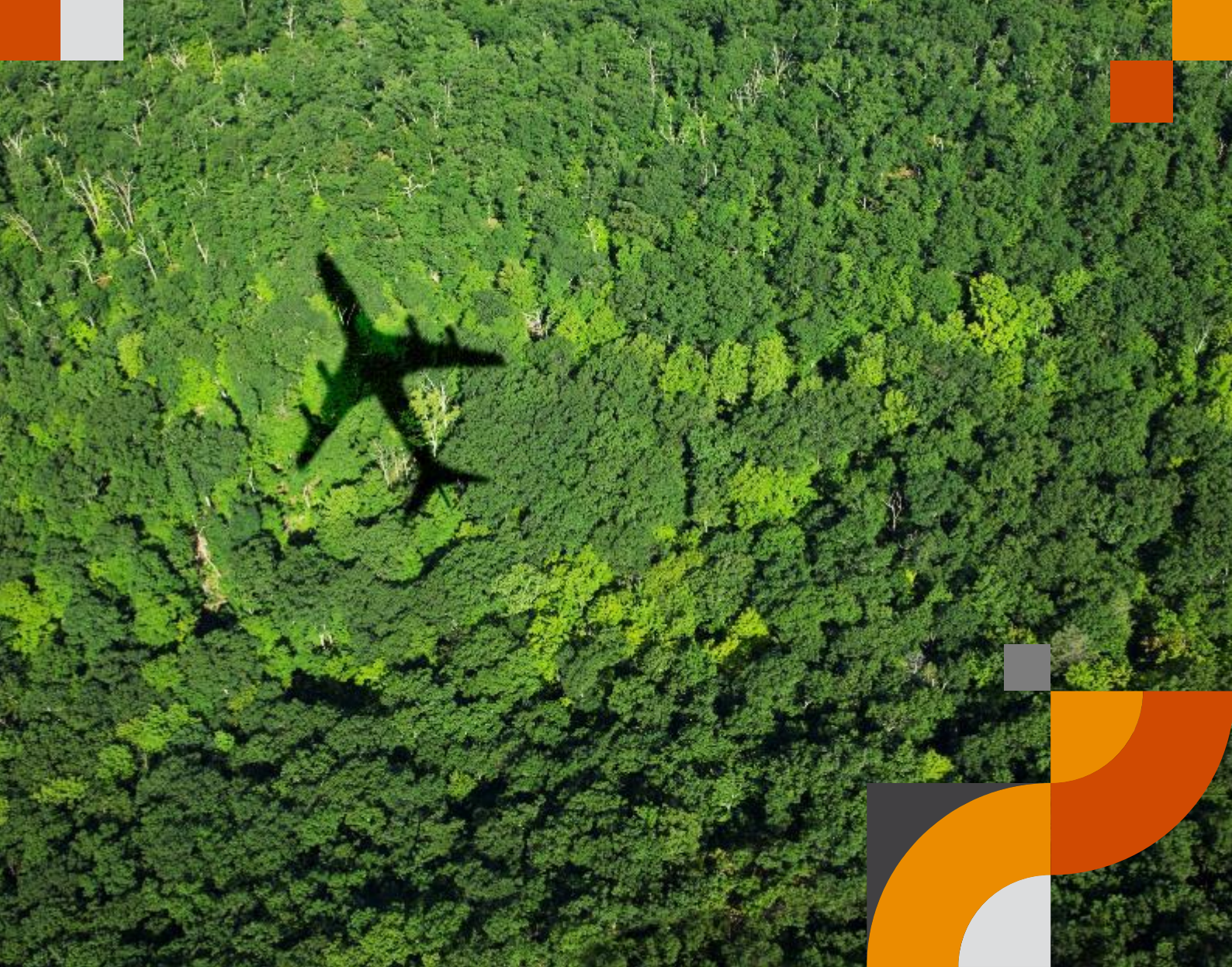




Impact Assessment Report of Urban Afforestation Programme

IndusInd Bank Limited

August 2025

Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Form
BSF	Border Security Force
CERE	Centre for Environmental Research & Education
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
IBL	IndusInd Bank Limited
IDI	In-Depth Interview
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD- DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development- Development Assistance Committee
PWCALLP	Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UAP	Urban Afforestation Programme

Executive Summary

IndusInd Bank Limited (IBL) engaged Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP (PWCALLP) to carry out the impact assessment of the **Urban Afforestation Programme (UAP)** with a purpose to evaluate the impact created on the community through the activities undertaken during the programme period. The scope of work included reviewing the Key performance indicators (KPIs) as defined by the Management of the IBL under the framework for implementing the programmes for the outputs, outcomes and impact of the programmes. OECD-DAC framework was adopted, and recommendations were provided on the Programme's performance for their further evaluation and consideration.

A qualitative methodology was deployed to carry out the impact assessment of the programme. As part of the qualitative approach, a structured sampling plan was implemented, involving 12 interactions (In-Depth Interviews) with varied stakeholders in four locations namely Ghaziabad, Gurugram, Mumbai and Greater Noida.

OECD DAC Framework Assessment

Relevance:

The Urban Afforestation Programme (UAP) has enhanced urban greenery by **planting over 186,500 trees in 21 cities across nine Indian states**. It has provided livelihood support during the COVID-19 pandemic and **improved air quality, benefiting both direct and indirect beneficiaries**. The initiative has also created habitats for fauna, increasing bird species like sparrows, bulbuls, and mynas, and improved urban livability by transforming spaces such as the Badshahpur corridor and Colaba Woods Garden into areas for exercise and relaxation.

Coherence:

The Urban Afforestation Programme (UAP) **enhances urban green spaces and ecological restoration**, supporting national and local environmental goals like air quality and biodiversity. It aligns with IndusInd Bank's CSR policy on environmental sustainability and contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including **SDG 3 (Good Health), SDG 8 (Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action)**.

Effectiveness:

Since 2019, the UAP has planted trees **at 61 sites in 21 cities** across nine Indian states, achieving a **90-95% survival rate**. This initiative has boosted urban climate resilience by enhancing soil fertility and water table recharge, and it has created employment opportunities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Efficiency:

The Urban Afforestation Programme (UAP) has expanded **green spaces and biodiversity**, creating jobs, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It boosts urban climate resilience by enhancing soil fertility, reducing erosion, and improving water table recharge. The programme **supports diverse flora and fauna, promoting ecosystem resilience**, reducing disease risks, and aiding pollination and seed dispersal. It also improved air quality, reduces urban heat, and provides recreational green spaces that enhance mental health and well-being.

Impact:

- **Widespread Planting Success:** Since 2019, the UAP has planted over **186,500 trees across 61 sites in 21 cities in nine Indian states**, achieving a **90-95% survival rate**. This initiative has addressed immediate environmental challenges and set the stage for a sustainable urban future.

- **Air Quality and Community Benefits:** The program has **improved air quality and reduced pollution**, benefiting around **20,000 people**. It has transformed wastelands into green spaces, enhancing urban livability and reducing health risks. Community involvement ensures the long-term sustainability of these green spaces.
- **Ecosystem and Biodiversity:** UAP's efforts have increased urban climate resilience by **improving soil fertility, reducing erosion, and enhancing water table recharge**. Using native species has **boosted local biodiversity, reduced disease susceptibility**, and facilitated pollination and seed dispersal, evidenced by increased bird species sightings.
- **Carbon Sequestration Potential:** The plantations contribute to urban temperature reduction by absorbing CO₂. According to the 2022-23 Annual Report by CERE, a single tree can absorb up to **22 kg of CO₂ annually**. Over 40 years, a tree can sequester one tonne of CO₂, creating significant potential for carbon sequestration.
- **Pandemic Employment Support:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative provided **essential jobs to about 30 individuals at Mumbai's Colaba Woods Garden**, offering their families vital income during challenging times.

Sustainability:

By **engaging local communities** and **securing government support**, this programme fostered shared responsibility and long-term sustainability. Designed to **deliver long-term environmental benefits** such as enhance air quality and soil stabilisation, it also promoted **community well-being** by incorporating recreational spaces to boost community engagement.

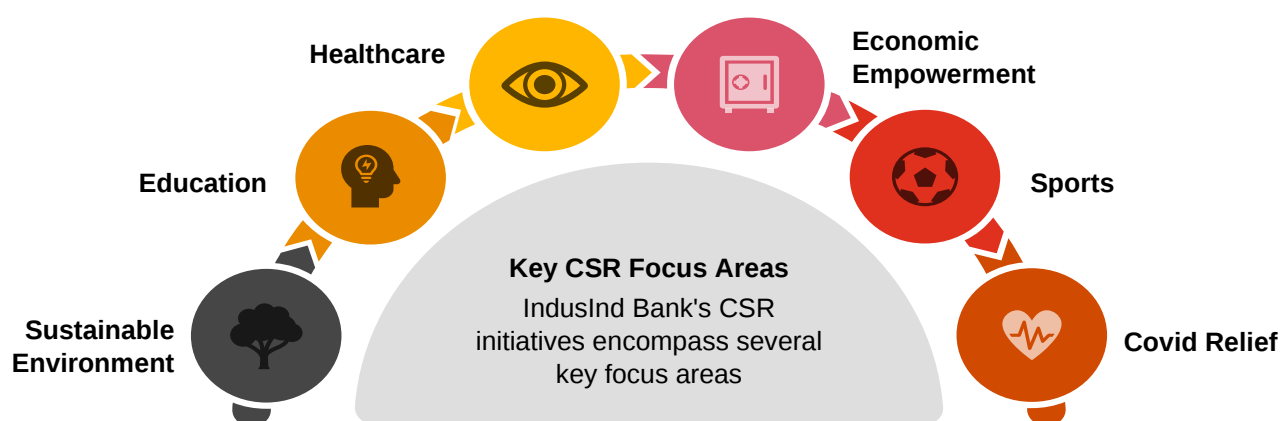
Active **community involvement in maintaining** green areas instilled a lasting sense of ownership. **Using native species** improved resilience, while Miyawaki plantations became self-sustaining after three years. **Adaptable to future urban development and climate changes**, the programme served as a replicable model for transforming wastelands, as seen at Sikanderpur and Badshahpur corridors.

1. Introduction and background

1.1. About IndusInd Bank Limited and its CSR

IndusInd Bank Limited (IBL) is a financial institution committed to sustainable growth, supporting community empowerment, environmental conservation, and stakeholder value through its comprehensive CSR initiatives. IndusInd Bank's CSR framework involves a long-term, impactful approach categorised into Flagship Programmes and Strategic Programmes. Flagship Programmes focus on holistic rural development, aligning with national priorities like the NITI Aayog Aspirational Districts initiative, aiming to boost economic empowerment and resource efficiency over 5-10 years. Strategic Programmes span 3-5 years and address critical environmental, educational, and sports inclusivity issues in urban and semi-urban areas. A significant portion of the CSR budget supports these initiatives, underpinned by partnerships with government bodies, NGOs, and leveraging public-private partnerships.¹

Figure 1: Key CSR Focus Areas



1.2. About the projects under assessment

IndusInd Bank (IBL) has implemented **Urban Afforestation Programme (UAP)** in collaboration with Centre for Environmental Research & Education (CERE). UAP is aimed at expanding **green areas in urban environments, creating habitats for urban fauna, and leveraging the carbon sequestration abilities of native tree species**. The key objective of the programme is to assist companies, organizations, and individuals in **reducing their carbon footprint**. The programme activities have benefited local communities, landowners, and community members from the slums by offering job opportunities through plantation and maintenance work and supporting local nurseries in growing and distributing saplings.²

Since 2019, the programme has successfully planted over **1,86,500 trees** across 61 plantation sites in **21 cities** in **nine states** of India. This includes around **100 varieties** of native species from different regions such as mango, neem, amla, bel, cashew, mahua, almond, bamboo, padas, jamun, and. Three types of plantations have been carried out under the programme: **traditional, dense** and the **Miyawaki method**³.

¹ Source: <https://www.indusind.com/in/en/csr-home/our-approach/csr-policy.html>

² Source: UAP_2021_09_14_IBL_UAP_Annual_Report_2020-21 (report shared by CERE)

³ Source: UAP_Plantation_Sites_Summary_2015-22 (report shared by CERE)

2. Approach and methodology

IndusInd Bank Limited (IBL) engaged Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP (PWCALLP) to carry out the impact assessment of **Urban Afforestation Programme** with a purpose to evaluate the impact created on the community through the activities undertaken during the programme period. The scope of work included reviewing the Key performance indicators (KPIs) as defined by the Management of the IBL under the framework for implementing the programme for the outputs, outcomes and impact. OECD-DAC framework was adopted to conduct the impact assessment and recommendations were provided on the programme's performance for their further evaluation and consideration.

The assessment was undertaken using the qualitative method to understand the interventions undertaken under the CSR programmes post mutual discussion with IBL. The scope of work involved conducting the desk review of the programme documents, mapping of key programme stakeholders, developing research methodology and impact map, data collection and analysis and report writing. This is an abridged report created basis the impact assessment undertaken and a detailed report has also been submitted to the management.

Stage 1: Desk review

- A detailed understanding of the interventions was obtained through an inception meeting held with the IBL team.
- The scope of work was agreed upon, and IBL expectations were understood.
- A desk review of programme documents was undertaken.
- Mapping of programme stakeholders was carried out, based on the desk review and preliminary interactions with key stakeholders and in consultation with the IBL team, for interaction purposes.

Stage 2: Planning and tool preparation

- The data collection plan was finalised in consultation with the IBL team and the implementation partner.
- Key indicators and research tools were shared and finalised after the incorporation of feedback from the IBL team.
- The developed tools were digitised.
- The IBL team was apprised of the data collection plan for the field visit.

Stage 3: Data collection & field visit

- The field team was trained on the data collection tools.
- The field data collection process was initiated.
- In-depth interviews (IDIs) with beneficiaries and key stakeholders such as implementation partner were conducted.

Stage 4: Data analysis and report writing

- The key findings were assimilated to better analyse the data.
- OECD-DAC analysis was conducted using primary and secondary data.
- The draft of the impact assessment report was prepared for the IBL team.
- Feedback received from IBL was incorporated and report was submitted to IBL for their management's consideration.

2.1. Sampling Plan

Owing to the nature of this Programme, a **qualitative research approach** was chosen to examine the impact. This approach included engaging with key stakeholders through qualitative interactions. These interactions facilitated the assessment of subjective experiences and allowed for in-depth exploration of various perspectives related to the programme. The study included 12 in-depth qualitative interviews to capture diverse stakeholder perspectives. Details of the qualitative interactions are given in the table below:

Table 1: Qualitative sampling plan

Sl. No.	Stakeholders	Type of interaction	No. of interactions conducted
Mumbai: Colaba Woods			
1	Direct beneficiary (Supervisor)	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	1
2	Indirect beneficiaries (Community members)	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	2
3	Implementing partner	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	1
Gurgaon			
4	Direct Beneficiary (Supervisors and Gardener)	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	3
5	Indirect Beneficiaries (Community members)	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	1
6	Implementing Partner	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	1
Ghaziabad			
8	Implementing partner	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	1
Greater Noida			
9	Direct Beneficiary (Quarter Master- BSF Camp)	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	1
10	Implementing Partner	In-Depth Interview (IDI)	1
	Total		12

3. Key Findings of the Assessment

3.1. Summary of the Impact Created

Relevance

The Urban Afforestation Programme (UAP) has significantly contributed to urban greenery by planting over **186,500 trees across 21 cities** in nine Indian states, demonstrating broad geographical coverage. The programme has been positively received by both direct and indirect beneficiaries, with direct beneficiaries gaining livelihood support during the COVID-19 pandemic and indirect beneficiaries experiencing improved air quality and reduced pollution.

The initiative has successfully created **habitats for local fauna**, as evidenced by the increase in bird species like sparrows, bulbuls, and mynas in areas such as the Badshahpur and Sikanderpur corridors. Additionally, the creation of **natural recreational spaces** has **enhanced urban livability**, providing areas for exercise and relaxation, as seen in the transformation of the Badshahpur corridor and Colaba Woods Garden.

Coherence

The Urban Afforestation Programme (UAP) aligns with urban planning needs by addressing enhancing green spaces, contributing to ecological restoration. It supports **national and local environmental priorities**, such as improving air quality and supporting biodiversity. Additionally, the programme aligns with IndusInd Bank's CSR policy, focusing on environmental sustainability and contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The programme aligns with multiple SDGs such as **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 13: Climate Action.**

Effectiveness

Since 2019, the UAP has planted trees across 61 sites in 21 cities within nine Indian states, **achieving a 90-95% survival rate**. The programme has contributed to urban climate resilience by improving soil fertility and enhancing water table recharge. It has additionally generated employment opportunities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Efficiency

The Urban Afforestation Programme (UAP) has significantly increased green space coverage and enhanced biodiversity. It has generated both **short-term and long-term employment opportunities**, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and **contributed to urban climate resilience** by improving soil fertility, reducing erosion, and enhancing water table recharge. The programme promotes urban biodiversity and ecosystem resilience by supporting diverse flora and fauna, which reduces disease risks, facilitates pollination and seed dispersal, and supports varied wildlife. Additionally, it has improved human well-being through better air quality, reduced urban heat, and the creation of recreational green spaces that foster mental health and well-being.

Impact

1. Enhancement in overall ecological health at the plantation sites

Since 2019, the UAP has successfully planted over **186,500 trees across 61 plantation sites in 21 cities**, spanning nine states in India, achieving an impressive survival rate of 90-95%. This has led to resolving immediate environmental challenges and has laid the groundwork for a more sustainable urban future.

Table 2: Year-wise details on tree plantation methods used*

Year	Total no. of Plantations	No. of Traditional Plantations	No. of Miyawaki Plantations	No. of Plantations using other methods (Mixed or Dense)
2019-20	59,000	44,000	15,000	-
2020-21	56,000	41,000	15,000	-
2021-22	52,000	5,000	37,000	10,000
2022-23	19,500	8,000	9,000	2,500

*As per the information provided by CERE

The plantation in Colaba Woods Garden in Mumbai **transformed approximately 4 acres of land**. The programme involved systematically planting 5 plants within every 2x3 feet area, enhancing both biodiversity and aesthetic appeal. Prior to the programme, some sections of the garden served as informal **dumping grounds, resulting in a pervasive unpleasant odor** deterring any recreational use. By clearing all the accumulated waste, the programme led to significantly **improving the environmental health and usability** of the garden.

Similarly, in Ghaziabad, the plantation transformed a **former dumping ground in the midst of an industrial area into a green space**. The strategic planting of trees has effectively deterred further dumping, thereby ensuring cleanliness. The plantation boundaries have been secured with wiring and are regularly **maintained, ensuring the healthy growth and protection of the trees**.

In **Badshahpur Forest Corridor**, previously characterised by waste accumulation and encroachments, has been successfully transformed into an engaging green space for the residents of Gurugram, due to collaborative efforts of government agencies, IBL and the implementing partner - I am Gurgaon.

2. Improved ecosystem resilience and biodiversity enhancement:

The programme's focus on planting native species like Karanj, Jamun, Neem, and others **ensures vegetation thrives** in local climates and soils, supporting long-term ecosystem sustainability. These species **enhance biodiversity by providing habitats and food for wildlife**. By increasing plant density and diversity with 60-70 varieties, including mango, neem, amla, and bamboo, the programme creates complex habitats that support a wide range of bird species such as sparrows, bulbuls, and parrots, indicating **improved biodiversity and ecological balance**. For flora, this diversity promotes genetic variation and resilience, reducing disease risks and facilitating pollination and seed dispersal, aiding natural regeneration. For fauna, dense vegetation offers essential resources like food and shelter, supporting diverse wildlife. The presence of fruit-bearing trees and nectar-rich flowers supports insects, serving as prey for birds and mammals, **fostering a balanced ecosystem**. Overall, the program enhances ecosystem resilience, promotes urban biodiversity, and benefits human communities by **improving air quality, reducing urban heat, and providing recreational spaces**.

3. Improvement in community well-being and urban liveability

The programme has transformed urban landscapes into aesthetically pleasing spaces that serve as hubs for **recreation, rejuvenation, and community gatherings**. These enhanced green spaces have become vital assets to the community, encouraging residents to spend more time outdoors and engage in a variety of health-promoting activities such as yoga, walking, and cycling as observed during the site visit.

The programme has played a pivotal role in enhancing **air quality and reducing pollution**, indirectly benefiting approximately **20,000 people**. The programme also enabled strategic transformation of wastelands, such as the Badshahpur corridor, into thriving green spaces, enhancing urban liveability and reducing health hazards. The programme has aesthetically transformed urban landscapes and promoted community well-being. The community has also been involved in maintaining and protecting green spaces, ensuring their long-term sustainability.

5. Potential for significant carbon sequestration

Plantations absorb substantial amounts of CO₂, contributing to urban temperature reduction. As per the data in the Annual Report 2022-23 shared by CERE on the Urban Afforestation Programme, a single tree can absorb up to 22 kg of CO₂ per year. Over a 40-year lifespan, a tree can sequester one tonne of CO₂. This programme has created a significant potential for carbon sequestration in the near future.

Table 3: Carbon sequestration potential of saplings planted*

Year	No. of Saplings planted	No. of saplings geotagged	Carbon sequestration potential value (MTCO ₂) (Post replantation)
2019-20	59,000	10,443	14,387.79
2020-21	56,000	14,142	11,983.69
2021-22	52,000	16,629	12,288.56
2022-23	19,500	10,837	4250.47

*As per information provided by CERE

4. Positive economic impact on the communities

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative at Mumbai's Colaba Woods Garden provided essential employment opportunities, supporting around **30 individuals** in need of a livelihood. This support enabled their families to secure income during these challenging times.

Beyond direct employment, the programme's impact is evident in the transformation of urban environments. The creation of lush, well-maintained green spaces has enhanced the area's appeal, attracting both residents and investors. These green spaces have been associated with improved mental and physical health, reducing stress and encouraging physical activity. As a result, they may contribute to lower healthcare costs and increased productivity, offering indirect benefits to the local economy.

Sustainability

By engaging local communities and securing government support, this programme cultivated a sense of shared responsibility and collective action, which is vital for ensuring long-term sustainability.

The programme was designed to **deliver long-term environmental benefits**, such as enhanced air quality and soil stabilization, ensuring its sustainability. It promoted community well-being by incorporating aesthetically pleasing recreational spaces, complete with seating and lighting, to boost community engagement and visitor experiences. **Significant community involvement** in the upkeep and protection of green spaces fostered a lasting sense of ownership. The use of native species enhanced the sustainability and resilience of the plantations, and saplings planted via the Miyawaki method became self-sustaining after three years, requiring no further maintenance. Adaptable to future urban development and environmental changes, the programme supported climate change resilience and served as a replicable model for transforming wastelands, as demonstrated at Sikanderpur and Badshahpur corridors, into vibrant green spaces.

4. Recommendations

Below recommendation is based on the observations after interaction with the stakeholders to further enhance the impact of the programme:

- **Increase Urban Public Engagement:** To strengthen community ownership and raise environmental consciousness, the programme may consider expanding public engagement initiatives. This could include organising urban green volunteering drives, establishing partnerships with schools for eco-education activities, and hosting public plantation days that allow citizens to actively participate in afforestation efforts. Additionally, to enhance public learning and appreciation of biodiversity, informational signage can be installed at plantation sites. These signboards can include QR codes that provide visitors with detailed information about the tree species, ecological benefits, and the broader impact of the plantation initiative.

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