

Aditya Valiathan Pillai

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Affiliations

Doctoral researcher, King's College London and Visiting Fellow at the Sustainable Futures Collaborative (October 2024-present)

- Doctoral project: a comparative analysis of why some subnational jurisdictions adapt to climate change better than others.
- Doctoral research supported by the UK Economic and Research Council's LISS-DTP International Doctoral Scholar Award (Grant ES/Y001850/1).
- Currently leads a multi-institutional research project on the implementation of heat action plans in India's hottest places bringing together researchers from the Sustainable Futures Collaborative, Princeton University, and University of California Berkeley.
- Led the drafting of the National Disaster Management Authority's draft guidelines for cities and states seeking to access extreme heat mitigation funding through the National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF).
- On the [Scientific Committee](#) of Harvard University's 'India 2047: Building a Climate-Resilient Future' conference (March, 2025).

Fellow & Coordinator of the Adaptation and Resilience Initiative, Sustainable Futures Collaborative (October 2023 – October 2024)

- One of the founding fellows of the [Sustainable Futures Collaborative](#) (SFC), an independent New Delhi-based climate, energy and environment thinktank.
- Established and led SFC's work on Adaptation & Resilience. This included managing engagements with governments and the media, setting strategic direction, leading research projects and hiring.
- Co-led the drafting of the National Heatwave Mitigation Framework for the National Disaster Management Authority.
- Member of the National Disaster Management Authority's Technical Advisory Group for heatwave mitigation.

Fellow, Centre for Policy Research (September 2018- October 2023, formerly Associate Fellow and Senior Researcher in that period)

- Established the Adaptation and Resilience research area within the Initiative for Climate, Energy and the Environment at CPR.
 - Established research on extreme heat in India and began building a team. Co-authored India's first assessment of heat action plans.
 - Policy advisory engagements with National Disaster Management Authority.
 - Led engagements with state governments (Kerala and Madhya Pradesh).
- Co-led CPR's work on institutions for climate governance:
 - Co-led a global comparative analysis of climate governance systems in eight large countries involving leading climate political scientists. 'Varieties of Climate

Governance' is a special issue in *Environmental Politics* and synthesised in *Science*. Led the India paper.

- Led research on how India's federal structure affects climate policymaking.
- Research used to make institutional reform recommendations at national and sub-national scales, including ideas for a climate law presented to the environment ministry.
- Advisor to the World Bank in India on structuring the Bank's development loans on climate change to Indian states.
- Organized a side-event on climate governance and institutions at COP26 in Glasgow with the Grantham Research Institute (LSE) and Inter-Parliamentary Union.
- Policy work: engagement with various ministries and civil society organizations at the national and sub-national level; internal engagement with policy outputs led by Navroz K. Dubash including the IPCC 6th Assessment Report (institutions section in Chapter 13: National and Subnational Policies and Institutions) and Government of India's Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy submitted to the UNFCCC (adaptation section).
- Management responsibilities: communications, grant management and team convening.

Program Officer at The Asia Foundation (2016 – 2018, Program Associate - 2015)

- Managed several adaptation-related climate governance grants:
 - The Civil Society Fund: \$3 million. Supported over 40 civil society organizations (28 directly) in Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan to improve transboundary river governance outcomes.
 - Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio: \$1.5 million. Investments targeted improving resilience by understanding the politics of the water-food-energy nexus in South Asia.
- Awarded The Foundation's 2017 *Presidential Award for Exceptional Performance*. Given to select teams or individuals across The Foundation's 20 offices globally.
- Member of The Asia Foundation's Evaluation and Learning Unit Advisory Group.
- Anchored research that advanced The Foundation's practice in energy and agriculture.

Research Associate at the Centre for Policy Research (2014 – 2015)

- Worked with Pratap Bhanu Mehta, former CPR President.
- Studied the politics of climate change in international river basins, with a focus on South Asia.

Papers and chapters

- Chaturvedi, V., A. Ghosh, A. Garg, V. Avashia, S. Vishwanathan, D. Gupta, N. K. Sinha, C. Bhushan, S. Banerjee, D. Datt, J. Bansal, M. Pathak, S. Dhar, A. K. Singh, N. Khan, R. Rashmi, S. Agrawal, D. Agarwal, A. Singh, ... S. Prasad. 2024. India's pathway to net zero by 2070: status, challenges, and way forward. [Environmental Research Letters](#), 19(12).
- Dubash, N. K., A.V. Pillai & A. Sridhar. 2024. Climate Change: Policy, Institutional, and Legal Framework. In P. Cullet, L. Bhullar, & S. Koonan (Eds.), [The Oxford Handbook of Environmental and Natural Resources Law in India](#) (1st ed., pp. 549–568). Oxford University Press.
- Pillai, A. V. & N. K. Dubash. 2023. Climate governance and Federalism in India. In Alan Fenna, Sébastien Jodoin and Joanna Setzer (eds.). [Climate Governance and Federalism](#). Cambridge University Press.
- Dubash, N. K., A. V. Pillai, C. Flachsland, K. Harrison, K. Hochstetler, M. Lockwood, R. MacNeil, M. Mildenberger, M. Paterson, F. Teng, & E. Tyler. 2021. National Climate Institutions are a Necessary Complement to Targets and Policies. [Science](#).

- Pillai, A. V., & N. K. Dubash. 2021. The Limits of Opportunism: The Uneven Emergence of Climate Institutions in India. [Environmental Politics](#).
- Pillai, A. V., & S. Prasai. 2019. The political economy of electricity trade and hydropower development in eastern South Asia. [International Journal of Water Resources Development](#).

Policy briefs and reports

- Pillai, A. V., T. Dalal, I. Kukreti, A. Kassinis, L. V. Zeppetello, E. Tewari & N. K. Dubash. 2025. Is India ready for a warming world? How heat resilience measures are being implemented for 11% of India's urban population in some of its most at-risk cities. [Report](#). New Delhi.
- Pillai, A. V. & T. Dalal. 2024. Adaptation and Resilience: Building systems that allow India to adapt to multiple and increasingly severe climate impacts. [SFC Perspectives Paper](#).
- Shekhar, S., T. Dalal, S. Santhosh, A.V. Pillai, & B. Krishna. 2024. Finding the Finance: A guide to identifying Centrally Sponsored Schemes to fund heat resilience solutions. Working Paper. [Centre for Policy Research](#).
- Pillai, A.V., & T. Dalal. 2023, March 27. How is India adapting to heatwaves?: An assessment of heat action plans with insights for transformational climate action. Report. [Centre for Policy Research](#).
- Pillai, A. V., N. K. Dubash & P. Bhatia. 2021, July 28. Unlocking Climate Action in Indian Federalism. Policy Brief. [Centre for Policy Research](#).
- Dubash, N. K., A. V. Pillai & Bhatia, P. 2021, June 1. Building a Climate-Ready Indian State: Institutions and Governance for Transformative Low-Carbon Development. Policy Brief. [Centre for Policy Research](#).
- Pillai, A. V. 2021. Abiding by Nature, Not National Borders: Institution building in the Himalayas. [World Bank Case Studies](#).
- Pillai, A. V. & S. Prasai. 2018. The Price of Power: The Political Economy of Electricity Trade and Hydropower in South Asia. Report. [The Asia Foundation](#): New Delhi.
- Pillai, A.V. & S. Prasai. 2018. "The Political Economy of Rice Trade between Bangladesh, India and Nepal". Report. [Australian Center for International Agricultural Research](#): New Delhi.
- Vasudha Chhotray, Aditya Valiathan Pillai and Mona Chettri. 2015. Climate change and the drivers of hydropower development in the Eastern Himalayas: policy analysis as entry point. CoCooN Background Paper.

Accepted journal review requests

- *Climate Policy, Contemporary South Asia, Climate and Development, Environmental Science and Policy, Indian Law Review.*

Longform writing

- Pillai, A.V. 2022, March 30. Karnataka's crumbling coastline shows climate battles are political. For [Scroll.in](#)'s 'Common Ground' series.
- Pillai, A.V. 2022, May 3. Let the Subaltern Speak: Why Climate Assemblies Might Breathe Life into Indian Climate Politics. [The Trouble](#).
- Pillai, A. V. 2020. China and India in the Himalayan climate crisis. [Seminar](#), 728.

Op-eds

- Pillai, A. V., T. Dalal, I. Kukreti. 24 March 2025. Heatwaves are coming. Can India handle it?. [India Express](#).
- Pillai, A. V., T. Dalal, I. Kukreti, A. Kassinis, L. V. Zeppetello, E. Tewari & N. K. Dubash. 19 March 2025. Guest post: Why action on extreme heat in Indian cities is falling short. [CarbonBrief](#).
- Dubash, N.K., A. V. Pillai. & S. Ghosh. July 08, 2024. A law around low-carbon climate resilient development. [The Hindu](#).
- Dubash, N.K., S. Ghosh & A. V. Pillai. July 08, 2024. Court on climate right and how India can enforce it. [The Hindu](#).
- Pillai, A.V. April 20, 2024. The Indian election issue that will impact the world (and no one is talking about). [CNN](#).
- Pillai, A. V. 2023, May 20. Heatwaves will get worse, invest in adapting now. [Hindustan Times](#).
- Pillai, A.V. 2023, March 28. The gaps in India's 'heat action plans'. [Carbon Brief](#).
- Pillai, A.V. 2022, September 07. Forging a national consensus on climate adaptation is key. [Hindustan Times](#).
- Pillai, A.V. 2022, May 3. Let the Subaltern Speak: Why Climate Assemblies Might Breathe Life into Indian Climate Politics. [The Trouble](#).
- Pillai, A.V., M. Chandra & S. Mathew. 2022, March 2. "What the New IPCC Climate Report Portends for India and South Asia." [The Wire](#).
- Pillai, A. V., N. K. Dubash and P. Bhatia. 2022, February 7. Reimagining Indian Federalism in the Climate Crisis. [Ideas for India](#).
- Pillai, A.V. 2021, November 3. Reviving South Asian cooperation, climate first. [Third Pole](#).
- Pillai, A. V., N. K. Dubash & P. Bhatia. 2021, August 2. States are the beating heart of climate action. [Hindustan Times](#).
- Dubash, N. K., A. V. Pillai & P. Bhatia. 2021, June 24. Design a climate-ready governance system. [Hindustan Times](#).
- Pillai. A. V. 2021, March 24. The surge of geopolitics in South Asia's power trade. [The Hindu](#).
- Pillai, A. V., 2021, February 25. Breaking down renewable politics in the Global South. [Environmentality](#).
- Pillai. A. V. 2021, February 17. Are carbon regulators the next big thing? [Environmentality](#).
- Pillai. A. V. 2020, June 25. Global solar grid could cause sunburn. [Financial Express](#).
- Pillai. A. V. 2020, June 10. A convergence of crises. [The Hindu](#).
- Pillai. A. V. 2019, January 3. Powering South Asian Integration. [The Hindu](#).

Government and media trainings

- "Setting the Scene: India's people, economy and government in a more destructive climate". Training at the [Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration](#), Mussoorie. I gave this lecture thrice on: 30 January 2023, 13 March 2023, 11 September 2023.
- 'Covering Extreme Heat: Health'. Oxford Climate Journalism Network. 1 May 2024.
- 'Climate and Heat'. [Oxford Climate Journalism Network](#) Guest Lecture. 1 August 2024.

Talks and panels

- 'Fireside chat on heat policy in India with Aditya Valiathan Pillai and Vishwas Chitale'. Indian Heat Summit 2025. Climate Trends, National Human Rights Council and National Disaster Management Authority. 27 May 2025.
- 'Is India Ready for a Warming World'. Harvard University's '[India 2047: Building a Climate-Resilient India](#)' conference. 20 March 2025.
- 'Heat Policy and the Indian Experiment' (moderator opening presentation in plenary session). Harvard University's '[India 2047: Building a Climate-Resilient India](#)' conference. 21 March 2025.
- 'Centering health and livelihoods while planning adaptation frameworks' (moderator). Harvard University's '[India 2047: Building a Climate-Resilient India](#)' conference. 21 March 2025.
- 'Governance for Heat and Cooling: Strengthening National and Subnational Action Plans'. Global Heat and Cooling Forum. Natural Resources Defense Council, National Disaster Management Authority, India and The World Bank. 17 March 2025.
- 'Climate Challenges and Opportunities'. Research Agenda for Climate Change and Cities in the Global South. *Ahmedabad University and the International Growth Centre*. 16 December 2024.
- 'Adaptation Strategies for Extreme heat'. India's Gen-Next Leaders Democracy Network Series. *Ananta Aspen and Indian Council for Cultural Relations*. 23 August 2024.
- 'Heatwaves 101: The Science of Extreme Heat' webinar. *Harvard University Lakshmi Mittal South Asia Institute*. 18 July 2024.
- Panel co-moderator: 'Building the foundations for a sustainable future'. [Sustainable Futures Collaborative launch event](#). 19 March 2024.
- Panel on heat resilience. *India-US Track 2 dialogue hosted by the Ananta Aspen Centre*. 21 March 2024.
- 'Evidence implications and collaborative opportunities in the context of climate change, air quality and health: Insights from South Asia'. [Harvard University Chan School of Public Health CAFÉ Climate and Health Conference](#). 6 Feb 2024.
- 'Just adaptation to heatwaves. *Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi* Unnati Heatwave project stakeholder workshop. 30 November 2023.
- 'Five conversations that could drive better adaptation in South Asia and Beyond'. [Harvard University workshop on Adapting to Climate Change in South Asia and West Africa](#). 13-15 November 2023.
- 'An introduction to international climate talks and India's role'. Department of Sustainable Energy Engineering, IIT Kanpur. 10 November 2023.
- 'An overview of climate politics and policy in India'. School of Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Amherst. 1 November 2023.
- 'A survey of India's heat action plans, and how they should improve'. *Centre de Sciences Humaines and Centre for Policy Research*, Urban Workshop #161. 25 July 2023.
- 'Financial inclusion in the era of climate change'. *Indicus Foundation* roundtable. 23 June 2023.
- 'Can we heat proof the future: Building Towards Long-Term Heat Resilience'. *National Disaster Management Authority, NRDC, Climate Trends* National Consultative Workshop on Implementation of Extreme Heat Mitigation Measures in India. 31 May 2023.

- 'Analysing challenges and progress in Heat Action Plans'. Climate Trends. 27 April 2023.
- 'How is India adapting to heatwaves?'. Azim Premji University and India Spend Data Journalism Workshop. 14 April 2023.
- 'The Changing Climate: Heat in South Asia'. Harvard University Workshop on Climate Change in South Asia. New Delhi. 31 March 2023.
- 'Climate policy and governance in India'. Panel discussion organized by Indian Urban Designers Institute in New Delhi. 11 February 2023.
- 'Assessment of India's Heat Action Plans'. National Workshop on Heatwaves organized by National Disaster Management Authority. 13 February 2023.
- 'Outcomes from COP 27'. Panel Discussion co-organized by The Government of Kerala and The World Bank in Trivandrum, Kerala. 7-8 December 2022.
- 'Climate Change and Electoral Politics'. Panel discussion at Hindu College, Delhi University. 19 October 2022.
- 'Climate Change Governance: Indian Perspective'. Lecture #4 in a course hosted by the National Law University Odisha; the Law, Environment and Development Centre; and the School of Oriental and African Studies. 14 October 2022.
- 'Towards Energy Federalism in India: Governance, Institutions, Inclusion and equity beyond the narrative.' Panel discussion by Indian Environmental Law Organization (Conference theme: Towards an Inclusive Renewable Energy Law in India). 26 August 2022.
- 'Hotly Contested Latitudes of Climate Policy'. Panel discussion at Azim Premji University. May 2022.
- 'Changing contours of climate politics'. Panel discussion at Indian Law Society, April 2022.
- 'Subnational Climate Change (and Related Energy) Policy in India: Overview'. Presentation. Harvard Project on Climate Agreements. 8 December 2021.
- 'Subnational Climate Change Policy in India: Roundtable Discussion with State Government Officials' (moderator). Harvard Project on Climate Agreements. 9 December 2021.
- 'Creating effective institutions for lasting change'. September 2021. Climate Trends and Arthan.
- 'Incorporating Political Feasibility Concerns into the Assessment of India's Environmental Policies'. Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies. September 2021.
- 'Building a Climate-Ready State'. Centre for Policy Research. July 2021.
- 'Gender Inclusive Disaster Management' (Moderator). Asian Pathfinders. March 2021.
- 'Indian climate policies'. Manipal University, Department of Geopolitics. September 2020.
- 'The present, past and future of Indian climate policy'. Asian Pathfinders. June 2020.
- 'Institutions and climate change'. Jindal University, School of Law. November 2019.
- 'The climate issue'. September 2019. Manipal University, Department of Ecosophical Aesthetics.
- 'Political Economy of Regional Electricity Trade in South Asia'. South Asia University, International Relations Department. April 2019.
- 'South Asian Hydropower in the Era of Climate Change'. IceWARM Australia. March 2019.

- 'Including the community and ground level perspectives in river cooperation'. [*Asian Confluence*](#) in Shillong, Meghalaya. March 2019.

Interviews

- 'Heatwaves are invisible yet pervade every aspect of society'. [The Print](#). 9 March 2024.
- 'Why this expert believes India's Heat Action Plans are falling short.' [Scroll.in](#). 09 May 2023.
- 'Heat Action Plans must to protect the vulnerable: Aditya Valiathan Pillai'. Interview. [Economic Times](#). 01 April 2023.
- 'How do Indian states fare on climate action?'. Interview. [India Development Review](#). 4 November 2022.
- Interview on 'Climate Action: Why India Can't Meet Its Net-Zero Target by Itself'. [The Wire](#). March 2021.

Podcasts

- 'Horror heatwaves are coming, how to prepare for it?'. [The Times of India podcast](#). 24 June 2024.
- 'A burning issue: understanding heatwaves across India'. [The Climate Conundrum Podcast](#). April 2024.
- 'Heat is on! Can India adapt to warming weather?'. [India Energy Hour](#). June 2023.
- 'How to Handle the Heat: Lessons from India'. [PODS by PEI](#). June 2023.
- 'The Truth about Heatwaves in India'. [The Big Story Podcast](#) by The Quint. June 2023.
- Is India prepared for the threat of extreme heat waves and a 'wet bulb' summer?. [In Focus](#) podcast by The Hindu. April 2023.
- 'How prepared is India for heatwaves'. [The Climate Emergency Podcast](#) by Suno India. April 2023.
- 'How can Karnataka become a climate hero?'. Youth ki Awaaz, Policy Pe Charcha. June 2022.
- 'The Joys and Pains of Studying Climate Change in India'. Research Rants Podcast. June 2022.
- 'The importance of robust climate institutions in India'. The India Forum Podcast. January 2022.

Degrees

- PhD (ongoing), King's College London (2024-2028). Funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council.
- Masters in International Security, Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po Paris (2012-2014). Graduated *cum laude* (top 10% of graduating class).
- B.A. in Journalism and Communication, School of Communication, Manipal University (2009-2012). Awarded Manipal University's Gold Medal for Best Outgoing Student.
- and the Best Outgoing Student Award for practical experience in journalism instituted by The Hindu. Served as Editor-in-Chief of The Manipal Journal (2012).

Languages

English (native proficiency), Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, and French (currently low intermediate)

