

# ESAF Summary Report 2024 - 2025



ESAF's country report for the 2024-2025 presents an overview of initiatives undertaken across six cities in India—Bangalore, Calicut, Guwahati, Malappuram, Nagpur, and Thrissur—aimed at improving open public spaces, streets, markets, and urban agriculture. These efforts reflect the growing recognition of the need for inclusive, accessible, and sustainable urban environments that serve all residents, especially women, children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and low-income communities.

The activities highlighted in this report cover a range of ESAF's interventions, from infrastructure upgrades and accessibility improvements to community events and policy-level engagements. By focusing on reclaiming public spaces, enhancing street safety, improving market infrastructure, and promoting urban agriculture, cities are making steady progress toward building healthier and more resilient urban areas.

The report brings together results from diverse locations, grouped under four key programme areas: Open Public Spaces, Streets, Markets, and Urban Agriculture. It provides a consolidated view of both physical improvements and policy measures, along with the extent of community participation and financial investments made to support these initiatives. The information presented here is based on ESAF's direct project activities, our partnerships with government and community stakeholders, and ESAF's ongoing advocacy efforts that contribute to the SDGs.

## Open Public Spaces

In Bangalore, public spaces have been reclaimed through ESAF-led community events like Open Streets. Eight such events were held in HSR Layout, engaging over 1,000 residents, including women, children, youth, the elderly, low-income residents, and persons with disabilities. The city has also made long-term plans to protect and improve public spaces through the Bangalore Development Authority's Draft Revised Master Plan 2041, which includes provisions for more green spaces and civic amenities.

In Kozhikode, accessibility improvements were introduced at Beypore, Gotheeswaram, and Chaliyam beaches. These upgrades are expected to increase weekly footfall from around 3,000–4,000 to as many as 10,000–20,000 visitors. The improvements also benefit approximately 1,000 persons with disabilities and 1,000–2,000 residents living nearby. To support these developments ₹269 million (3 million USD) was allocated for the beaches and Kolathara Abdurahman Park, along with an additional ₹105 million (1 million USD) for new inclusive parks, open gyms, and accessible beach infrastructure. Community events like the Beach for All campaign attracted around 600 participants, including 250 persons with disabilities. A neglected space in Ramanattukara Municipal Market was also converted into a functional public area through Tactical Urbanism project.





Because of ESAF's advocacy, Guwahati saw significant upgrades to its parks and gardens. Nehru Park, for example, was made more accessible with tactile paths and accessible washrooms, supported by an investment of ₹168 million (Approx. 1 million USD). The Botanical Garden underwent similar improvements with ₹586.3 million (6 million USD) allocated for wheelchair-accessible walkways, yoga spaces, and accessible toilets. Shradhanjali Kanan was equipped with new gym equipment and inclusive design features, while five other neighbourhood parks were selected for redevelopment. Additional funds of ₹50.4 million (5 million USD) were used to improve Swahid Udyan and Jorpukhuri Park under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation[1] (AMRUT) 2.0 scheme, providing accessible entrances, jogging tracks, play areas, open gyms, and rejuvenated ponds.

[1] Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0 scheme has been launched on 01 October, 2021 in all ULBs/ cities, enabling the cities to become 'self-reliant' and 'water secure'. Providing universal coverage of sewerage & septage management in 500 AMRUT cities is one of the major focus areas of AMRUT 2.0. Rejuvenation of water bodies, development of green spaces and parks and Technology Sub-Mission to leverage latest technologies in the field of water are other components of the Mission.

In Malappuram, ESAF organised the 33<sup>rd</sup> Beach for All campaign at Padinjarekkara Beach with over 100 participants. ₹2.5 million (2 million USD) was invested in developing a disabled-friendly park and walkway. The Vakkad Inclusive Beach Project, with a total budget of ₹60 million (6 million USD), will provide wheelchair ramps, footpaths, tactile paving, and accessible signage. As part of the Tirur Walkway Project, 450 meters of unused land were transformed into a pedestrian-friendly space with seating and lighting. Additional funding of ₹40 million (4 million USD) was approved to expand the walkway and build an open gym.

In Nagpur, six parks were upgraded under the AMRUT 2.0 program, while inclusive play spaces were created under the City Development Plan 2041. The Anubhuti Inclusive Park was developed as a model for accessibility, and special buses with facilities for children with disabilities were introduced to help them visit the park.

Thrissur has made steady progress in enhancing public spaces as well. The Vanchikulam Nature Park was upgraded with an investment of ₹30 million (3 million USD), followed by the acquisition of two acres of additional land for further improvements. Major upgrades have also been planned for Sree Rama Varma Park and Vilangankunnu Hills, with ₹34.5 million (3 million USD) allocated for accessible walkways and open gym facilities. These developments are guided by the Thrissur City Master Plan 2039, the Kerala State Design Policy 2025, and the Kerala Urban Policy 2025, which emphasize universal accessibility and better use of urban spaces.





## Streets

Efforts to make streets safer and more accessible have been seen across multiple cities. In Bangalore, the Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) pilot developed design templates to improve school zones in HSR Layout. Design templates developed using tactical urbanism principles have been submitted to the HSR Traffic Police and are currently awaiting approval. These templates aim to establish safe routes connecting four schools within the neighbourhood. The approval from the HSR Traffic Police in Bangalore is crucial towards transforming these temporary measures into permanent infrastructure, thereby ensuring long-term safety and accessibility for students. In Kozhikode, events such as the Freedom Run 2025 and the Empower Her Women's Night March, which engaged 122 and 210 participants respectively, helped raise awareness about street safety, particularly for women and children. Following these activities, 18 meetings were held with municipal officials to improve street infrastructure.

In Guwahati, two streets were upgraded through Tactical Urbanism interventions, which included better lighting, drainage, parking management, and pedestrian facilities. The 10th Open Streets event at Khanapara Walking Zone provided a car-free space for walking, yoga, and community activities. The city also implemented a Safe Route to School Program at Guwahati Refinery Higher Secondary School and approved Tactical Urbanism proposals to improve pedestrian crossings, parking, and public spaces at Paltan Bazar.



Malappuram introduced safety improvements near schools through tactile urbanism interventions, such as signage and zebra crossings, under the ASRTS programme in four municipalities. This intervention has significantly enhanced road safety for around 4,800 students attending schools along major thoroughfares in Malappuram district. Nagpur carried out similar improvements through tactical urbanism projects in Wardhaman Nagar, JaiBai School, and the Children Traffic Park, engaging around 400 participants. As part of a road safety campaign initiated by the ESAF Foundation, the Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) has formally instructed the Public Works Department (PWD) to enhance road safety infrastructure across all major school zones within its jurisdiction. In Thrissur, Ramanilayam Road was converted to a vehicle-free street, with plans underway to similarly transform Municipal Office Road, providing safer spaces for nearly 89,000 residents. The city also began redesigning major roads and public spaces to be more child-friendly, with ₹10 million (1million USD) allocated for these improvements under the Streets for Kids Accelerator Programme.





## Markets

Cities have also worked to make markets more inclusive and accessible. In Bangalore, two neighbourhood farmers markets were organised in Hennur and Halsuru, each with 15–20 vendors, reaching over 1,500 community members. Discussions are ongoing to secure permanent sites for these markets.

Kozhikode revitalised the area around the Ramanattukara Municipal Market by transforming a former dumping site into a vibrant public space. This enhancement enriches the market experience, offering customers and vendors a welcoming place to unwind and engage in activities once the market closes.

In Guwahati, infrastructure upgrades were completed at Beltola Bi-weekly Market, where 10 canopies were distributed to 15 female and 5 male vendors. These vendors, all local farmers who cultivate their own vegetables, were selected following consultations with local farmers, women vendors, market leaders, and the Beltola Bi-weekly Market Association. The initiative aims to support these vendors by offering improved facilities for their market activities.

These changes increased the market's footfall to around 7,000 visitors per week. The city also mapped 285 markets, identifying that 60% lacked accessibility features and none had facilities for persons with disabilities. To address these gaps, 30 meetings were held with the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Agricultural Marketing Boards, and Ward Councillors.





Malappuram set up a Farmers' Market at the Malappuram Collectorate, involving 11 farmers and 2 farmer groups. Space was allocated for a weekly market at Kottapadi Public Market, while two vegetable sales points were introduced at Krishi Bhavan facilities. Market assessments identified gaps in accessibility and safety, leading to further discussions through six consultation meetings with policymakers, eight community meetings with farmers, and additional meetings with the Department of Agriculture and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). In Thrissur, weekly and evening markets, food streets, and farmers' markets were integrated into the Thrissur City Master Plan 2039. The inclusive market model developed under the Learning City initiative was recommended for wider adoption in six municipal corporations through the Kerala Urban Policy 2025





## Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture is being promoted across cities to enhance food security and encourage sustainable practices. In Bangalore, a demonstration farm was established at BM English School, with 500 farming toolkits distributed and two workshops held to provide practical training. These initiatives contributed to discussions for Karnataka's first urban agriculture policy.

In Kozhikode, the Wheelchair Accessible Planter Project at Government UP School, Manassery allowed 27 differently-abled children to participate in farming. Community farming efforts also reclaimed a land at Nehru Park in Kozhikode. Altogether, the farming initiative in Kozhikode district yielded 105 kg of fresh vegetables from various crops. The community members sold the surplus at Nehru Park, and they used the proceeds to expand cultivation to other areas within the park.

Guwahati launched a school-based organic farming project at Guwahati Refinery Higher Secondary School to promote a "grow your food" campaign sustainable food production. This project produced 69 kg of fresh vegetables from a variety of crops, which were then incorporated into the school's mid-day meals.

Malappuram saw over 110 students engage in vegetable cultivation and tree planting activities in schools. The produce was used for school mid-day meals, while over 55 saplings were planted and unused land converted into green spaces. Also, a workshop was organised for 55 local farmers in Malappuram city on improved vegetable and fruit production techniques.

In Nagpur, urban agriculture activities were introduced at Gorewada Public School, reaching 200 students, 12 teachers, and 3 policymakers. Meetings were held with NMC Education Officers to explore expanding these initiatives to other schools.

In Thrissur, rooftop and vertical farming were incorporated into the city's Master Plan, promoting local food production and contributing to resilience.



## Conclusion

The total known budget allocation across all programme areas amounts to approximately ₹ 1311 million (14 million USD). Because of ESAF's advocacy, city and regional governments have allocated the majority of this funding towards improving open public spaces. This includes investments in parks, beaches, walkways, and other accessible spaces aimed at creating more inclusive, safe, and vibrant public areas.

For streets, while significant improvements have been made through tactical urbanism, child-friendly street design, and accessibility upgrades, these activities are considered part of a public space program and funds were allocated from the broader open public spaces budget.

Market-related projects supported infrastructure development and beautification of vending zones and markets, contributing to improved accessibility, safety, and vibrancy in markets.

Although urban agriculture initiatives have been introduced in several cities, both markets and urban agriculture are yet to be systematically integrated into formal urban planning processes. Efforts to demonstrate their relevance and promote their inclusion are ongoing.

Our shared future depends on how we care for the climate and nature today. In the year ahead, we will explore how climate change both directly and indirectly affects our work, and shape strategies for adaptation.



