

Climate resilience of street vendors in city to be enhanced

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Street vendors are a part of the vulnerable group that faces the harshest impact of climate vagaries. To enhance their climate resilience, the Chennai Resilience Centre (CRC) — a voluntary organisation — is collaborating with government agencies and residents to co-develop practical solutions to climate challenges.

The organisation would work with small vendors and residents at a neighbourhood level

to understand the nature of vulnerabilities they experience, and increase their ability to cope with extreme weather events.

The CRC has partnered with the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) and the Tamil Nadu Urban Livelihoods Mission to execute 'The Neighbourhood Small Business Climate Resilience Programme'. Krishna Mohan, Chief Resilience Officer, CRC, said the programme — a collaborative initiative led by New York-based non-profit organisation Resilient Cities Catalyst (RCC) — would be executed in Besant Nagar, Thiruvanmiyur and Kasturba Nagar.

"We are looking at practical solutions such as redesigning shops and pushcarts with climate-proof and adaptive solutions. Weather-resilient vendor infrastructure such as kiosks made of heat-resistant material, solar panels to operate fans and water kiosks are some of the solutions planned," he added.

The organisations, along with Okapi Research and Advisory, have already started to hold discussions with focus groups, including women self-help groups. V. Mageshvaran, secretary, National Association of Street Vendors of India, said: "Street vendors suffer from a lack of business or a considerable loss of income for a minimum of three months every year owing to extreme weather events. They should be provided umbrella sheds, drinking water and toilet facilities to combat climate challenges," he added.

Citing a recent national meeting, Mr. Mageshvaran said that the government must provide compensation for their loss and hold medical camps to address health issues. The CRC would also explore solutions to enhance climate-resilience, benefiting the neighbourhood. Paul Nelson, Founding Principal, RCC, said that besides improving physical infrastructure, including electric vehicles and temporary shelters at model locations or street vending zones, the programme would raise awareness on heat and preparedness, health risk management and better waste management.

The initiative would be expanded across the city.

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