



April 2013



**Thinking Aloud**

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Dear Reader,

With the World Earth Day being observed on the 22nd of April, we thought of weaving this month's theme around the issue of climate change which has become an intrinsic part of our everyday life. With the rapid industrialization and rampant use of fossil fuels, the climatic ecosystem of our planet has undergone a paradigm shift and we are faced with the problem of depleted inheritance. The future generations will probably never see some species of animals which are on the verge of extinction, they might learn of iceless poles of the earth and may be prone to extreme vagaries of the atmosphere. The changing weather patterns are having a telling effect in the form of rising sea levels, wild hurricanes, tsunamis, droughts and famines and many other ecosystem damages. The subject of climate change has gained significance in the recent decade and it is encouraging to see that not only individuals, but even business corporations are taking the issue seriously. This month's ET looks at the various aspects of climate change and encourages the initiated for further action and evince interest of the uninitiated.



In **Thinking Aloud** Jay tells us that though the issue of global warming has come to the forefront, there is no collaborative initiative at a global level to tackle the same. Though there have been discussions at various forums, the political deadlock among the developed and developing nations has been a major hindrance in building a common global platform to crusade against the effects of ' global warming' . But the positive streak is that business entities have acknowledged the issue and in the longer-term interest of business sustenance are taking major steps, while on the other hand individual and organisation-based crusaders are putting up a brave fight.

**Podium** this month features **Von Hernandez**, Executive Director, Greenpeace Southeast Asia, who shares with us Greenpeace's philosophy behind its fight against the deterioration of our climatic ecosystem. Many initiatives

conducted by Greepeace emanate from the fact that the climatic change issue has become a question of life and death for many lives – human and other beings. The Southeast Asia unit is currently concentrating on the main issues of the region including deforestation and promoting the use of clean and renewable energy sources. He urges that economic proliferation should not be at the cost of environmental well-being but also advocates that environment protection should not lead to anti-development. Instead, he says that development should be responsible such that environmental and business sustainability are ensured.

In **We Recommend** this month, we share with you various resources – books, YouTube videos, and films that grabbed a lot of attention in promoting the environmental cause. Rohan, Principal Consultant with ELS, has selected a ‘ potpourri of resources’ to promote and initiate interest in the subject of climate change. The resources are the proverbial ‘ tip of the iceberg’ , grab them before they melt!

**Standing Ovation** this month features Turning Point Foundation (TPF), a Delhi based organisation providing rehabilitation and medical facilities to the needy sections of the society. TPF runs various programs such as rehabilitation facilities for drug de-addiction, HIV/AIDS prevention and harm reduction services, medical and general health camps, etc. It also works in co-ordination with various other NGOs in providing these facilities to a larger section of the society. For its purpose and the efforts, TPF deserves a Standing Ovation!

In **Figures of Speech**, Vikram presents the effect of 'global warming'!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Linked In](#) & [Google+](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!



## Thinking Aloud

### IS GREEN GOOD? - Jay

Al Gore woke up a lot of sleeping people with his landmark film, ‘ An Inconvenient Truth’ . When a voice like his espouses a cause, it raised the profile of the subject like never before. Co-incidentally, around the same time, TIME magazine released its wake-up call with a cover story on global warming, ‘ Be Afraid. Be Very Afraid’ . Suddenly, the subject of Global Warming was main stream.

What is ‘ Global Warming’ ? Simply put, it is the escalation in the average temperature of the Earth’ s atmosphere and oceans. Scientists estimate that over the last century the mean temperature has risen over 0.8 degrees centigrade. What is calamitous is that the rise in temperature has intensified over the last three decades. While there is some debate about the real reasons, it is widely attributed to be due to enhancement of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to a larger use of fossil fuels and deforestation.

Sceptics remain, of course. But with every passing year, overwhelming evidence on climate change is on display: angry hurricanes, severe winters, dreaded droughts, etc. Mother Nature reminds us that we can no longer take her

for granted.

What can one do in this matter? Aren't governments responsible for policy steps – and in this case, as a subject with ramifications for all mankind – shouldn't the United Nations take the right steps?

Fair questions all; however, the terrible fact is that, as in many other matters, there is no unanimity of thought or action. Inter-governmental talks at various summits (Copenhagen, Doha, et al) have not been able to speak with one voice. The industrialised world refuses to take the lead in this matter – but is quick to pontificate to the emerging economies. In the quest to overcome the long chasm between the haves and have-nots of the world, the sorry fact remains that the developing nations are repeating the same mistakes that the older western economies have committed. If there is any alternate model of growth and development, then the new economies haven't found it yet.

Frustrated with the deaf ear that governments continue to display, Al Gore and his ilk are asking the private sector and citizens to take the lead.

What is the solution? There is no clear answer here too! From the advice to eat less meat (Dr. Pachauri, surely vegetarianism can't be a solution to all ailments of the world!) to greater energy efficiency and using clean energy, a variety of solutions have been offered. Sadly, there is no silver bullet but the common consensus is that every attempt must be made to reduce the carbon footprint in our consumption society.

The good news is that large corporations have become alive to this issue and some are taking serious steps to address issues of sustainability. Why this change of heart from capitalists, one may well ask? There are many reasons: chiefly because corporations appreciate that the thinking of the long-term offers the best ROI for a company – and only drawing from nature is a sure-shot ticket to mutually assured destruction. One must also note that activist bodies (like Greenpeace) have crusaded hard to bring the issues of sustainability to the Board room. Campaigns have taken both hard and soft agitations (euphemistically called by Greenpeace as a 'migraine headache'!) to convince large businesses that they can make a substantial difference. This is truly so as we live in an era of Big Business which can lobby governments like no one else can.

The Green movement is here to stay. Their voices cannot be muffled any longer and it is not an annual event restricted to Earth Day sloganeering. It is time to remind ourselves that though Gaia (the Greek Goddess of Earth) is with you, she does not belong to you. We are mere passengers transiting in a long journey and owe it to future generations that we preserve what we have been gifted with and offer a better place to those who succeed us on this planet.

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**Podium**

**Von Hernandez, Executive Director,  
Greenpeace Southeast Asia**



Von Hernandez is the Executive Director of Greenpeace Southeast Asia (GPSEA), leading the environmental group's programs and operations in the Southeast Asian region. Previously, he served as Campaigns Director for the organisation, and was responsible for driving the group's campaigns in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines on a number of issues including climate change, forests, sustainable agriculture and toxics pollution.

An environmental activist for more than 20 years, Von initiated and led a number of campaigns in the Philippines including the approval of landmark laws like the Ecological Waste Management Act and the Clean Air Act. He also spearheaded campaigns to rehabilitate the Pasig River as well as efforts to clean-up toxic sites in former US military bases in the country. He founded and spearheaded various environmental coalitions at the national and international levels including the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), Waste Not Asia, Lakbay Kalikasan, the Ecowaste coalition, and the Sagip Pasig Movement.

In 2003, Von was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for his work which led to the first national ban on waste incineration. The Goldman Prize is considered to be the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for grassroots environmental activists. Subsequently Asia Inc. magazine named him as one of Asia's young movers and shakers in 2004 and in 2007, he was also included in Time Magazine's Heroes for the Environment. More recently, Von was listed among the top 20 most trusted Filipinos by Reader's Digest in its nationwide Trust Poll in 2010.

Von graduated from the University of the Philippines, with a Bachelor's degree in English. He recently completed his Master in Public Management (MPM) degree from the National University of Singapore. The MPM is a prestigious program designed for senior managers by the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and includes spending a full semester at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

**ET:** According to Kumi Naidoo, Head of Greenpeace International, ' We are winning the battle but losing the planet' – what makes Greenpeace so special in a world where environmentalist movements now have voice?

**VH:** It is true that environmental awareness globally is now at an all-time high. This is a testament to the sustained efforts and campaigning by environmental groups to give the environment its proper place in our current order of priorities. Sadly, it is also a reflection of the immensity and complexity of the ecological dilemmas that we now face. Only quite recently, the International Meteorological Association reported that global temperatures were rising faster than previously anticipated and that polar ice are now going through accelerating rates of melting. These are signs that we are nearing a climate threshold that could lead to far-reaching and irreversible changes to life on the planet as we know it. In this climate change era, a single anomalous event is enough to nudge vulnerable countries and communities into even greater poverty.

In other words, the environment has become a survival issue for millions of people worldwide. And despite the seeming convergence of various and interlinked ecological threats – including the anticipated water and food shortages whose outbreaks could lead to greater conflict and social instability, most governments and corporations around the world are still operating on a business-as-usual basis. We are still sleepwalking into disaster, destroying and consuming this planet as if we have another planet to go to. The window for effective action to prevent runaway climate change from occurring is narrowing down pretty fast. Yet the still predominant drive of governments to develop at all costs, their continuing reliance on fossil fuels and dirty energy, and their failure to agree and commit to

a fair, ambitious and legally binding climate treaty – stand as proof that we are losing the planet.

Together with other environmental groups and communities, Greenpeace is committed to help ensure that the fundamental changes that need to happen now do materialize. The fact that Greenpeace does not accept funding from governments or corporations, and the fact that we are not tied or affiliated with any partisan political interests, give our campaigns credibility and power to push for real changes.

**ET: What are the major initiatives of Greenpeace South East Asia?**

**VH:** Southeast Asia is one of the key regions of the world where Greenpeace believes it is important to make a difference. Stemming the rate of deforestation in Indonesia alone, for example, will have significant global effects in reducing greenhouse emissions, protecting habitats of endangered species, and restoring important life support functions. Southeast Asia also stands among the most vulnerable yet least prepared regions in the world when we talk about climate impacts. Some of the major interests associated with overfishing and destruction of marine resources also have a Southeast Asian connection.

So in this region, Greenpeace runs almost all the vital issue campaigns. We are campaigning to stop deforestation in Indonesia. Our climate and energy campaign in Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia has been consistently focused on promoting clean, renewable energy in place of dirty coal and dangerous nuclear power plants. We are also launching our Oceans work this year, intended to highlight the crisis confronting our oceans across the region. We also have an aggressive campaign to protect iconic fresh water resources in the region against toxic pollution. On the food and agriculture front, we are committed to promote and enable the shifting of resources away from chemical intensive farming and towards ecological agriculture.

Taken together, these campaign initiatives are intended to sway the rising economies of Southeast Asia to adopt and follow a development pathway that is not predicated on the mindless and irreversible destruction of the natural environment. We do not need to repeat the mistakes and tragedies associated with industrialisation in the West, but rather we need to learn from those errors and leapfrog into developing clean and safer alternatives.

**ET: The rise of the new economies (China, India, Brazil, South East Asian nations, etc.) has lifted millions out of poverty. However, some industrialists have viewed environmentalists as major roadblocks in the path to national prosperity. What is your message to them?**

**VH:** Development need not be equated with environmental destruction. This was the rallying cry of the Earth Summit more than 20 years ago when the concept of sustainable development started taking root. Viewing the defence of the environment as anathema to progress, especially in this time and age, is therefore regressive, myopic and self-serving. It is precisely this kind of short-sighted thinking that is bringing the planet to the brink of an impending climate catastrophe.

When millions of people are pushed to even greater poverty as a consequence of a single, extreme weather event, is that progress? When children, consumers and communities are exposed to toxic, life-threatening chemicals and pollution, is that progress? When flash floods and landslides induced by deforestation continue to decimate entire villages, is that progress?

Perhaps the best answer to those who still have this terrible sense of deficiency about what progress ultimately means is captured in a proverb which counsels that “ when the last tree is cut, the last river poisoned, and the last

fish caught, only then will we realize that we cannot eat money.”

**ET: What are the biggest challenges faced in undertaking Greenpeace initiatives?**

**VH:** The biggest challenge is still the predominant mindset in our societies which views environmental defence as obstructionist and anti-development. This thinking has spawned and reinforced the irresponsible, reactionary stereotype of environmental activists as economic saboteurs or even worse, as terrorists, especially in places where the spaces for legitimate protest and democratic participation are absent if not shrinking.

Our activists and campaigners are often at the receiving end of hostile threats coming from campaign adversaries or those who are made uncomfortable by our actions. We do recognize that this comes with the territory. Having said that, we are always mindful of the risks and we accept that at times, our commitment would require us to operate in harsh, risky environmental settings.

Another big challenge is public indifference to the real issues and trends that are now shaping our future. People are continually distracted by the latest craze, or the new gadgets out there, or the fleeting consolation accorded by our comfortable lifestyles – that we begin to lose sight of the vision to pursue the real needs and challenges of our times.

**ET: Could you please share with us some of the significant successes of Greenpeace South East Asia in its campaigns?**

**VH:** All is not grim, and the reason I remain optimistic about the future comes from the many successes that our campaigns have had in Southeast Asia over the last decade. Our campaigns have already resulted in a number of key local and national victories – which involve not only stopping a polluting waste incinerator, a coal energy plant or a nuclear power proposal, but also mainstreaming safer alternatives such as in the areas of renewable energy and zero waste. Our initiatives have likewise catalysed and resulted in landmark policy victories in the countries where we operate (e.g. Philippine Ecological Waste Management Act, Renewable Energy law, a moratorium on forest clearance in Indonesia, GMO-free rice policy in Thailand, etc.). But perhaps more importantly, we are making progress in revising the climate of opinion on many of the issues we are working on, and to me that makes for real and lasting change.

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## We Recommend

### Resources on Environment and Ecology

This exercise felt like having to pick just one color from a wide arching splendid rainbow. Nevertheless, if not the mythical “ pot of gold” at the end of the rainbow, hope you will find the “ potpourri of resources” mentioned below to be of immense value, just as we did.

This judicious assortment of insightful reading, listening and watching is not just to inform, more importantly, it is to inspire right action. As a human race, it is our collective responsibility to ensure we report a higher ROI – Return on Inheritance – to the next generation of inheritors.

Books, online articles, YouTube videos:

1) **Silent Spring – by Rachel Carson**

First published in three serialized excerpts in the New Yorker in June of 1962, the book appeared in September of that year and the outcry that followed its publication forced the banning of DDT and spurred revolutionary changes in the laws affecting our air, land, and water. Carson's passionate concern for the future of our planet reverberated powerfully throughout the world, and her eloquent book was instrumental in launching the environmental movement. It is without question one of the landmark books of the twentieth century.

2) **Arctic Summer Ice Melting Faster Than Previously Thought, Scientists – Science World Report**

**Link:** <http://www.scienceworldreport.com/articles/6216/20130412/arctic-summer-ice-melting-faster-previously-thought-scientists.htm>

3) **China Syndrome (1979)**

This film eerily presaged the meltdown at 3 Mile Island just 12 days after its release, galvanizing the anti-nuclear movement in the United States. In the film, one scientist states that a "China Syndrome" would permanently devastate "an area the size of Pennsylvania." A coincidence? Three Mile Island was located in Pennsylvania, just south of Harrisburg. With the film anti-nuclear activists gained a powerful tool for organising the general public. China Syndrome articulated in easy-to-understand terms the dangers of nuclear power at the hands of neglectful energy profiteers.

4) **March of the Penguins (2005)**

It won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in which the incredible French filmmakers take you on a yearlong journey starting in the autumn when the emperor penguins breed. Once the chick is born, the parents then have to take a difficult crossing between the ocean and breeding grounds for several months and how global warming is really affecting the ice for these penguins.

5) **An Inconvenient Truth (2006)**

Depending on who you talk to, this was either the most important or the most damaging film for the environmental movement. Nevertheless, it's hard to imagine what the climate advocacy movement would be without Al Gore at the podium.

6) **The 11th Hour (2007)**

With contributions from over 50 politicians, scientists, and environmental activists, including former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, physicist Stephen Hawking, Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai, and journalist Paul Hawken, the film documents the grave problems facing the planet's life systems. Global warming, deforestation, mass species extinction, and depletion of the oceans' habitats are all addressed. The film's premise is that the

future of humanity is in jeopardy. The film proposes potential solutions to these problems by calling for restorative action by the reshaping and rethinking of global human activity through technology, social responsibility and conservation.

7) **BBC HARDtalk – Kumi Naidoo – (24:31 min)**

Four decades on and with global warming slipping down the agenda - is anyone listening to what Greenpeace has to say? In this 21 Nov 2012 video, Zeinab Badawi, HARDtalk presenter, speaks with South African Kumi Naidoo - Executive-Director of Greenpeace International on the need for his organisation to have a new bold vision to make an impact - and if so - what is it?

**Link:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qO8vLAGB3M>

8) **Global Warming- A Video by NASA – (5:49 min)**

The decade from 2000 to 2009 was the warmest in the modern record. "Piecing Together the Temperature Puzzle" illustrates how NASA satellites enable us to study possible causes of climate change. The video explains what role fluctuations in the solar cycle, changes in snow and cloud cover, and rising levels of heat-trapping gases may play in contributing to climate change.

**Link:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab6jV4VBWZE>

9) **Save the Arctic – Greenpeace Project – (2:03 min)**

In the last 30 years, we have lost as much as three-quarters of the floating sea ice cover at the top of the world. For over 800,000 years, ice has been a permanent feature of the Arctic Ocean. It is melting because of our use of dirty fossil fuel energy and in the near future, it could be ice-free for the first time since humans walked the Earth. This would be not only devastating for the people, polar bears, narwhals, walruses and other species that live there - but for the rest of us too. The ice at the top of the world reflects much of the sun' s heat back into space and keeps our whole planet cool, stabilising the weather systems that we depend on to grow our food. Protecting the ice means protecting us all.

**Link:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WF7L3sFLUK0>

**Happy reading and viewing!**

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**Standing Ovation**

**Turning Point Foundation**





The Turning Point Foundation (TPF) was founded by a group of likeminded and socially concerned citizens in Delhi. The NGO' s vision is to develop an environment for the beneficiaries in which they can make healthy choices and lead a life of dignity and respect.

The services provided by TPF include:

- Drug de-addiction and rehabilitation services (residential), at Delhi
- HIV/AIDS prevention and harm reduction for injecting drug users, at Panipat
- Naturopathy and yoga treatment services at Delhi
- Drugs/alcohol abuse awareness camps at Panipat and Delhi
- HIV/AIDS awareness camps at Panipat and Delhi
- General health camps at Panipat and Delhi
- Subsidized clinical laboratory services in Delhi
- Ambulance services in Delhi
- Awareness sessions on HIV&AIDS and drugs/alcohol for employees/students at institutions

They have been working in partnership with several NGOs like Concern India Foundation, One World South Asia, NGO Gateway along with the Ministry of Health to provide better facilities to the needy. Their mission is to provide quality and cost effective services to people negatively affected by issues related to social and health. This is achieved by a holistic approach to the treatment so that the clients will achieve a degree of wellbeing and wellness.

For its relentless efforts and benign cause, the Turning Point Foundation truly deserves a Standing Ovation!

If you want to get more information and support TPF, you can visit the website at <http://tpfindia.org/>.

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