

# Indian Museums Against Climate Change

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2022-2023**



# Indian Museums Against Climate Change

indian  
music  
EXPERIENCE

MAP  
Museum of Art  
& Photography



KERALA  
MUSEUM



MUSEO CAMERA  
Centre for the Photographic Arts



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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction to IMAAC

Indian Museums Against Climate Change (IMACC) is a programme led by ReReeti Foundation to engage the museum community in India in the fight against the current Climate and Ecological Emergency. It was born through our engagement with the international movement of Culture Declares Emergency (CDE) — a group of people across the world who deeply care about our planet. Today, IMACC functions as the Indian International hub of CDE.

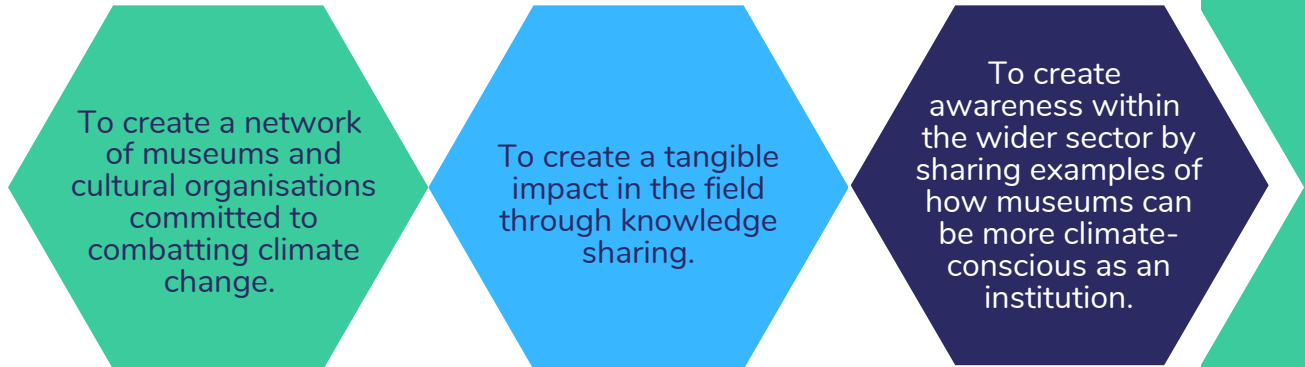
IMACC is a conscious collective space of growth and change and was created to fill a gap in the system. Its objective is to create a network of museums and cultural organisations in India committed to combating climate change. With the official launch of IMACC in March 2022, we set out to create impact, build a network of committed partners, and set examples of how cultural organisations can work in more climate-conscious ways.

## What is Culture Declares Emergency?

Culture Declares Emergency (CDE) is a growing global movement of people in arts and culture declaring a climate and ecological emergency. It believes that arts and culture can take the lead in creating a regenerative future that protects the planet and sustains everyone, everywhere. There are currently 1,606 individual and organisational declarers on the forum, and 10 local, regional and international hubs including IMACC.

# Goals and Plan of Action

In our first year, we started out with these three simple goals in mind:



With these clear goals, we started out with the following 3-pronged approach:

1

- a. Collaborate with museums to support their institutional initiatives and facilitate regular **capacity-building workshops** for museum professionals to train them at the foundational level in order to fight climate change.
- b. Host **quarterly meetups** with the museums to evaluate IMACC's progress and discuss the next steps. This includes enabling dialogue and expression amidst our communities about how the Emergency will affect them and discussing action plans about the changes that are needed.

2

Work with museums to guide them in exploring climate change by **putting an eco-lens on their collections** and the histories they tell, and further create awareness amongst their audiences through social media platforms. Urge them to declare the ways in which they are fighting climate change through practices within the **organisation's operations**.

3

Create a **tangible impact** in the form of museums taking action towards reducing their carbon footprints. ReReeti will also be creating a handbook for the larger Indian museum sector which will be launched very soon.

# Partner Museums

The first year of IMACC was a small-scale pilot programme with an intimate and closed group of 8 museums across different parts of the country. The following museums were chosen due to their existing interest in sustainability as well as their acknowledgement of the criticality of the climate crisis. We also looked at diversity in terms of geography, demography, cultural influences and diverse museum collections. One of them had to drop off due to a lack of human resources.

- 
- Arna Jharna, The Thar Desert Museum, Jodhpur
  - DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum, Chennai
  - Indian Music Experience Museum, Bangalore
  - Kerala Museum, Kochi
  - Museum of Art & Photography, Bangalore
  - Museum of Christian Art, Goa
  - Museo Camera, Gurgaon



# CHAPTER 2

## Capacity building workshops

ReReeti planned three workshops for its partner museums over the course of one year to provide them with the resources and tools they needed to take action against the Emergency. In the following section, the content of each workshop and our learnings are explored in detail.

### Workshop 1: “Putting an Eco-lens on Museum Objects” by Climate Museum UK

Facilitators: Bridget McKenzie, Founding Director and Victoria Burns, Director

In this workshop, we learned to find links between museum collections and ecology. It trained the partner museums to take a closer look at their museum objects and approach them from many different angles, helping them find a relationship between the object and ecology that aren't obvious at first glance. In a larger sense, we also learnt that we must be conscious of the Ecological Crisis while we work at and with museums, and must choose museum partnerships and funding sources wisely. Through these actions, museums become spaces of sharing climate-related stories and spreading awareness, which in turn, mobilises their audiences.

The guiding principle was that the environment affects everything (and everyone), and that all objects - no matter how removed they might be from ecology - are in some way or the other connected to nature. This helps in establishing the severity and urgency of the burgeoning Emergency and the effects it can have on all of us.

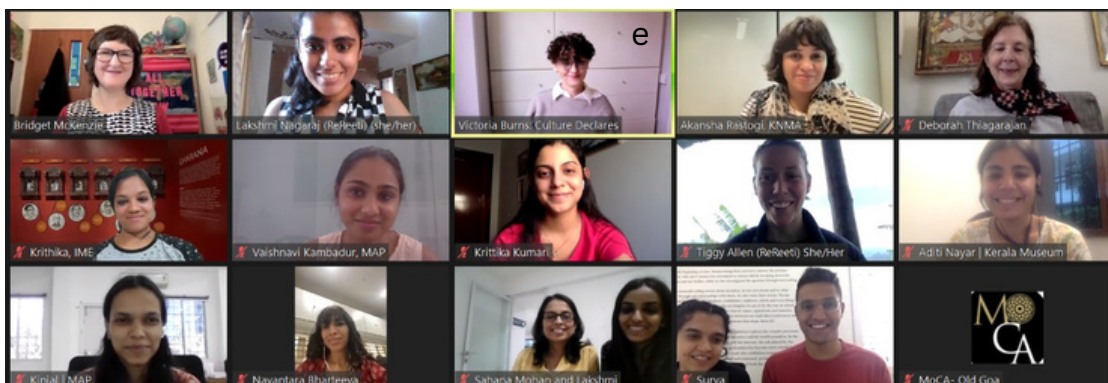
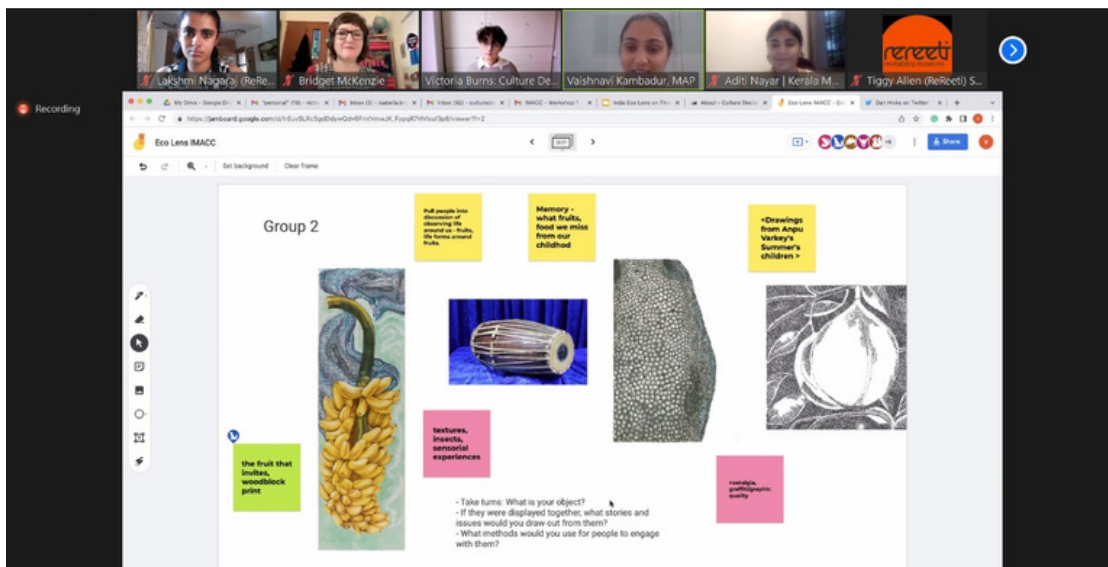


# Workshop Outcomes

Throughout the year, partner museums consistently relooked at their collections in a new light. **On a scale of 1-5, most museums rated a 4** on their expansion of knowledge of their own museum collections. More on this in Chapter 3.



They also presented their learnings to their audiences in the form of social media posts. Through this joint effort, we were able to reach the general public and bring their attention to the intersection of art, history and ecology.



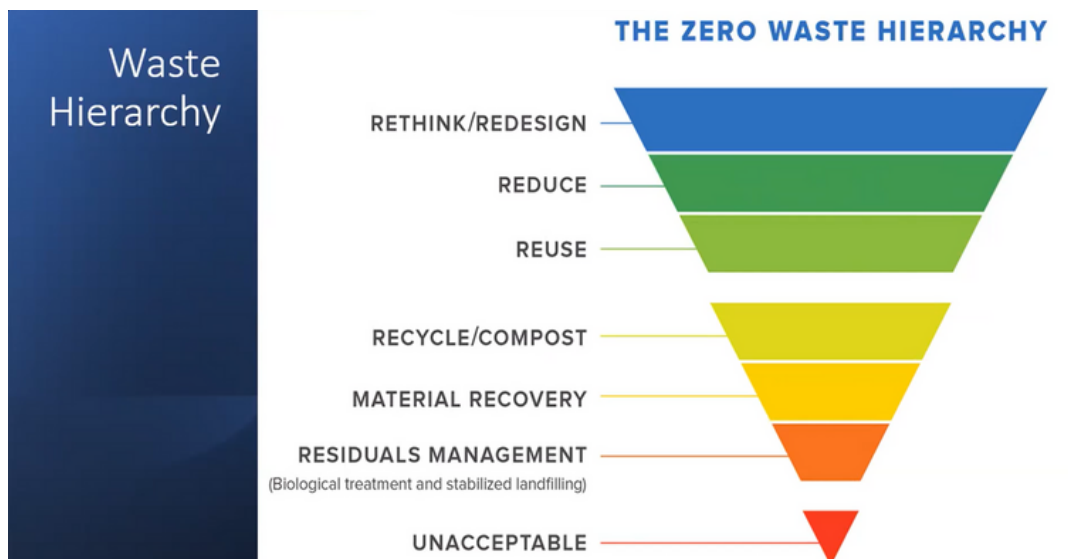


## Workshop 2: “Our Waste, Our Responsibility” by Urban Morph

Facilitator: Subbaiah TS, Co-Founder/Director

In this workshop, we focused on how museums can keep a close eye on the waste that they produce knowingly and unknowingly. We explored how institutional waste can be monitored and the ways in which they can minimise it through their conscious actions. Prior to the workshop, the museums were asked to fill out an audit sheet detailing out the waste they are currently producing. Based on this information which included the current amount of waste produced, the museums discussed their goals and the challenges they currently face to manage their waste responsibly.

Some of the major goals the museums wanted to achieve were to reduce soft plastic at the museum, become a plastic-free zone, avoid flex banners and reduce the amount of bubble wrap and tapes used to package books at the museum shop or while developing exhibitions.

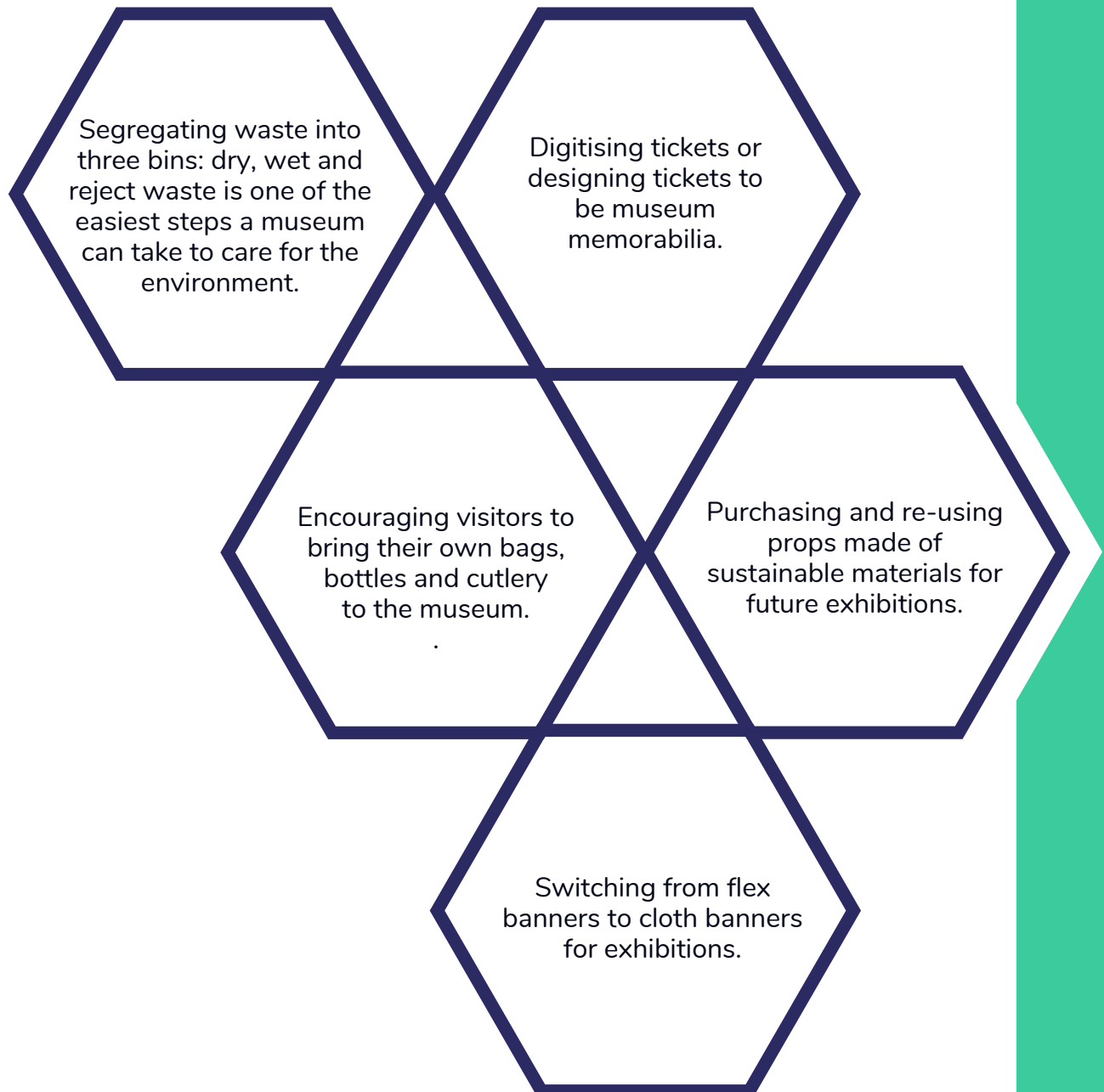


A major highlight of the workshop was **the five stages of behaviour change**:



It is required for any museum to go through these stages to reach its eventual goal of sustainable waste management.

The facilitator also shared some **“quick wins”** that museums can achieve in their waste management journey. Below are a few examples of the same:



# Workshop Outcomes

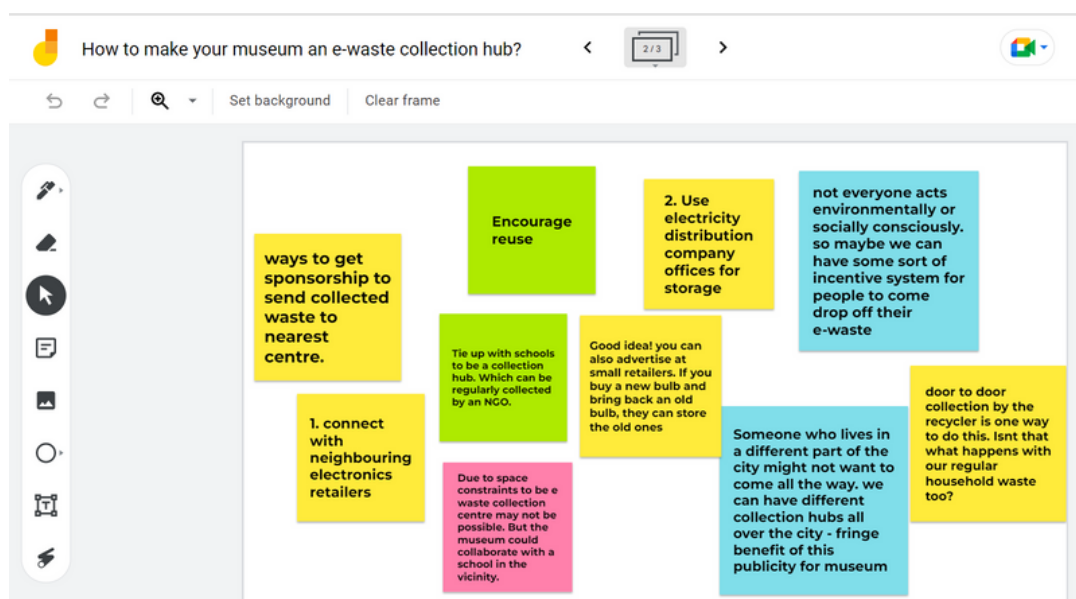
One of the key objectives of the workshop was for the partner museums to monitor and analyse the waste generated across weeks and months by continuing to fill their respective audit sheets regularly and measure their growth. Some of the partner museums got started on this and were able to do it a few times, but their efforts tapered off over time and remained quite inconsistent. This has been one of the shortcomings of the pilot programmes which will be a major concern we will be addressing addressed in the coming year.

## Workshop 3:

### “Electronic Waste Management - Wired for the Future” by Solid Waste Management Roundtable ([SWMRT](#))

Facilitator: Dr. Sowmya Raghavan, Member

Our third and final workshop for the year was focused on electronic waste. Museums were educated about the subject - right from what is e-waste, how to recognise it, to the importance of recycling it. In this workshop, we also discussed how we can develop community practices that encourage reuse and repair of e-waste.



The system of recycling e-waste is not very robust in India. The percentage of metal extracted from e-waste is still very low — only about 30%, according to a UN report. We learnt about **the 3 Rs of e-waste** which are three main actions museums can take in the proper management of e-waste.

## REFURBISH & REPAIR

Before completely discarding any e-waste, we need to consider if it is a waste after all. A thorough examination must be done to determine whether a product can be refurbished or repaired to bring it back to working condition again. Once it has been determined that a product is a waste after all, the e-waste must be disposed of correctly. One cannot throw away just some parts of an electronic gadget — the entire product must be discarded as a whole. These must then be sent to the nearest authorized e-waste recycling centre for the proper management of e-waste.

## REIMAGINE

Consider this: At what point is it necessary to throw out your old stuff? E-waste can be reimaged to create art and even daily-use items. These can be displayed at museums, even drawing attention to how dependent we are on electronic products. A stellar example of the reimagination of e-waste is the Tokyo 2020 Medal Project, a landmark recycling initiative that ensured that each Olympic medal at the 2020 Olympics was moulded entirely from metal extracted from recycled consumer electronics.

## RECOGNIZE YOUR IMPACT

Art is a powerful way to spread awareness. Museums, with their large audiences, have the facilities to become a platform for art that explores the vagaries of climate change. As a part of the cultural sector, we have the ability to create change through our performative, creative and influential mediums of communication, showing our audiences the urgent and important message of the climate emergency and call out to them to mobilize.

# Workshop Outcomes

The outcome that was expected out of this workshop was for all the partner museums to declare an “e-waste day” and hold an e-waste collection drive on that day on the museum premises. Each museum can act as an e-waste collection hub, where the general public could come down to drop off their e-waste. In cases of lack of space, museums can partner with local schools to become e-waste collection hubs, which would also educate the student population. The waste collected is to be redirected to local repair shops, in turn also supporting them. These products can then return to the market as refurbished items and can be sold to museum audiences or disadvantaged communities. The remaining e-waste that cannot be repaired would then be sent to the nearest authorized e-waste recycling centre respectively.

This activity is still a work in progress. The museums have shown interest in the collection drive and conversations with local vendors have started. We hope to work on this more seriously in the next year and bring it to fruition.

## Testimonials

Below are a couple of testimonials from museum members about the impact and relevance of these workshops:



“Our Waste, Our Responsibility was the most helpful workshop for us. It helped us in carefully monitoring the museum as well as also made us more careful about the objects we use in the museum, like plastic or Paper bags.”

Kuldeep Kothari, Secretary, Arna Jharna Desert Museum



“All three workshops were very informative and made us look around our museum a little more closely based on these topics.”

Natasha Fernandes, Curator, Museum of Christian Art



# CHAPTER 3

## Placing an eco-lens on museum collections



“An eco-lens is not just about seeing the world as nature, but about inspiring visitors to become better stewards of nature.”

Bridget McKenzie, Founding Director of Climate Museum UK

The global cultural sector world over believes that both art and cultural heritage play vastly important roles in fighting the climate crisis. A large portion of the intersection of art and climate change activism has consisted of one of these two things: creating art about the crisis and creating art out of waste. Through IMACC, however, we relook at existing museum collections through a new lens — an ecological one — and in doing so, retell the historical narrative around them.

After our first workshop titled **“Putting an Eco-lens on Museum Objects”** to help the partner museums understand the approaches they can take to interpret their collections through an eco-lens, each museum took up the task of performing this activity with their museum objects. In the period of one year, the museums were to interpret **four** of their collections and present their interpretations in the form of social media posts to educate their audiences on their findings. Although basic guidelines were given to conduct this activity, the museums were given the freedom to explore their objects in whatever way they chose, to allow for individual creativity; the only condition being that it must lead back to the environment.

This wonderful exercise turned out to be eye-opening. Through eco-lens, museums interpreted some vastly different objects — ranging from musical instruments and cameras to millets and decorative masks.



However, as anticipated, a few museums faced challenges in conducting this activity as well as making social media posts based on it. The hurdles ranged from the selection of the museum object itself to designing the posts to creating content for the posts. The most common challenge faced was finding objects in their collection that could have any relation to the environment. While ReReeti had individual conversations with the museums as well as CDE to find solutions for this, a larger conclusion we came to was to take a deeper look at the museum objects and have a few more workshops on this subject in 2023-24.



**Museo Camera** is an excellent example of a museum that overcame this hurdle. Since this is a museum that focuses solely on camera equipment and photography, their objects were quite homogenous in nature. We were stuck on this question: How many different ecological links can we find to the camera after all?

After a discussion on this, they came up with the following ideas for a way forward:

1

Showcasing Kulwant Roy photographs depicting Gandhiji - where we could talk about the role he played historically in the Dandi March and his use of the Charkha to produce Khadi - connecting historical photographs from our archives to pivotal movements from the past

2

Vageeshwari Camera - The history behind the Vageeshwari Camera is interesting - we could use that as a featured Museum item. The father of the inventor of the Vageeshwari camera was a musician and used to make instruments, and was asked to repair the bellows of an imported camera by a foreigner, he was unable to do so but then his son started manufacturing Indian cameras with the wood from his father's shop and creating all parts by himself. Only the lens and screws were imported.



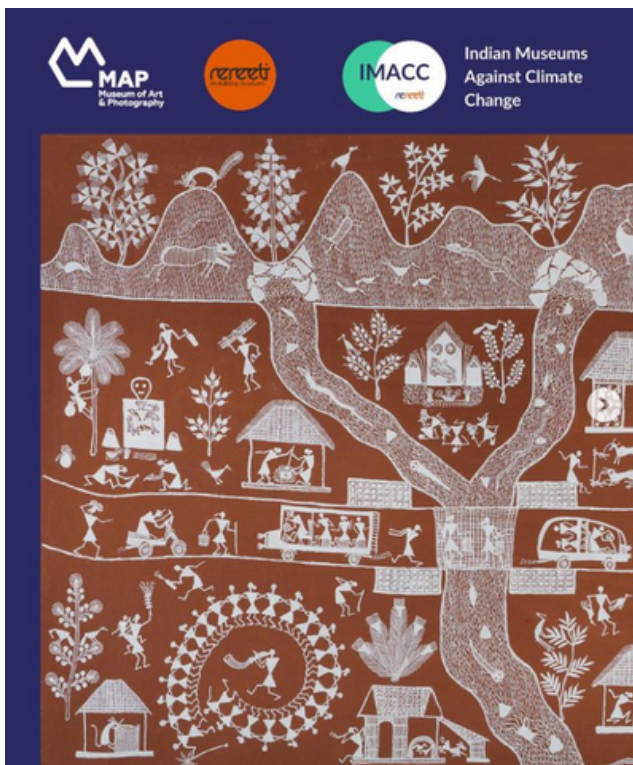
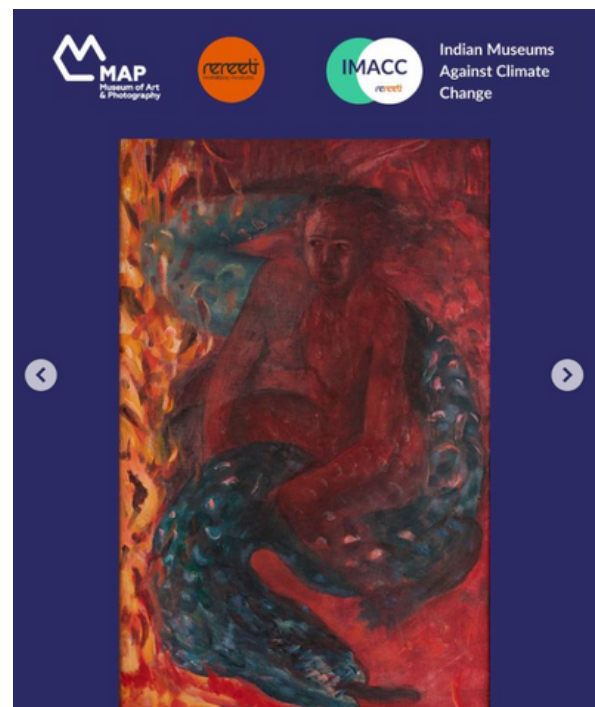
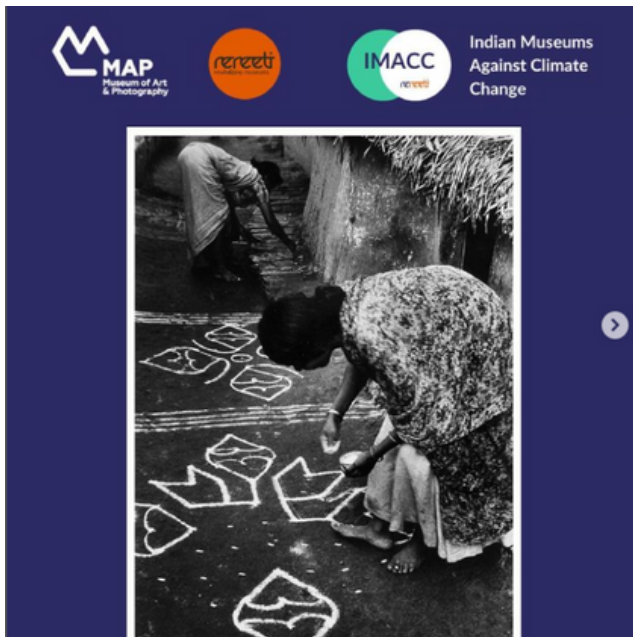
3

Featuring the Aerial war cameras that captured the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.

4

Showcasing the Nikonos underwater camera along with the fish tank installation in front of the museum.

To wrap up this segment, listed below are three of the social media posts in the eco-lens series that were most well-received:



# CHAPTER 4

## Sustainable practices in daily operations

For museums to become organisations of change, they need to make a conscious effort to practise sustainability within their institutional space.

Through IMACC, our effort has been to not just create dialogue but also provide tools and resources that would allow museums in India to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. We encourage museums to make a change within their institutional settings before they become forums of awareness. The question often posed by IMACC to Indian museums joining the movement is a simple one: “How sustainable are you in the running of daily operations at the museum?” The response to this often holds within it the initial solutions and steps a museum can take.



Kerala Museum's efforts to reduce plastic waste during school visits.



It was a pleasant surprise to discover that our partner museums were already following a number of sustainable practices at their premises. Most of them had fairly solid systems of waste segregation, management and treatment. Some of them made sure to help the greenery around them flourish and were already in the process of making their spaces plastic-free and zero-waste zones. DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum and the Museum of Art & Photography, although built decades apart, both had sustainable methods and materials incorporated in the construction of their respective spaces. We must specially applaud **The Indian Music Experience Museum and Arna Jharna: The Thar Desert Museum** for centring ecology even in their curatorial conceptualisation by holding the exhibitions “Birdsong” and “Millets of Rajasthan” respectively.

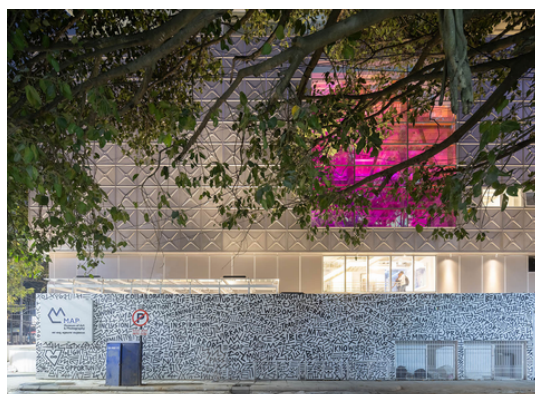


Image from the Birdsong Exhibition, Indian Music Experience Museum, Bangalore

We have not yet conducted a structured evaluation of the increase in sustainable practices at the museums at the end of the first year of IMACC. However, here are a few **testimonials** from partner museums about the changes in their practices after joining IMACC. **The Indian Music Experience Museum** again took the lead here by making a number of tangible changes in the museum operations.



DakshinaChitra Museum, Tamil Nadu



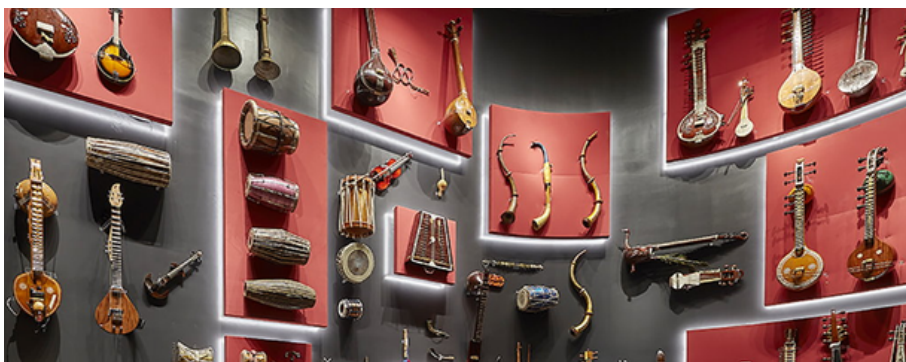
MAP, Bangalore

“

Post the waste management workshop, we have implemented a couple of changes to reduce the use of single-use plastics within the museum premises. Some of the steps we implemented are mentioned below:

- 1 Banning the sale of plastic water bottles at the museum. Instead, we intend to install water dispensers this month for huge audience groups that come to the museum for tours or as part of events or festivals so that they have access to drinking water.
- 2 Stopped distributing plastic bottles to artists performing as part of our events and festivals. Now we have copper bottles and tumblers placed backstage and on stage for artists. This is a practice we will be following going forward for all events.
- 3 As part of our community outreach initiative that reaches out to children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, earlier we used to serve children a snack and a tetra-pack drink. We will no longer be doing that. Children will be served a drink in steel tumblers.
- 4 We are also exploring options to replace boxed lunches and plastic packaging which we distribute to children coming in as part of our community outreach initiatives with more eco-friendly options (either in terms of packaging material or in the way it is served, for instance having a buffet system).
- 5 We are working on streamlining our waste segregation. This is a work in progress. At present, we are in the process of looking at procuring colour-coded bins for different kinds of waste generated and looking for vendors who can help us with better waste disposal or recycling processes.”

Lakshmi Raghu, Community Outreach Coordinator, Indian Music Experience Museum

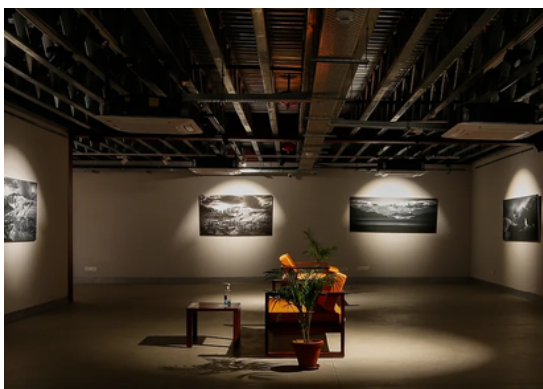


Indian Music Experience Museum, Bangalore

“

“Post the waste management workshop conducted by ReReeti, we have initiated weekly training of all staff members on the segregation system. Despite following segregation over the last 2.5 years we did have waste streams getting mixed up. With the weekly training + new system of marking the various segregation bins we hope to achieve 100% segregation at source. All the segregated waste is taken to Samadhaan hub in Gurgaon.”

Mallika Arya, Trustee, Museo Camera



Museo Camera



Arna Jharna Desert Museum

“

"Working with IMACC has made us more aware of our role and responsibility towards fighting climate change. Hence, this year when we curated our new exhibition on the millets of Rajasthan, we used resources available in the museum itself. For example, we have extensively used our Paper Mache and Pottery Exhibition objects in the design of the Millet Exhibition."

Kuldeep Kothari, Secretary, Arna Jharna Desert Museum

In the next phase of IMACC, ReReeti Foundation will launch a thoroughly researched handbook titled as the **Sustainable Development Handbook for Museums**, with special emphasis on the Indian context. Within this book one can find guidance on implementing sustainable practices — some of them would include - prioritising eco-friendly practices, increasing use of renewable energy, reducing and conserving water usage, and having an efficient waste management system with prominent signages across the museum premises. The aim of this handbook is to help the museums to select environmentally responsible vendors, promote ethical sourcing, reduce carbon footprint, and ensure social and environmental sustainability throughout the process of reaching closer to the vision of fighting against climate change.



# CHAPTER 5

## Enabling Public Dialogue

In addition to encouraging our partner museums to have conversations internally and with their audiences, we at ReReeti also made our own efforts to engage in and enable important conversations around the intersection of climate change, art, history and museums.

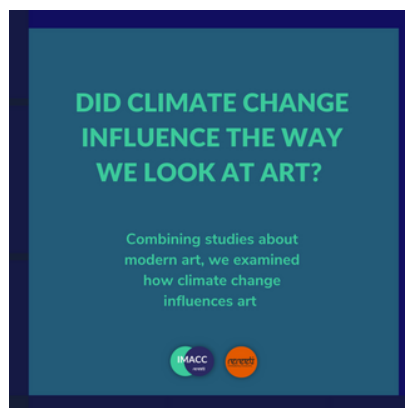
We carried this out in 3 main ways:

**Social media:** In the period of 1 year, ReReeti posted 24 IMACC-related Instagram posts, which were also adapted to our other social media platforms. These posts drew attention to the relationship between art, museums and climate change. These included:

1

- An introduction to IMACC (3 posts)
- Well-researched posts about subjects like sustainable museum practices and museums with a focus on ecology (7 Instagram posts)
- Learnings from the IMACC workshops (4 posts)
- Collaborative posts with partner museums (11 Instagram posts)

These posts reached a total of around **37,000 audiences**. Below are the 3 most popular posts created by ReReeti independently:





**Blog articles:** We published a few articles on The ReReeti Blog which act as starting points for anyone interested, and especially museum professionals, to gain insights into this intersection. Find them listed below:

[The Sustainable Development Goals and Museums](#)

[The Intersection of Culture and Climate Action: Museums, and a Way Forward](#)

[Climate and Museums In India: Crowd-Sourced Opinions on the Way Forward](#)

[Public Views on Sustainable Food and Museums](#)

We also published multiple articles that were directly and indirectly related to ecology on Culture Cog, our secondary blog with articles in the general ambits of art, culture and history. Find them listed below:

[An unsung bond between the Kodavas and their ecology](#)

[The Effects of Climate Change on the Historic Mosque City of Bagerhat](#)

[Belur Diaries: Memories of food and change](#)

[Synergies between Stepwells and Art](#)

**CDE meetups:** Every month, the ReReeti team attends CDE's International And Regional Hubs Meeting. In these meetings, Hub coordinators from across the globe come together to discuss updates and the way forward. We also brainstorm to find solutions on any challenges we may be facing. This not only helps us to stay in touch with the larger community consistently, but also stimulates our minds with fresh perspectives, ensuring that we bring a global approach to IMACC time and again.

We must also mention here the immense impact these dialogues have had personally on ReReeti's team members. We are more conscious of our everyday actions now. We have started using public transport as much as possible. We think twice before buying non-essential products and pay more attention to label descriptions to understand what we're really consuming. We continue to uphold some non-negotiables in the events we conduct. Overall, we ensure that we are dedicated to our organisational as well as personal goals towards sustainability, and believe that we are better for it.

# CHAPTER 6

## Learnings and Way Forward

The pilot programme has given us a lot of insight into the Climate Emergency, the intersection of museums & climate change, and the running of IMACC. To start with, we learnt that continuously and consistently having **conversations** around the subject is paramount — both with partner museums and the general public.

This year, our focus remained steadfast on a handful of activities. While certain exercises like putting an eco-lens on museum collections were impactful and must be continued, in the future, we would love to see the directions our partner museums go in when they are free to choose activities that interest them. We will let museums take their own creative paths, but continue to assist and guide them in their journey.



Although our efforts were to the best of our abilities, they did not reach the heights of our expectations, mostly because of the limited resources within ReReeti as well as the partner museums. In the coming year, we intend to **expand our efforts** in terms of team, velocity, and funds, which will allow us to strengthen this initiative in more systemic ways. We will also work with each museum individually to find effective solutions to these challenges.

For instance, each museum could identify one or two staff members as the **Emergency Representatives**, who already have a particular interest in the environment and climate change. Assigning these members the responsibility of leading IMACC-related activities can lead to more enthusiastic participation and a renewed sense of importance towards the museums' institutional goals of sustainability.

We will also have **workshops** that will equip museums to have conversations with their visitors about the subject in an effective manner and build a community devoted to sustainability. An effective way to amplify these conversations is to organise physical events at museum premises which are open to the public. These interactive events are sure to bring in much higher audiences than just online engagement. We are keen to raise **funds** towards the partner museums for the same. The funding could also help them to employ the needful resources for the implementation of other IMACC-related work.



While we successfully held 3 important workshops this year, we understand that some museums still found it difficult to work without actionable guidelines. ReReeti, being a staunch advocate for processes and frameworks, is already moving towards building a concrete set of guidelines for the partner museums. In June 2023, we are set to launch the **“Sustainable Development Handbook for Museums in India”**, a guide that can be used by museums across the country to systematically direct them towards responsible museum management and other sustainable practices. The Handbook will also guide museums to become (single-use) plastic-free zones, which is a significant goal for a number of partner museums.

Following this, we will begin research on our next goal — to build a **Waste Management App** for museums, where museums can track their waste metrics easily and clearly. This could also be an alternative to filling the audit sheet, the challenges towards which we will actively work on to understand and problem-solve.



All in all, the pilot programme has taken us through a steep learning curve and we are committed to putting this knowledge into practice and experimenting further in the years ahead.