



Goa Conscious Planning Participatory Workshop Report

On 23rd November 2024 a participatory workshop was convened* due to growing concerns about the unchecked development in Goa causing environmental degradation and cultural destruction which threatens the future of all residents, human and non-human. The 38 participants included specialists from public, private and civic sectors from fields such as urban planning, biodiversity, architecture, law, agriculture, community development and logistics. Goan, Indian and International participants came together to explore a more conscious, sustainable and people-friendly approach to planning for Goa's future and share their experiences and expertise . This report is the summary of their contributions.



 by actfor goa

*Workshop convened by ActforGoa and hosted & harvested by Circlewallas using participatory leadership practices

If you would like to participate future workshops and contribute to making Conscious Planning a reality in Goa, please get in touch at actforgoa@gmail.com #ActforGoa

1. PEOPLE CARE

Participants expressed

A deep sense of loss and fear about Goa's destruction, the growing disconnect between government and people; and between people, nature and place; a strong desire to urgently contribute to positive change.

A shared concern about flawed planning processes that centralised power at higher levels, prioritised extractive tourism, real estate speculation and business, over community welfare, sustainability and climate risk.

A deep love for Goa's cultural, ecological, and social characteristics and values that make it unique.

Summary of the cherished essence of Goa

Intangible

Such as freedom, tolerance, safety, community, family, food, communal harmony and cultural diversity, slower susegad pace and quality of life, simplicity, time for community, celebration, sacredness, fun, connection, integration with Nature, part of an living system, civic sense, more healthy balanced living, small is beautiful, the "best of both" - traditional and modern, village and town, east and west, etc.

Tangible

Such as biodiversity, beaches, cultural heritage, hills, ghats, khazans, forests, rivers and creeks, water, vibrant villages, sustainable low footprint practices, passionate, talented, diverse and educated peoples.



"This land is worth dying for!"



2. LACK OF FORWARD- LOOKING & COHERENT PLANNING APPROACH IS PUTTING THE STATE & RESIDENTS IN DANGER.

Participants identified what about the current development approach puts Goa at risk.

Negative Ecological Impact in the Context of Climate Change

Overshooting carry capacity, depletion of quality water resources, destruction of disaster protection services eg forest (landslides) dunes (coastal erosion) , Construction in Coastal Regulation Zones (CRZ) violating protected land norms. Loss of tree cover and destruction of aquifers due to heavy infrastructure.

Breaking the possibility of intergenerational equity and passing down a resilient Goa to the youth and future generations.

Reduces Access to Basic Essential Services

Water: Reduced availability, lack of rainwater harvesting, and groundwater exploitation.

- *Energy:* Dependence on external energy sources with no local renewable energy plans.

- *Food:* Declining agricultural production, threatening food security.

- *Housing:* Skyrocketing land prices and lack of affordable housing plans.

- *Transport:* Poor public transport infrastructure and reliance on private vehicles.

- *Air:* Reduced air quality and more pollution

-*Health/Education:* Absence of integrated spatial planning for community wellbeing

Destroys Community, Culture, and Heritage

Loss of traditional building methods and Goan architectural heritage, lack of affordable housing pushes locals out, changing demographics, agricultural decline impacting traditional livelihoods and cultural practices. Unclear where youth will have place and how culture will sustain. Fast city pace at odds with Goan laid back culture.

Extractive economics focused on 'Fast Growth' not long term quality of life

Privatization, commercialisation and construction on open spaces and commons. Prioritization of tourism, private profit and non-local investments over ecological and social welfare,

Poor & ineffective Governance

Greed, power, corruption and competition driving bad decisions, fragmented policy responsibility, lack of decision making based on scientific data and analysis, lack of people's participation and benefit, inadequate devolution of planning powers to panchayats as per national norms

Outdated high footprint model

Fails to integrate carry capacity, climate science, resource efficiency, footprint reduction, green vision, known side effects of overdevelopment and the "concrete jungle" for example mental health problems and negative effects of road widening on traffic congestion.

Goa's current trajectory risks irreversible ecological damage, cultural erosion, and socio-economic inequality. A shift toward participatory, climate-resilient, and culturally sensitive planning is critical. Governance must prioritize ecological boundaries, community rights, and equitable access to resources over profit-driven growth.

3. OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME

Participants said that a new planning approach would need to develop strategies to overcome:

Ineffective Governance

Corruption, criminal activity, lack of punishment for non-compliance.

Lack of public participation in decision-making by those affected and with long-term stewardship responsibility; lack of structures to enable this at state/village levels; underutilized public resources

Lack of integrated oversight; conflicting departmental directives and plans, lack of effective and accurate monitoring and adaptive and integrated management.

Specific policy changes needed:

- Devolve power to panchayats and urban local bodies to plan as per 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution, make it legally binding in panchayat gazette in the powers listed under Schedule XI
- Amendment to Sec. 239 of the Goa Panchayat Raj Act 1994 (from SPECIAL to SPATIAL) as mandated in Art. 243 ZD of the Constitution of India.
- Citizen's Right to ownership of the development process
- Highlight the flood hazard line & ensure measurement of distance from Rivers is from river **bank NOT the middle** of the river
- Mandate the use of accurate data/ground truthing
- A robust evaluation of the existing (so called participatory) Planning Procedures being followed at the State, PRI and ULB level.

A dominant global mindset not aligned to our values

Global narrative of greed for power and money; commodification of nature, the resource "curse".

Big is better, concrete urbanisation = progress, high footprint development & consumption patterns

External experts with an engineering approach perceived as more credible than local knowledge

Skewed Economic Incentives

Existing economic incentives and investment favor destructive development, speculation on limited land makes it more expensive; private not community interests are driving development choices;

Lack of Unity

Already broken community cohesion; fragmentation of different groups; a shift from community land ownership to private land ownership; lack of clear common purpose.

Rate of Change

Rapid rate of environmental degradation, contamination & pollution.

Rapidly changing demographics with increase in people with no connection to place.

4. THE NEED OF THE HOUR....

A CONSCIOUS PLANNING FRAMEWORK & NEW DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE

GOAL: create a new Conscious Planning framework for Goa that is aligned with what we value

- Protects Goa's unique ecological and cultural assets and identity.
- Enables a people-driven vision for the future that benefits communities.
- Ensures and promotes "conscious" development in Goa that is resilient & regenerative.

ELEMENTS IDENTIFIED FOR A POTENTIAL STRATEGY

1. A new Goa Vision, development narrative & public campaign putting community, nature & climate first.
2. State and village participatory planning mechanisms.
3. Inter-departmental government integration mechanisms to deliver on climate action.
4. Data hub to make data available for data-informed decision making.
5. Advocacy and legal changes and development of a punitive grievance mechanism to ensure legal compliance and stop corruption.

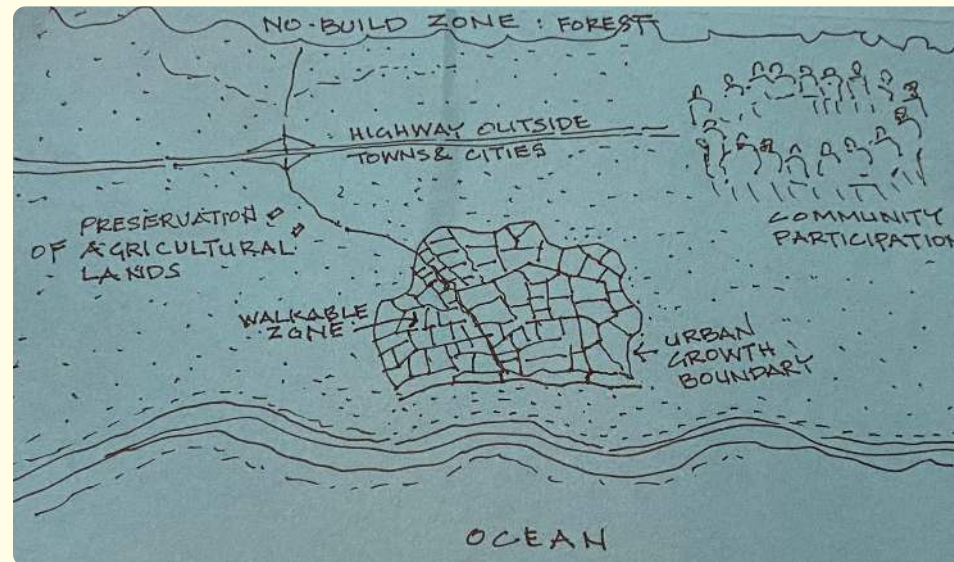
4a. A new development narrative & Vision

There is need to reframe Goa's identity *beyond* tourism, partying, alcohol and second homes by emphasizing:

- Cultural and natural uniqueness and village topography
- Community and ecosystem well-being
- Social and economic development aligned with what we value here
- Sustainable livelihoods.

Goa as a model state for a form of conscious progress, rooted in nature, resilient, low-footprint villages and towns, thriving cultural and ecological harmony and intergenerational equity.

A vibrant, resilient, and circular local economy that ensures quality of life, while protecting natural and cultural heritage and community wellbeing.



4b. Conscious Planning Guiding Principles

Participants identified what Goa's planning approach needs to ensure:

- 1 Sacred Nature First**

Respect the sacredness of Nature and living systems of which we are part. Ensure Nature's needs are met.

Topographic and ecological cycles and priorities to guide planning;

Integrate carry capacity, ecosystem services and shared natural commons into development planning.

Value and protect the non-human residents of Goa, and their right to thrive.
- 2 Community Ownership & Benefit**

Empower Panchayats, ward committees, and Gram Sabhas with devolved *genuine* participatory Decision-Making.

Prioritise the needs of local residents, public facilities and quality of life (not visitors, investors, cars).

Build on existing community strengths, assets & traditional knowledge/practice

Make the process clear and accessible and multilanguage.

Include community in full cycle-planning, execution, assessment & adaptation
- 3 Data driven Decision making**

Protect water, air, and soil health for current and future generations using scientific data & monitoring to calculate dynamically changing carry capacity over time.

eg Forests: incorporate the People's Biodiversity Register into planning and digitally monitor derestation to support strict enforcement of deforestation and compensatory afforestation rules.

Development within ecological limits
- 4 Groundwater Management**

Mandatory groundwater recharge, rainwater harvesting, and stormwater management designed for non-urban spaces.

Preserve wetlands and high-yield aquifers.

Decentralized solutions, including watershed management.
- 5 Equitable Land Use**

Fair share for Nature (50%) and human settlements;

Locals and second-homes, speculation, and tourism

Current & future generations

Access to basic services for all and equitable redistribution.
- 6 Community Resilience**

Climate resilience

Localised low footprint circular economy

Strong local governance,

Social cohesion.

Build on community strengths and assets

Traditional knowledge & practices
- 7 Holistic long-term planning & "rurban" design**

Designed for ecosystem and human health, social cohesion, food and housing security, resource efficiency, resilience, livelihoods, compassion, universal access, transport, quality of life etc.
- 8 Integrated planning between parts of government**

Alignment between departments, jurisdictions, and levels to align climate change imperatives with planning & monitoring within each department

Linkages and learning between State and ground level action .

Multi-disciplinary teams and cross-departmental coordination.
- 9 Regenerative Infrastructure design**

Green building design, integrated with nature

Energy-efficient construction, heating/cooling, reduced concretization

Prioritize walking, cycling, and peaceful village living.

Protect & revitalise cultural heritage
- 10 Local Green Economic planning**

Prioritise local MSME/small business upliftment, skilling & livelihoods

Regenerative natural resource/commons management

Regenerative tourism benefiting communities.

Heritage revenue models.
- 11 Transparent Processes and visual tools**

Publicly accessible data, maps and zoning information using tech to democratise knowledge.

Public accountability, review and monitoring systems.

Maps, visual datasets, and creative exercises to inspire/enable community participation and visioning.
- 12 Strict Enforcement**

Punitive measures for lawbreaking, environmental non-compliance and corruption, with mechanisms to protect whistleblowers.

Grievance mechanism/body with "teeth" .
- 13 Broad multi-disciplinary Stakeholder Engagement**

Include indigenous knowledge, NGOs, environmentalists, and community members.

Government, private and civil collaboration across all areas.

Leverage international and national examples and experiences.

Involve Diaspora.
- 14 Education & skill development**

Sensitise citizens about rights and responsibilities

Panchayats, planners and architects training on the interdependence of health and ecosystems.

Youth training in sustainable practices, livelihoods, and local green economic development
- 15 Green economic incentives for Sustainability**

Reward conservation & regeneration and discourage speculation & destruction.

Green investment Instruments & incentives.
- 16 Land Use Options**

Develop land trusts, cooperatives and other viable options to reduce pressure to sell and enable people to choose a different development path.
- 17 Robust Evaluation**

Review existing laws & practices for evaluating town & country planning and propose policy and practice changes.

Cost benefit analysis for all public works legislation and initiatives.

This holistic blueprint for conscious planning paves the way for a **thriving, sustainable, inclusive, and resilient Goa** that protects its unique identity and communities, while promoting low footprint prosperity. Specific actions for different stakeholders can be developed in the next phase of this framework.

4c. ACTION PLAN JAN - JUNE 2025

For consultation

There is a strong commitment to creating a more inclusive, people-led planning process and vision of progress. A range of assets, talent and opportunities exist to move beyond the obstacles and work towards a Goan Conscious Planning framework. Working Groups as below proposed to take the work forward:

<u>Workstream</u>	<u>Action</u>
State Level Stakeholder Mobilisation Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Co-create a new Goa vision including Regenerative Tourism, and outline a conscious planning and progress narrative.2. Continue the conscious planning community design process and engage more stakeholders, including more government in the process3. Support the Goa government to create an inter-departmental integrated government planning process to align department plans.
Village /place-based prototypes Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify Villages who want to prototype Conscious Planning - March 20252. Co-Design a Conscious Planning village development journey/ approach, integrating various tested methodologies into the GPDP* process - <i>by March 2025</i>3. Design a training for village facilitators of Conscious Planning process by June 20254. Inter -BMC** collaboration at Taluka level
Data & Knowledge Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make the knowledge network visible and accessible - Feb 20252. Design a data & knowledge hub, including amche.in and onemapgoa.gov.in platforms- by June 2025
Communications & Education Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Design public information and education materials for youth, panchayats, citizens, business etc - by June2. Deploy a Conscious planning campaign and communications strategy
Legal, Planning & Land use Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Refine the Conscious Planning framework and approach into a formal proposal - by March 20252. Mobilise legal expertise to achieve advocacy changes and strategy - by March 20253. Research & design options for a grievance body and compliance enforcement mechanisms with teeth (intergenerational equity)4. Research & design land stewardship models - by March 2025
Cross-Sector Steering Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Support and guide the ongoing process and review mechanisms- by March 2025

*GPDP - Gram Panchayat Development planning **BMC - Biodiversity management committee

If you would like to participate in one of the teams above and contribute to making Conscious Planning a reality in Goa, please get in touch at actforgoa@gmail.com.