Developing a Climate Consciousness

What is the issue?

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- Climate change has the potential to massively disrupt and reshape lives.
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- Hence, vulnerable populations should be made aware of the potential risks and how to cope with them.
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What are the risks involved?

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- There are several alarming predictions about the increasing erratic nature of world's weather systems in the future due to climate change.
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- UN Sustainable Goals Report (SGR), 2018 notes that climate change is among the key factors in rising hunger and human displacement.
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- World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that climate change will cause an additional 2.5 lakh deaths per year between 2030 and 2050.
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- It has been predicted that climate change will enhance the prevalence of decreases like malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.
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- Particularly, the vulnerability of low-income groups in developing countries like India is very high, which is also accentuated by its tropical location.
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- Notably, World Bank (WB) projects that climate change could cost India 2.8% of its GDP, and diminish living standards for nearly half of the population.
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- But despite these severe risks, the vulnerable population has little awareness of them, with little knowledge of the changing weather

patterns.
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What is the current situational awareness?

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- Several initiatives have been implemented to create awareness about climate change and about how to mitigate it and adapt to it.
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- In 1991, Supreme Court (SC) directed the Central government and all State governments to provide compulsory environmental education to all students.
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- Further, the court had directed “corporate organisations, research and education institutes, NGOs” to create awareness on the same.
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- The vision is to inculcate the concept of environmental sustainability and drive home the message for judicious use of food, water, nutrition and health.
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- However, despite these efforts, and the reach of the court’s order, climate change seems to find low salience in everyday lives and conversations.
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- Further, most of the country’s plans for vulnerable populations are towards poverty alleviation, enhancing access to education, sanitation, and healthcare.
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- With climate change emerging as an imminent challenge of a massive proportion, it deserves its due attention.
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What is the way forward?

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- At present, climate change is not specifically mentioned as a domain permissible under “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR) mandate.
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- While work in this area can be taken up as part of environmental sustainability, a more specific mention will help it gather more attention.

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- This way, more corporate organisations may be roped in to create awareness, mitigation and resilience-building.
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- Scaling up current initiatives of the corporate and social sectors to regional or national levels would be an early, albeit challenging, solution.
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- Similarly, the film industry, book writers, and gaming companies could design their products with an appeal in this regard.
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Source: The Hindu

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