairTravel works with pioneering IT and BPO/Finance Companies in India through a participatory method, which has been successfully employed in global enterprises, called: 'carbon reduction action groups' (CRAGs). CRAGs are mixed-groups consisting of anywhere from 10 to 40 employees across the corporate management structure. They work together, in a facilitated environment, to set their own Carbon Footprint reduction targets, including climate impacts from business related Air Travel. The groups will co-create their roadmap to achieve these reduction targets alongside FairTravel which will handhold them through the entire process and provide all necessary training and support to achieve these targets. FairTravel will provide carbon footprinting and other decision support, along with communications support, for Corporate Sustainability teams of participant companies to amplify these pioneering efforts. Upon completion of 1-year long 'pilots', their CRAGs reductions will be benchmarked compared to average employees who aren't engaged through these cohorts (i.e. 'control' groups). Findings and insights from this project will be used to influence NASSCOM through its platforms (roundtable events) for amplifying the discourse to include all significant members companies, who can be supported through Regional Chapter-level CRAGs that can be operated within the umbrella of the association's other membership services.

About cBalance: cBalance is an Indian social enterprise. It has worked with India's 2nd Largest IT Company, Wipro Ltd, to assess its GHG Emissions Inventory from business travel for 7 years (2014 to 2021). As part of this multi-year effort, it has devised and modelled scenarios for how Wipro can reduce carbon emissions from business travel. cBalance has also surveyed Wipro's 180,000 employees to ascertain business travel related attitudes and co-ideate possible solutions for incentivizing reduced air travel at Wipro.

Partners: Wipro Ltd., Infosys Ltd.

Invitation

FairTravel will be launched in January 2022. To learn how your organization can participate in the Launch Roundtables in Pune and Bangalore, write in to:

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