



Recommendations for Worker Welfare: Brick Manufacturing Responses to Climate Change for CSOs

September 2024ⁱ

Drawing on a series of ongoing analyses and discussions with former kiln workers in India and their lived experience of exploitation in the kilns and climate change, we have developed a series of recommendations to support workers, and advise kiln owners, policymakers and civil society organisations (CSOs) to ensure workers are supported and have access to support as they are increasingly affected by climate change. Our recommendations for improved worker welfare are grounded in research based on global climate models, current recommendations in the literature, and lived experience; and focus on four key climate hazards for workers 1) heat, 2) lack of access to water, 3) heavy rainfall, and 4) air pollution.

The recommendations in this briefing are specific to how CSOs, can respond to climate change impacts on worker welfare.

This briefing is part of a four-part series; the other briefings for the series include those for kiln workers, kiln owners, and policymakers.

Climate Change: An Industry Issue

Climate change has an impact on the environment and conditions workers face. These impacts will vary from place to place, but they are often felt most by vulnerable workers.

India is increasingly experiencing periods of extreme heat, drought, flooding, and air pollution.

In this briefing, a series of recommendations are provided to CSOs to support their workers against four primary climate-related concerns. These concerns are:

- **Heat Stress:** extreme heat exposure can lead to heat stress in populations, combining air temperature, humidity, and air pressure to provide an indication of the effects on human health.
- **Water Stress:** demand on water availability is compared against the amount that is available; when demand exceeds supply this leads to water stress, leading to potential shortages

and difficulties for communities and ecosystems.

- **Precipitation:** referring to rainfall levels, both increased (which can lead to flood events) and decreased (which can lead to drought).
- **Air Pollution:** emissions of particulate matter of 2.5nm in diameter (PM2.5) from the combustion of materials are monitored as they can increase the risks of adverse health outcomes through poor air quality.

These adverse climate impacts can lead to varied health outcomes (e.g., lung and heart issues, dehydration, long-term illnesses, and even death), and cause shifts in the number of hours worked, and income made by workers and their families.

Efforts to support workers should be a combined effort by the kiln owners, the local, state and national government, and through the support of CSOs.

Here we outline the key recommendations for how CSOs can engage in to respond to climate change in the brick kiln industry.

Responding to Heat Stressⁱⁱ

- Periods of high temperatures sometimes mean owners do not attend the kiln sites; this means it is an ideal time to access workers and assess their support needs. CSO staff should follow the guidance above for workers and ensure they undertake appropriate risk assessments prior to engaging in such activities during extreme heat.
- CSOs should support workers in ensuring they are aware of WASH and housing standards that should be available to them, and report non-compliance to the local authorities.
- Support to address worker welfare and climate issues should be considered in tandem, including through combined initiatives, campaigns, support available, and media engagement.

Responding to Water Stressⁱⁱⁱ

- Anti-salinification, and potable water kits should be provided to workers who do not have access to clean and potable drinking water.
- Encourage alternative collection of water from precipitation from 'grey' water sources to use within the production of bricks (e.g., collecting wastewater from other industries, rain barrels) rather than other water sources.
- CSOs should support workers in ensuring they are aware of WASH and housing standards that should be available to them, and report non-compliance to the local authorities.
- Support to address worker welfare and climate issues should be considered in tandem, including through combined initiatives, campaigns, support available, and media engagement.

Responding to Precipitation^{iv}

- Hygiene kits, safe and potable drinking water access, food supplies, and mosquito nets supplied to families.
- Provisions of safe shelter during periods of flooding and whilst flood water recedes.
- Access to unconditional cash transfers – paid directly to affect households into their bank accounts to support recovery from flooding events.
- CSOs should support workers in ensuring they are aware of WASH and housing standards that should be available to them, and report non-compliance to the local authorities.
- Support to address worker welfare and climate issues should be considered in tandem, including through combined initiatives, campaigns, support available, and media engagement.

Responding to Air Pollution^v

- When working to access workers to provide support, kiln owners not granting access due to environmental non-compliance should be noted – and reported – as they may indicate signs of poor worker welfare.
- Promote national and state-wide green financing schemes, including those that promote improvements to brick kiln infrastructure, and up-skilling for workers.
- Support to address worker welfare and climate issues should be considered in tandem, including through combined initiatives, campaigns, support available, and media engagement.

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ⁱⁱ Heat Stress recommendations from National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Government of India (2024). [Heat wave: Do's & Don'ts](#) (Accessed 25 June 2024); WHO (2024). [Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)](#): World Health Organization (Accessed 28 August 2024); OHCHR (2024). [The human right to adequate housing](#): UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (Accessed 28 August 2024); and suggestions from a Research Advisory Group with Lived Experience in India (July 2024) and suggestions from partner organisations (August 2024).

ⁱⁱⁱ Tricoles, R. (2022). [The Emotional Weight of Water Stress](#) (Accessed 25 June 2024); WHO (2024). [Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)](#): World Health Organization (Accessed 28 August 2024); [The human right to adequate housing](#): UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (Accessed 28 August 2024); and suggestions from a Research Advisory Group with Lived

Experience in India (July 2024) and feedback from partners (August 2024).

^{iv} Caritas India (2017). [Northeast flood response: How the relief work started](#) (Accessed 24 June 2024); India CARE. (2009). [INDIA CARE relief workers reach flood affected families](#) (Accessed 24 June 2024); Reuters. (2018). [India wins praise for 'exemplary' flood relief as community pitches in](#) (Accessed 24 June 2024); World Health Organization. (2024). [Safety during monsoon and floods](#) (Accessed 24 June 2024); WHO. (2024). [Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)](#): World Health Organization (Accessed 28 August 2024); OHCHR. (2024). [The human right to adequate housing](#): UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (Accessed 28 August 2024); and suggestions from a Research Advisory Group with Lived Experience in India (July 2024) and from partner organisations (August 2024).

^v World Health Organization (2019). [What to do when there is an air pollution alert](#) (Accessed 25 June 2024); Leeds City Council. (2024). [Protect yourself from air pollution](#): Clean Air Leeds (Accessed 25 June 2024); and suggestions from a Research Advisory Group with Lived Experience in India (July 2024) and from partner organisations (August 2024).