



# PHASE OUT FOSSIL FUELS AND FAST TRACK CLEAN ENERGY

HOW TO TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE, FOSSIL  
FUEL THREATS AND THE NEED FOR A FAIR  
ENERGY TRANSITION IN INDIA

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### **About the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty is a global initiative to phase out fossil fuels and support a just transition. The world is beginning to recognise that unprecedented levels of international cooperation will be required to prevent the proliferation of fossil fuels, to phase out existing stockpiles and infrastructure, and to fast-track a just and peaceful transition to sustainable development and greater wellbeing for all.

[www.fossilfueltreaty.org](http://www.fossilfueltreaty.org)



### **About Climate Access**

Climate Access is a nonprofit organization focused on building political and public support for climate and clean energy solutions by developing and promoting the adoption of effective communication and engagement approaches. Climate Access draws from social science, best practices in the field and its in-depth climate communication and public engagement experience to make complex issues easy to understand and involve stakeholders in decision making and supporting policy and program implementation. Climate Access offers strategic framing, narrative, activation and engagement services and runs a resource and training center for more than 3,700 members from nonprofit, government, academic and community organizations.

[www.climateaccess.org](http://www.climateaccess.org)

*The “Phase out Fossil Fuels and Fast Track Clean Energy India Playbook” was produced by Climate Access on behalf of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative with consultation from Climate Action Network Southeast Asia.*

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# introduction

## BACKGROUND

Fossil fuels are responsible for more than 80 percent of the emissions causing climate change to date. Climate policies and programs focus on reducing emissions from the burning of fossil fuels but largely ignore the source of the problem – the production of coal, oil and gas – which governments and fossil fuel companies are expanding unchecked. Their plans, if allowed to continue, would generate more than twice the amount of emissions allowable to avoid catastrophic climate change.

This is not surprising given the influence of the fossil fuel industry and its government proponents in shaping the narrative around coal, oil, and gas, undermining support for impactful supply side policies. They amplify arguments about the necessity and inevitability of fossil fuels (despite their threat to humanity), the economic benefits they deliver and their role as innovators in advancing progress. Most recently, they claim the industry is part of the solution to climate change with hollow net zero commitments that rely on unproven, expensive technologies and unrealistic timelines that undermine our efforts to preserve a livable planet.

The movement in Southeast Asia and around the world to shift from fossil fuels to clean energy and low-carbon technologies is growing and successfully blocking some of the expansion of new coal, oil and gas and coal projects despite being David in a fight with the ultimate Goliath. Yet fossil fuel expansion plans and existing production levels remain inconsistent with survival. Those advocating for a fossil fuel phase out and fair energy transition must scale up efforts to tell a new story about the imperative and benefits of a fossil fuel free world and how we get there.

India is dependent on fossil fuel for nearly 70% of its energy, particularly coal. Public revenues from fossil fuel production and consumption currently account for 18% of general government revenue in India. It has on the other hand committed to net-zero emissions by 2070. However, an analysis last year by the Council for Energy, Environment and Water said India needed at least \$3.5 trillion to achieve this and needed nearly \$1.4 trillion, in the form of concessional finance, from developed economies.

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAYBOOK

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative aims to change the narrative around fossil fuels and climate change as one of its core goals. This means elevating the risks associated with existing and planned fossil fuel production, connecting the need for a phase down of fossil fuels with the imperative of a global, fair transition to clean energy and outlining a pathway to achieve it.

In 2021, on behalf of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, Climate Access in partnership with Drive Agency conducted media, social media and polling analyses plus message testing in five countries – the United States, India, Brazil, Philippines and Kenya. This was done to inform the Initiative’s communication efforts and share with organizations addressing supply side issues including the network of groups advocating for a Fossil Fuel Treaty. In addition, Climate Access and the Climate Narratives Initiative conducted similar research in Canada and developed [framing guidance](#).

The Phase Out Fossil Fuels and Fast Track Clean Energy India Framing Playbook offers guidance on how to talk about fossil fuel supply side issues, a fair transition and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. A summary of key trends from the research sources listed below are included in an appendix.

## METHODOLOGY

Recommendations in the *Phase Out Fossil Fuels and Fast Track Solutions Playbook* are informed by the following research:

**[India media analysis](#)**: Climate Access used Google News to track coverage in national news outlets.

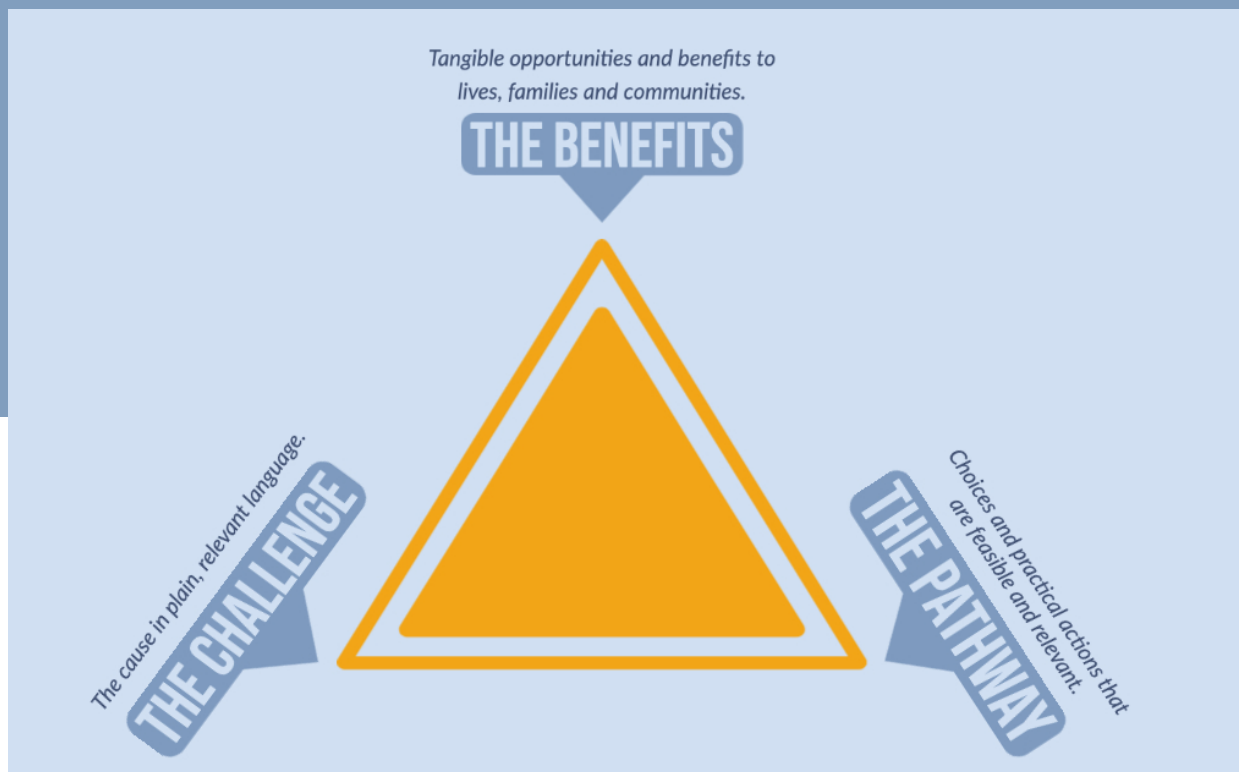
**[India polling analysis](#)**: The Climate Access team reviewed available public opinion research conducted in 2020 and 2021 on climate change, the phase out of fossil fuels, climate and clean energy solutions. A total of 3 studies were analyzed from sources including Yale University, Pew, and Ipsos.

**[India message testing](#)**: Climate Access worked with Drive Agency on message testing via social media. Drive Agency also conducted a social media analysis.

# recommendations

## TOP LEVEL FRAMING RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Lead with or incorporate a positive vision of a world without fossil fuels where people have access to clean, reliable and affordable energy, India's development needs are being met and there is cleaner air and water.
- ▶ Make the link between air pollution, climate change and fossil fuels and the impacts on public health.
- ▶ Highlight the health risks related to extreme heat and cold.
- ▶ Emphasize that fossil fuels are not needed for development given renewable energy is available and affordable. India can be a world leader in the shift to clean energy, rather than one of the three biggest emitters.
- ▶ Recognize the role that the global community must play in accepting their historical responsibility for the climate crisis as well as offering significant technical and financial support to nations like India in making the transition
- ▶ Amplify that it's not an energy transition if fossil fuel producing countries keep growing the problem - oil, gas and coal production. The first step is to end expansion.
- ▶ Point out the need for a plan to reduce the risk of air pollution and emissions from coal, gas and oil and achieve energy and economic security via a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty where the Global North takes responsibility for their fair share of the climate crisis and supports developing countries to move to clean energy.



## THE MESSAGE TRIANGLE

A message triangle can help guide you to create a story that sticks. This tactic helps to keep things simple amidst the noise and connect the dots between what people care about and what can be done. It highlights key themes to integrate and amplify in communications while allowing room for specific messages to be tailored for different stakeholders and audiences.

When you hit each of the points, you remove barriers to engagement and create a complete narrative for your audience with a clear challenge, pathway forward and benefits of taking action.

**The challenge** – the cause in plain, relevant language.

**The pathway** – choices and practical actions that are feasible and relevant.

**The benefits** – tangible opportunities and benefits to lives, families and communities.

You can start at any point, depending on where your audience is on the issue and cares about, then link to the other two points.

The benefits — the vision of what a fair shift away from fossil fuels will be like — is often left out or downplayed yet is needed to generate a sense of hope and momentum. Consider leading with it. All three components are needed. Individuals must feel a challenge to want to engage yet it must be balanced. If you dial up the threats, also dial up the pathway and the opportunity.

# THE MESSAGE TRIANGLE IN ACTION

## Fossil Fuel Treaty Meta-Narrative

Here is an example of how to bring the three points of the message triangle together into a cohesive narrative. This is a high-level framework offering key themes to integrate and amplify across fossil fuel supply side campaigns.

### ► Vision/Benefits

Clean air should be a basic right, not a luxury. India can clean up air and water pollution, meet its development needs and ensure everyone has access to affordable reliable energy by accelerating the adoption of clean energy from the sun, wind and water. Phasing out coal, oil and gas at the same time will protect us from more extreme heat and cold from climate change and pollution and reduce the need to import energy as well as global conflicts. India can be a leader advancing renewable energy and other low-carbon solutions while creating new economic opportunities and jobs.

### ► Challenge

Air pollution is choking our communities and lungs. It's only getting worse with heat waves driven by climate change. Heat waves in combination with extreme cold weather events are responsible for more than 740,000 deaths per year in India. Coal, gas and oil are big contributors to air and water pollution and are responsible for more than 80 percent of the emissions causing climate change. Meanwhile, the fossil fuel industry is making windfall profits while people across India struggle to make ends meet as energy and other costs rise due in large part to the fossil fuel funded war in Ukraine. Fossil fuel companies have plans to expand production, locking in pollution, climate, security and economic risks. The countries most responsible are in the Global North. Countries such as the United States, Canada, Norway, the UK and Australia that have created most of the climate pollution and have benefitted the most from fossil fuel production. These countries are not yet providing significant enough financial and technical support to help spur a just transition in countries like India.

### ► Pathway

It's time to protect people from air and water pollution and more extreme weather due to climate change by making a global plan to fast-track the adoption of clean energy and low-carbon technologies while starting to phase out coal, oil and gas. These are the three products that cause the greatest harm to our health and future. A plan that ensures countries most responsible for the climate crisis and with the greatest capacity to accelerate a clean energy transition lead and support nations in the Global South to be part of it. That's why a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty is needed so countries work together to move to clean energy, end the expansion of fossil fuels and start to wind down production to keep air pollution and extreme weather from getting worse in a way that is fair and fast so India can achieve its development goals.



## Unpacking the Triangle

Lead with the vision/benefits of a fair and fast energy transition. Choose which points to highlight based on the stakeholders you aim to reach (i.e. health, economic, climate, equity). Be sure to link to oil, gas and coal as the main driver of the challenge and the risk of fossil fuel expansion.

### The Vision/Benefits

- ▶ Make the benefits clear and tangible.
  - *Clean air and water are possible if we move away from coal, gas and oil to protect our families' health and the climate.*
  - *Renewable energy from the sun, wind and water can give everyone access to affordable, reliable energy and help India achieve our development goals into the future.*
  - *India has ambitious renewable energy goals yet more can be done. Accelerating the adoption of renewable energy in every community across the country will keep the lights on, create jobs and economic opportunities and reduce the need to import energy.*
  - *India can leverage its leadership to deliver more renewable energy and low-carbon solutions for India and the world.*
- ▶ Make the case that the benefits of action outweigh the costs of inaction. We have more options and it will take fewer resources to make a shift now, rather than spending more each year to respond to and recover from extreme weather events. Moving money out of fossil fuels will protect assets from being stranded as the world moves away from oil, gas and coal.
- ▶ Provide examples of how the transition is already underway and gaining momentum in India and around the world. Include local examples as much as possible. For example, India already has the fourth greatest wind capacity in the world and fifth for solar and has the largest solar plant in the world at Leh Kargil yet the potential remains largely untapped.

## The Challenge

- ▶ Air and water pollution are threatening our health and childrens' future. Coal, oil and gas are a big part of the problem. In India, pollution from fossil fuels is responsible for [2.46 million deaths each year](#) - the most in the world.
- ▶ These three products are also responsible for more than 80 percent of emissions causing climate change that is bringing more extreme heat and cold to India. This more extreme weather is causing more than 740,000 to die each year in our country.
- ▶ Highlight the financial risks of relying on fossil fuels including being reliant on imports during volatile energy markets.
- ▶ Point out the impacts of coal (i.e. coal ash pollution) on workers and communities living near coal mining and power plants. Also, make the case that despite having large coal reserves, India still has to import coal from other countries due to the low quality. Relying on coal for development is a false choice given the health, climate and economic risks.
- ▶ Emphasize that scientists (IPCC) and energy experts (IEA) agree there can be no new fossil fuel projects and we need to accelerate the adoption of clean energy and other low-carbon solutions or we will lock in catastrophic climate impacts. Yet the evidence is being ignored as countries pledge climate action while building out more of the problem.
- ▶ Highlight that countries have plans for expansion that would lock in [two times](#) the amount of climate pollution than the levels needed to have a safe climate. Cite the United States, Canada, U.K. and other wealthy fossil fuel producing countries as [examples](#) of who is behind the problem and that have benefited the most from fossil fuels. Don't let India off the hook. It's not enough to set ambitious renewable energy goals. It's time to act on those goals while reducing dependence on dirty coal at the same time. It's not an energy transition if we keep expanding coal, oil and gas production.
- ▶ Pivot to who is responsible for the problem - the fossil fuel industry.
  - *Fossil fuel companies and their executives are making record profits as people face higher prices for energy and rising costs across the board.*
  - *The fossil fuel industry has deceived the public for decades, burying evidence that their products cause climate change just as tobacco companies lied about cigarettes causing cancer. Now oil, gas and coal companies are saying they can continue to expand, misleading the public with empty promises based on false solutions. Take net zero pledges where the emphasis is capturing emissions through technologies that don't work, are expensive and not at scale.*

- Fossil fuels are funding Russia's invasion of Ukraine and driving conflicts around the globe. Fossil fuel companies are profiting while people struggle with high energy and food costs and lack of availability.
- ▶ Elevate the gaps in government action and international cooperation.
  - *Governments around the world are letting oil, gas and coal companies off the hook. Most climate policies have ignored the production of fossil fuels. Even the global Paris Agreement where nations committed to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius avoids the issue by not even mentioning the words oil, gas and coal.*
  - *Wealthy fossil fuel countries in the Global North are driving dangerous fossil fuel expansion. The Global South has paid the social, environmental and economic price for fossil fuels yet haven't gained the benefits. India shouldn't add to the problem by expanding coal production.*
  - *With nothing to hold them accountable, most countries are not willing to move away from oil, gas and coal, assuming their products will be among the last in the climate era or arguing if they cut production, others will up theirs.*
  - *Wealthy countries are not contributing their fair share to address the climate crisis. They have failed to live up to their commitments to provide climate financing to the Global South to support a transition to renewable, clean energy as well as deal with the impacts of climate change.*

## The Pathway

- ▶ Identify the present as the crossroads moment to address mounting threats from air and water pollution, extreme weather, rising energy prices and development needs.
  - *The pathway forward to climate, economic, health and global security is investing in clean energy from the sun, wind and water. India is already a clean energy leader and can expand on this by tapping into the massive potential for solar and wind energy to foster development and increase the well-being of all Indians.*
  - *While we need to foster the growth of renewable energy, we need to weed out the source of the problem – coal, oil and gas at the same time. Coal was an important part of our past but is not reliable for the future.*
- ▶ Amplify that there are enough fossil fuels already in production to support us through a transition and enough [renewable energy capacity](#) in every part of the world to deliver energy security for every Indian and person around the world. India is particularly well positioned to take advantage

of solar power. Focus on the fact that the solutions we need to power our businesses, homes, communities and lives from clean energy are available now and affordable. India has the ingenuity and solutions to be a renewable energy and low-carbon technology leader.

- ▶ Stress that the window of opportunity to act is still open according to scientists, but it is small and requires action to start today.
- ▶ **Pinpoint that now what's needed is a plan to phase out fossil fuels and fast track clean energy and other low-carbon solutions.**
  - *What the world needs now is a coordinated plan where every country contributes their fair share.*
- ▶ Call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty as the vehicle to create a global plan.
  - *A Fossil Fuel Treaty would bring countries together to agree to accelerate a transition to clean energy and low-carbon solutions where no country, community or worker is left behind; end the expansion of fossil fuels and wind down existing production to levels that ensure a safe climate.*
- ▶ Emphasize that when countries call for a Fossil Fuel Treaty, it puts pressure on the Global North to do its fair share to accelerate a shift to clean, renewable energy and weed out the threat of oil, gas and coal.
- ▶ Showcase the momentum underway in India and globally.
  - *With the Fossil Fuel Treaty proposal putting the notion of equity at the heart of its fossil fuel exit strategy, the initiative is gaining traction within both civil society and institutional structures.*
  - *There are now more than 100 Indian organizations supporting the Treaty demands, such as Climate Action Network South Asia, Warrior Moms, Fridays for the Future India, Vrikshit Foundation and the Association of Surgeons of India.*



## THE PATHWAY TO A TREATY

- **Reference examples of when the world has come together to take on great challenges such as closing the hole in the ozone layer, phasing out asbestos, banning landmines or winding down nuclear weapons.**
- **Outline how the campaign for a Fossil Fuel Treaty is as important as achieving a binding agreement.**
  - ➔ The campaign for a Fossil Fuel Treaty is generating the pressure and social norms needed to spur a phase out of oil, gas and coal and fair expansion of clean energy. Since its launch in late 2020, the campaign has already prompted local and state governments to call on higher levels of government to act, compelled 101 Nobel Laureates to demand international cooperation to address fossil fuels and activated hundreds of scientists and academics and more than 1,300 civil society organizations to advocate for government leadership.
  - ➔ Not every country needs to sign on. In fact, this was the case with the Mine Ban Treaty where a small group of countries were willing to lead and compel others to join.
- **Lay out the steps to a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.**
  - ➔ A critical first step is mobilizing a broad and large cross-section of civil society organizations as well as academics and government, Indigenous, youth, business and other leaders around a common global call for action: Phase out fossil fuels and fast track clean energy in a fair way.
  - ➔ Local, state and national governments endorse the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and compel other governments to join.
  - ➔ It is also important to increase transparency and accountability related to emissions from fossil fuels. A new Global Registry of Fossil Fuels is being developed which will be the first publicly accessible database of all current, planned and potential oil, gas and coal production and the climate pollution they would lock in. This can be used by governments as a basis for negotiating countries' fair share of the responsibility for action, by advocates to demand government action and investors assessing the risk of stranded assets.
  - ➔ The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative is calling for a Global Commission on Fossil Fuels to create an initial group of first mover countries, enhance transparency and develop a formal process for a legal agreement. This can draw on the World Commission on Dams as one of many examples.

# resources

For more information on the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, visit [www.fossilfuel treaty.org](http://www.fossilfuel treaty.org) or reference these [FAQs](#).

Check out communication resources available at [Climate Access](#), [Fossil Free Media](#) and [Potential Energy](#).

## appendix

### ► **Air Pollution is a Major Concern but Not Associated with Fossil Fuels**

- Air pollution and the related health risks are covered frequently in the media and discussed on social media.
- Transportation was the focus of most coverage and in addition to air pollution, emissions from transportation were included in reporting and in social media conversations.
- The public health impacts of climate change, especially related to air and water pollution were also a topic of conversation in the media and on social media.
- The link between fossil fuels and air pollution is for the most part, not being made.
- Framing the need to move away from oil, gas and coal due to air pollution resonated the most in message testing.

### ► **Extreme Weather and Climate Change are Major Topics of Conversation and Concern**

- 50 percent of the public are very alarmed about climate change (as compared to 33 percent in the US which is at an all time high). Despite this, less than half of the public say they know a lot or a moderate amount regarding climate change and close to half say they need a lot more information. Only forty percent of the public believe climate change is due to human causes. While 77 percent say the issue extremely or very important to them personally, only 45 percent believe it will harm them personally.
- There was a lot of media coverage of heat waves but few reports made the link to climate change and fossil fuels. Social media conversations were focused on the impact of the climate crisis on wildlife and drinking water.
- Media coverage on climate change also highlighted the need for other countries to do their fair share by living up to their commitments including for developed countries to follow through on the promise

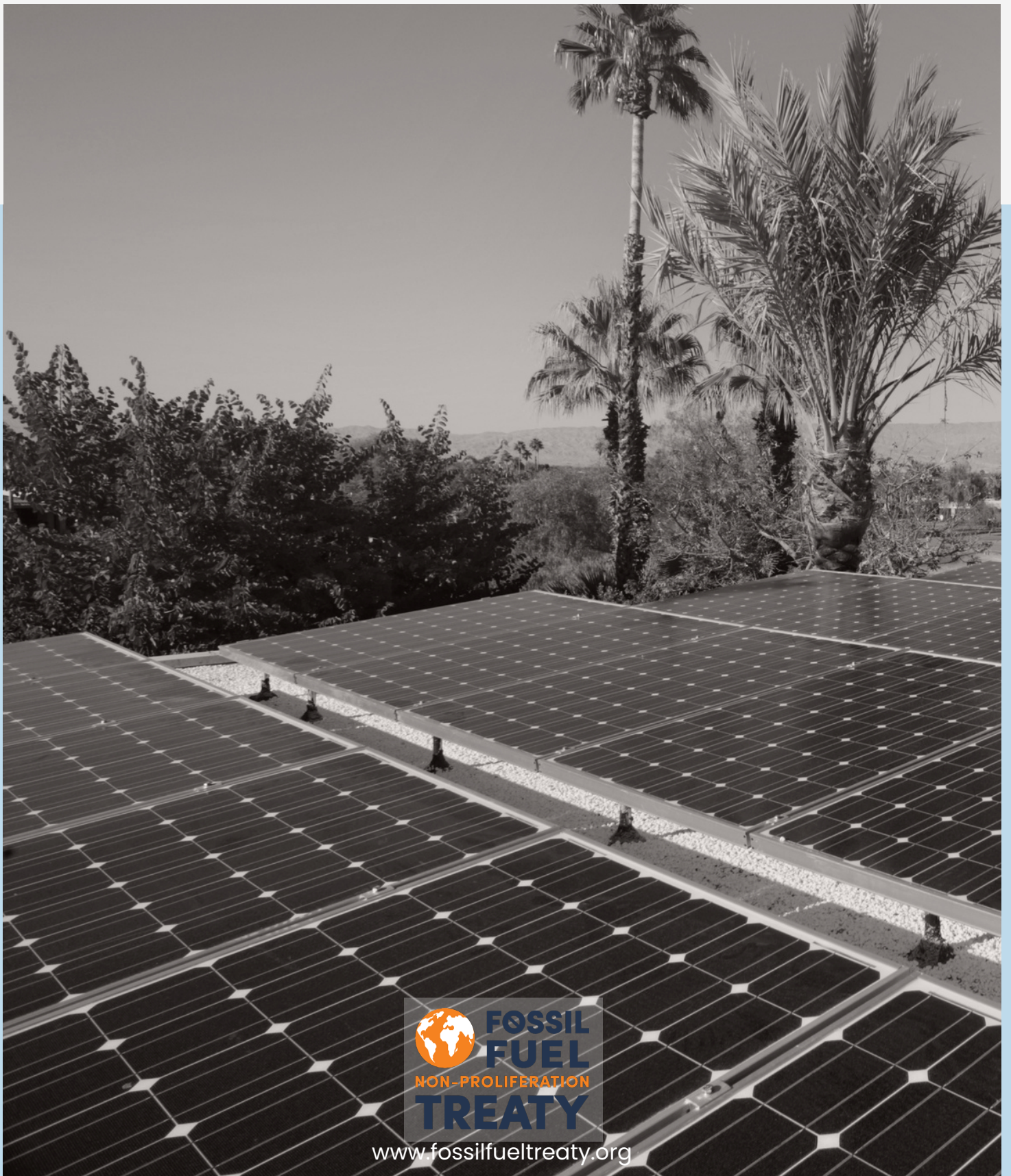
to provide climate finance to developing countries to meet their development needs.

- The need for more government action was featured in media coverage. 80 percent of the public agree that if India's government doesn't act now to combat climate change, it will be failing the people of India.
- In message testing, focusing on natural disasters and linking them to the need to transition away from fossil fuels through a global treaty did not perform well with audiences except climate activists. The need for an equitable transition where no workers or communities are left behind was the most popular frame with the youth movement.

#### ► **Mixed Views Regarding a Phase Out of Fossil Fuels**

- The role of fossil fuels in driving climate change is not being acknowledged and the fossil fuel industry is largely framed in a positive way in both the media and on social media.
- Online campaigns that focus on fossil fuels focus on individual behavior change such as reducing car trips versus advocating against the industry.
- Efforts by the government to increase renewable energy targets were covered in the media and government agencies were actively promoting clean energy on social media.
- Despite progress on renewable energy, arguments that India is not ready to move away from coal are prevalent in the media. This is both related to India having the largest coal reserve in the world and the government's aim to exploit it in order to avoid spending foreign currency on energy imports.
- While 72 percent of the public say India should use somewhat more or much more renewable energy, 54 percent think India should use the same amount, somewhat more or much more coal, oil and gas as it does today with 25 percent of that group thinking it should be much more. 36 percent think it should be somewhat or much less.
- Following air pollution, the need for the fossil fuel industry to transition to clean energy in order to expand energy access performed the best in message testing following the air pollution frame.





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