

Beyond Compliance: Corporate Responsibility, Fourth-Generation of Human Rights and India's Renewable Energy Transition

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ABSTRACT

India's pursuit of a low-carbon energy system through solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, green hydrogen, and battery storage is frequently presented as an unambiguous social good. This framing, while understandable given the urgency of climate mitigation, tends to obscure a harder question: whether the manner in which renewable infrastructure is sited, financed, built, and eventually retired is itself compatible with human dignity, ecological integrity, and fairness toward those who will inherit the consequences of today's decisions. This article argues that the answer depends less on the technology chosen than on how corporate responsibility is conceived and enforced across a project's life. Drawing on constitutional doctrine, environmental and company law, sustainability-disclosure requirements, and the emerging discourse on so-called fourth-generation human rights oriented toward climate security, ecological continuity, technological fairness, and obligations to future generations the paper contends that voluntary corporate social responsibility spending and post-hoc welfare gestures cannot substitute for continuous human-rights and environmental due diligence. Using doctrinal and policy analysis, the paper traces impacts across the project life cycle, from site selection through decommissioning, and proposes an eight-principle accountability model together with measurable indicators. It concludes that India's clean-energy transition will earn lasting legal and social legitimacy only when responsibility is designed into project governance itself, rather than appended to it as an afterthought.

Keywords: Corporate Accountability; Renewable Energy; Fourth-Generation Rights; Climate Justice; Sustainable Development; India; ESG.

INTRODUCTION

Few propositions in Indian energy policy attract as much cross-partisan agreement as the need to expand renewable generation. Rising demand, urban growth, industrial ambition, and exposure to volatile fossil-fuel markets have together pushed solar, wind, green hydrogen, biomass, small hydropower, and storage technologies toward the centre of national planning. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy coordinates this expansion with state nodal agencies and regulators, and the resulting build-out has generated capital investment, rural employment, and measurable emissions reductions.

Yet the label "clean energy" does useful but partial work. It correctly distinguishes renewable from coal, oil, and gas on a carbon-intensity basis; it says nothing about the land a solar park displaces the migratory corridors a wind farm interrupts, the river regime a hydropower scheme reorders, or the mineral supply chains a battery factory depends upon. A large ground-mounted solar installation can sever a village's access to grazing tracts or seasonal water points. Transmission corridors fragment habitats even where the generating asset itself is relatively benign. Biomass feedstock cultivation can quietly compete with food crops for scarce land and irrigation. None of this is an argument against renewable it is an argument against treating them as automatically just.

The real question, then, is not whether India should build more renewable capacity, but whether it builds this capacity in a way that respects human dignity, protects ecological systems, distributes gains and losses fairly, and leaves options open for people not yet born. This is the terrain increasingly described through the idiom of fourth-generation human rights a loosely bounded but analytically useful category concerned with climate stability, technological fairness, bioethical risk, digital-era harms, and intergenerational obligation. The category does not replace older rights frameworks; it extends them into domains that first-, second-, and third-generation rights language was not designed to capture.

International recognition of a standalone human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment affirmed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2021 has reinforced the connection between ecological harm and human-rights violation. India's own constitutional jurisprudence reached a structurally similar place earlier and by a different route: through judicial expansion of Article 21's guarantee of life and personal liberty to include clean air, potable water, and a livable environment, reinforced by the directive principle in Article 48A and the citizen's duty in Article 51A(g). Doctrines such as sustainable development, the precautionary principle, the polluter-pays principle, the public-trust doctrine, and intergenerational equity now sit comfortably within Indian environmental law.

Corporate actors are not peripheral to this framework; they are central to it. Renewable-energy developers make the land-use, labour, financing, and supply-chain decisions that determine whether a project advances or undermines the rights described above. Treating corporate responsibility as synonymous with statutory CSR spending or with regulatory compliance narrowly defined understates what is actually required. A genuinely responsible developer identifies, prevents, mitigates, and remedies adverse impacts across the entire project life, not merely at the point of environmental clearance.

This paper develops that argument in five moves. It first situates fourth-generation rights conceptually within the energy-transition context; it then maps India's relevant legal and regulatory architecture; it catalogues the human-rights risks that renewable projects characteristically generate; it proposes a life-cycle accountability model with accompanying indicators; and it closes with policy recommendations aimed at converting voluntary good practice into enforceable obligation.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To clarify what fourth-generation human rights mean when applied specifically to renewable-energy development.

To map the constitutional, statutory, and regulatory architecture that governs corporate conduct in Indian renewable-energy projects.

To identify the recurring environmental, social, labour, and community impacts associated with these projects.

To evaluate whether existing CSR, ESG, and sustainability-disclosure mechanisms are adequate to these impacts.

To construct a rights-based accountability framework applicable across the project life cycle.

To propose legal and institutional reforms capable of making that framework enforceable rather than aspirational.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What content should be given to fourth-generation human rights in the specific context of renewable-energy development?

What obligations should renewable-energy companies owe to affected communities, ecosystems, workers, and future generations?

Does India's current legal framework adequately address the human-rights risks that renewable projects generate?

How might CSR and ESG mechanisms be redesigned to deliver substantive rather than symbolic accountability?

What reforms would move India toward a just and rights-compatible energy transition?

4. HYPOTHESES

"A life-cycle model of human-rights and environmental due diligence offers stronger protection for fourth-generation rights than a voluntary, expenditure-oriented model of corporate responsibility."

5. METHODOLOGY

The study is doctrinal, analytical, and qualitative. Primary sources include the Constitution of India, the Companies Act, 2013 and its CSR rules, environmental statutes, sector-specific renewable-energy policy instruments, judicial decisions of the Supreme Court and High Courts, and relevant international instruments on business and human rights. Secondary material includes peer-reviewed literature, regulatory guidance, and institutional reporting from bodies such as the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

Analytically, the paper disaggregates a renewable-energy project into eight stages site selection, planning, land and resource acquisition, construction, operation, supply-chain management, decommissioning, and restoration and asks, at each stage, what a rights-based standard of corporate conduct would require. It then contrasts this life-cycle standard against the narrower expenditure-based model that currently dominates Indian CSR practice.

6. FOURTH-GENERATION HUMAN RIGHTS: A WORKING FRAMEWORK

The conventional account of human rights proceeds in generations. First-generation rights protect civil and political freedoms life, liberty, equality, participation. Second-generation rights secure economic, social, and cultural entitlements health, work, education, social security. Third-generation rights are collective or solidarity rights development, peace, a healthy environment.

Fourth-generation rights are less settled doctrinally but increasingly unavoidable in practice. They cluster around challenges that the earlier generations did not anticipate: climate destabilization, environmental sustainability at planetary scale, the ethics of new technologies, digital-era harms, and obligations owed to people who do not yet exist and therefore cannot participate in present decision-making. Applied to renewable energy, this cluster plausibly includes: a right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment; a right to climate stability and resilience; a right of future generations to inherit usable ecological resources; a right to affordable and sustainable energy access; a right to environmental information; a right to meaningful participation in environmental

decisions; a right to technological fairness; a right to protection from avoidable environmental and technological harm; a right to a just transition; and a right to effective remedy for climate- and environment-related injury. These rights interact rather than operate in isolation. A solar park may reduce grid-level emissions and still violate local environmental rights if it fragments habitat, blocks customary access routes, or destabilizes livelihoods. Assessing a renewable project's rights-compatibility therefore requires a holistic reading across environmental, social, economic, and intergenerational dimensions simultaneously not a checklist applied to each in turn.

Table 1. Rights Generations Mapped Against Renewable-Energy Relevance

Generation	Core Rights	Renewable-Energy Relevance
First	Life, liberty, equality, participation	Consultation processes, property interests, access to legal remedy
Second	Health, work, education, social security	Quality of green jobs, worker safety, energy affordability
Third	Development, peace, environment	Sustainable siting, ecological protection, regional equity
Fourth	Climate security, technological fairness, intergenerational justice	Long-run climate responsibility, ecological restoration, future-oriented risk management

It is worth stressing that this typology is heuristic rather than a rigid legal taxonomy. Its value lies in surfacing interests that older categories tend to miss, not in creating a new tier of enforceable rights with settled content.

7. FROM PHILANTHROPY TO OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate responsibility, in its fullest sense, is the obligation of an enterprise to account for the social, environmental, economic, and human-rights consequences of what it does a standard that exceeds bare legal compliance. Older conceptions of corporate responsibility in India leaned heavily on philanthropy: donations, community infrastructure, and welfare programmes detached from core operations. Contemporary practice, at least in principle, is broader, encompassing ESG performance, supply-chain conduct, stakeholder engagement, climate disclosure, and human-rights due diligence.

Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, together with Schedule VII, gives statutory shape to CSR for qualifying companies, including activities with environmental relevance. But CSR expenditure and corporate accountability is not the same thing, and conflating them is analytically dangerous. A company can fund schools, clinics, or rural infrastructure while simultaneously mishandling consultation, degrading a wetland, or tolerating unsafe labour conditions on its own project site. Spending on unrelated welfare activity does not offset harm caused by core business decisions.

Corporate responsibility, properly understood, therefore operates on two distinct tracks. The first is external social contribution community development, health, education, livelihood support. The second, and the one this paper is chiefly concerned with, is internal operational responsibility: preventing and remedying harm generated by a company's own siting choices, construction methods, labour arrangements, and supply chains. Fourth-generation rights are protected or not primarily on this second track.

8. LEGAL AND REGULATORY ARCHITECTURE IN INDIA

8.1 Constitutional Foundations

Article 14's equality guarantee bears on renewable-energy siting insofar as it counsels against concentrating environmental burdens on marginalised communities while directing project benefits elsewhere. Article 21, through decades of judicial elaboration, now embeds environmental quality, health, and dignity within the guarantee of life and personal liberty. Article 48A obliges the state to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife, while Article 51A(g) makes environmental protection a fundamental duty of every citizen. Article 39(b), directing the distribution of material resources toward the common good, supplies a further normative anchor for equitable benefit-sharing in energy projects.

8.2 Environmental Statutes

The core environmental statutory framework includes the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986; the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981; the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, as amended; the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; the Biological Diversity Act, 2002; and the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010. Environmental impact assessment remains the principal gate

keeping mechanism for identifying likely impacts before approval, generally incorporating some form of public consultation.

A recurring gap, however, is that renewable-energy projects do not always attract the same intensity of impact assessment applied to large conventional infrastructure. Where a project sits in an ecologically sensitive or socially vulnerable area, this differential treatment can leave real risks under-examined.

8.3 Corporate Social Responsibility Regulation

Section 135 has undoubtedly institutionalized corporate responsibility discourse in Indian company law, but it governs expenditure and governance process rather than mandating comprehensive human-rights due diligence. To close this gap, CSR obligations would need to be supplemented not replaced by project-specific duties covering human-rights impact assessment, community participation, environmental risk management, labour protection, supply-chain accountability, benefit-sharing, grievance redress, and decommissioning.

8.4 Sustainability Disclosure

The Securities and Exchange Board of India's Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting framework, strengthened by the BRSR Core requirements and the December 2024 industry standards on BRSR Core reporting, has pushed listed entities toward more standardised ESG disclosure, including some value-chain elements. Disclosure of this kind is valuable, but only conditionally: it improves outcomes when the underlying data is measurable, comparable, independently assured, and tied to consequences. Disclosure without assurance or accountability risks becoming a compliance ritual rather than a genuine accountability mechanism.

Table 2. Key Legal and Regulatory Instruments

Instrument	Primary Function	Relevance to Corporate Responsibility
Constitution of India	Rights, equality, environmental duties	Normative basis for sustainable, equitable development
Companies Act, 2013	Corporate governance and CSR	Statutory CSR obligation for eligible companies
CSR Rules, 2014	Implementation and reporting	Governs CSR expenditure and disclosure
Environment (Protection) Act, 1986	Environmental regulation	Baseline environmental safeguards
EIA Notification, 2006	Environmental assessment	Evaluates project-level impacts, public concerns
National Green Tribunal Act, 2010	Environmental adjudication	Specialised environmental remedies
SEBI BRSR framework	Sustainability disclosure	ESG transparency for listed entities
Labour legislation	Worker protection	Underpins safe, dignified green employment
Renewable-energy policy instruments	Energy transition	Drive investment and capacity addition

9. HUMAN-RIGHTS RISKS ALONG THE RENEWABLE-ENERGY VALUE CHAIN

9.1 Land and Livelihood

Utility-scale solar and wind installations are land-intensive. Converting agricultural plots, grazing commons or ecologically significant tracts can quietly erode livelihoods that depend on customary rather than titled use. Pastoralists may lose grazing routes; farmers may face altered water access; communities may absorb long-run environmental costs while capturing little of the project's economic upside. Responsible practice requires developers to look past formal land title to customary use, seasonal dependence, and collective claims.

9.2 Community Participation

Consultation confined to a single meeting after key decisions have already been taken is participation in name only. Meaningful participation instead requires early disclosure of project information, communication in local languages, adequate time for community deliberation, deliberate inclusion of women and marginalized groups, genuine consideration of local knowledge, and transparent responses to concerns raised. Crucially, participation must be capable of altering project decisions; otherwise it remains procedural rather than substantive.

9.3 Biodiversity and Ecosystems

Habitat fragmentation from solar arrays, wind farms, and associated infrastructure

Disturbance to resident and migratory wildlife

Bird and bat mortality at wind installations

Vegetation change and topsoil disturbance

Pressure on local water systems

Altered river ecology from hydropower diversion

Fragmentation caused by access roads and transmission corridors

Cumulative-impact assessment, biodiversity mapping, ecological monitoring, and restoration commitments should form part of ordinary project governance rather than optional add-ons.

9.4 Water Resources

Manufacturing, construction, panel-cleaning, and cooling processes all draw on water and this demand becomes contentious in arid or water-stressed regions. Developers should assess local water availability before commitment, prioritise water-efficient technology choices, and disclose water use on an ongoing basis.

9.5 Labour Conditions

Green employment is not automatically decent employment. Renewable-sector workers frequently encounter insecure or temporary contracts, inadequate safety training, long hours, insufficient protective equipment, weak grievance channels, unequal pay, and limited social security. Corporate responsibility must address occupational safety, fair remuneration, non-discrimination, skill development, and social protection as core obligations, not discretionary extras.

9.6 Supply-Chain Accountability

Renewable technologies depend on globally dispersed supply chains for minerals, metals, components, and batteries. Responsibility cannot stop at the project boundary; it must extend to suppliers and manufacturers, covering labour conditions, risks of child or forced labour, the environmental footprint of extraction, waste generation, recyclability, and traceability of critical materials.

9.7 End-of-Life Management

Solar panels, batteries, turbine components, and electrical equipment eventually reach end of life, and the absence of disposal and recycling planning simply defers environmental cost onto future generations. Protecting those generations' interests requires decommissioning funds, recycling arrangements, and site-restoration obligations to be settled before, not after, project approval.

10. A LIFE-CYCLE MODEL OF CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Rather than treating responsibility as a single event typically the environmental clearance stage this paper proposes that it be distributed across the full project life cycle, with distinct obligations attaching at each stage.

Table 3. Responsibilities across the Project Life Cycle

Project Stage	Principal Risk	Corresponding Responsibility
Site selection	Ecological and community harm	Human-rights and biodiversity screening
Planning	Exclusion from decision-making	Early, meaningful participation
Land acquisition	Displacement, livelihood loss	Fair compensation, livelihood restoration
Construction	Worker injury, pollution	Safety standards, environmental controls

Operation	Resource pressure, unequal benefit	Impact monitoring, benefit-sharing systems
Supply chain	Labour and environmental abuse upstream	Supplier due diligence
Decommissioning	Waste, abandoned infrastructure	Recycling, ecological restoration

The underlying logic is simple: a project that behaves responsibly at construction but ignores decommissioning has not discharged its obligations it has merely postponed the harm.

11. CSR COMPARED WITH HUMAN-RIGHTS DUE DILIGENCE

It is worth being precise about how conventional CSR and human-rights due diligence differ, since Indian practice frequently treats the two as interchangeable.

Table 4. Conventional CSR Versus Human-Rights Due Diligence

Criterion	Conventional CSR	Human-Rights Due Diligence
Main focus	Social contribution	Prevention and remedy of harm
Nature	Largely expenditure-based	Risk-based, continuous
Timing	Often post-project	Begins before project approval
Scope	Community programmes	Entire project and value chain
Accountability mechanism	CSR reporting	Impact assessment, monitoring, remedy
Community's role	Beneficiary	Rights-holder and participant
Key objective	Social welfare	Respect for human rights

A school built next to a project site is a genuine social good, but it does not compensate for lost grazing access or contaminated groundwater. Where a project's own operations cause harm, that harm must be addressed directly and on its own terms substitution by unrelated welfare spending is not an adequate remedy.

12. CLIMATE JUSTICE DIMENSIONS

Climate justice begins from the observation that climate impacts fall unevenly, with vulnerable communities frequently bearing disproportionate risk despite having contributed comparatively little to the emissions driving that risk. Renewable-energy projects can either advance or undermine this principle.

They support climate justice when they lower emissions, widen affordable energy access, generate decent employment, strengthen local development, protect ecosystems, and genuinely include vulnerable communities in decisions that affect them. They undermine it when communities are displaced without adequate protection, environmental burdens cluster in poorer regions, benefits flow elsewhere, local knowledge is disregarded, employment is precarious, or profit is prioritised over community rights.

Three strands of justice are useful in assessing this balance: distributive justice, concerning how benefits and burdens are shared; procedural justice, concerning participation, transparency, and access to information; and restorative justice, concerning compensation, remediation, and restoration once harm has occurred.

13. JUDICIAL PRINCIPLES OF CONTINUING RELEVANCE

Indian environmental jurisprudence has developed several doctrines directly applicable to corporate conduct in the renewable sector.

Sustainable development requires a genuine balance between economic growth and environmental protection, not a presumption in favour of either.

The precautionary principle holds that scientific uncertainty about serious environmental harm is not a reason for inaction; preventive assessment should precede, not follow, damage.

The polluter-pays principle places the cost of prevention, remediation, and restoration on the party responsible for the harm, implying that corporate responsibility must include dedicated financial mechanisms for repair.

The public-trust doctrine treats natural resources as held in trust for the public, constraining corporate access to land, water, and forests where that access would compromise long-run public interest. Intergenerational equity requires that present development not deprive future generations of usable ecological resources, reinforcing the case for long-term waste management, monitoring, and restoration commitments.

14. GAPS IN THE CURRENT FRAMEWORK

Fragmented regulation: corporate law, environmental law, energy policy, labour law, and land governance operate through separate institutions, producing accountability that is easily diffused across agencies.

Thin human-rights assessment: environmental clearance processes do not consistently examine social, cultural, gender, or livelihood dimensions with the same rigour applied to purely technical environmental criteria.

CSR-centred thinking: corporate responsibility is too often measured by expenditure rather than by the operational impact of core business decisions.

Weak participation: consultation frequently arrives late, and often fails to include women, pastoral groups, or economically marginal populations on equal terms.

Inadequate cumulative assessment: individual projects can each appear environmentally tolerable while their combined regional effect is substantial.

Limited transparency: project documentation is often difficult for affected communities to access or interpret without technical assistance.

Weak grievance mechanisms: affected persons frequently face cost, delay, and procedural obstacles in seeking remedy.

Under-planned end-of-life obligations: decommissioning and recycling responsibilities are rarely built into project approval from the outset.

15. A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK: THE RENEWABLE ENERGY HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITY (REHRF)

Building on the gaps identified above, this paper proposes an eight-principle accountability model organized around three pillars environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and intergenerational responsibility all oriented toward the protection of fourth-generation rights and anchored in corporate accountability.

Principle 1 — Human-Rights Due Diligence

Independent assessment of likely impacts on environment, livelihood, health, labour, gender equality, cultural rights, community resources, and future generations, conducted before rather than after key decisions.

Principle 2 — Meaningful Participation

Consultation that is early, inclusive, adequately informed, and continuous, rather than a single procedural event.

Principle 3 — Environmental and Biodiversity Protection

Avoidance of ecologically sensitive sites where feasible, backed by mitigation, restoration, and ongoing monitoring where avoidance is not possible.

Principle 4 — Fair Benefit-Sharing

Measurable local benefit through employment, infrastructure, energy access, revenue-sharing, or community-development mechanisms, proportionate to the burdens a project imposes.

Principle 5 — Decent Green Employment

Corporate policy protecting worker safety, fair wages, equal treatment, skill development, and social security across direct and contracted labour.

Principle 6 — Transparency

Disclosure of project impacts, environmental performance, water use, land requirements, emissions, community benefit, and grievance outcomes in accessible form.

Principle 7 — Effective Remedy

Accessible grievance mechanisms capable of timely investigation, compensation, corrective action, and restoration.

Principle 8 — Intergenerational Responsibility

Decommissioning plans, waste-management systems, recycling obligations, and long-term ecological restoration committed to at the outset rather than deferred.

16. INDICATORS FOR MEASURING CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

Principles of this kind require measurable indicators if they are to move beyond aspiration. The following set is proposed as a starting point for independent verification and public disclosure.

Table 5. Proposed Corporate Responsibility Indicators

Indicator	Measurement Basis
Community participation	Share of affected groups formally consulted
Women's participation	Share of women represented in consultation processes
Local employment	Share of workforce recruited from the local area
Worker safety	Injury frequency rate and safety-training coverage
Land impact	Area acquired and resulting livelihood effects
Biodiversity	Habitat affected and restoration outcomes achieved
Water use	Water consumed per unit of energy generated
Community benefit	Value and distribution of local benefit delivered
Grievances	Numbers received, resolved, and outstanding
Supply-chain accountability	Share of high-risk suppliers formally assessed
Waste management	Share of equipment recycled at end of life
Restoration	Area ecologically restored after project closure

17. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduce mandatory human-rights impact assessment for large renewable projects, covering livelihoods, gender, labour, cultural, health, and environmental dimensions together.

Integrate social and cumulative-impact review into environmental clearance rather than treating them as separate processes.

Set minimum regulatory standards for community consultation timing, disclosure, representation, and documented response to concerns.

Establish a renewable-energy benefit-sharing mechanism guaranteeing measurable local gains through employment, energy access, infrastructure, or dedicated community funds.

Enact a corporate human-rights due diligence law requiring large enterprises to identify, prevent, mitigate, and remedy risks across operations and supply chains.

Deepen BRSR disclosure requirements toward project-specific, rather than purely aggregate corporate-level, social and environmental data.

Mandate independent environmental monitoring involving qualified institutions and, where appropriate, community representatives.

Set green labour standards covering occupational safety, fair wages, skill development, and social security for renewable-sector contracts.

Require decommissioning and restoration funds to be established prior to the commencement of operations.

Introduce circular-economy obligations promoting repair, reuse, recycling, and responsible disposal of panels, batteries, and turbine components.

Mandate accessible, local grievance offices with transparent, time-bound procedures.

Require gender-responsive governance ensuring women's meaningful participation in planning, monitoring, employment, and benefit-sharing.

18. FINDINGS

Renewable energy is indispensable for climate mitigation, but it is not inherently free of environmental or human-rights impact.

Fourth-generation human rights offer a useful lens for addressing climate security, ecological sustainability, technological responsibility, and intergenerational fairness together.

India possesses a substantial legal foundation constitutional, statutory, and disclosure-based on which stronger accountability could be built.

Existing mechanisms remain fragmented and continue to privilege CSR expenditure over operational accountability.

Human-rights due diligence outperforms philanthropy-oriented CSR in preventing project-related harm before it occurs.

Community participation is too often treated as a procedural formality rather than a substantive right capable of shaping outcomes.

Stronger safeguards are needed specifically around land use, livelihoods, biodiversity, labour, water, and supply chains.

ESG disclosure improves transparency but requires independent assurance and enforceable consequences to be meaningful.

Decommissioning, recycling, and restoration are not peripheral details but core elements of intergenerational responsibility.

A genuinely just transition depends on the fair distribution of both benefits and burdens, not merely on aggregate capacity added.

19. CONCLUSION

India's renewable-energy expansion offers a real opportunity to address climate risk, strengthen energy security, and support broader development goals. But the environmental case for renewable does not, by itself, discharge the case for corporate accountability. Land acquisition, resource competition, biodiversity loss, labour conditions, and inadequate participation can each generate serious harm even within an otherwise low-carbon project. Protecting fourth-generation human rights requires corporate responsibility to be reconceived not as charitable expenditure, annual disclosure, or minimal regulatory compliance, but as an obligation distributed across the entire life of a project. A genuinely responsible developer assesses risk before selecting a site, engages communities before decisions are locked in, protects workers through construction, monitors impacts through operation, provides workable remedies when harm occurs, and restores ecosystems once the project's working life ends.

The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is inseparable from climate justice, intergenerational equity, and responsible technological development, and corporate conduct bears directly on all three. India's task is to integrate human-rights due diligence, environmental assessment, community participation, labour protection, benefit-sharing, transparency, grievance redress, and long-term restoration into the ordinary governance of renewable-energy projects — not as add-ons, but as conditions of legitimacy. Success in this transition should not be measured only in megawatts installed or tones of carbon avoided. It should also be measured in the health of ecosystems, the dignity of workers, the depth of community participation, the fairness of benefit distribution, and the resources preserved for generations yet to come.

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