

National Seminar organised by Department of Social Work

In collaboration with

Karnataka Jesuit Higher Education Commission

On

Climate Literacy and Environmental Governance: Empowering the Next Generation

On September 29, 2025, the Department of Social Work, St. Aloysius (Deemed to be University), Mangaluru, in collaboration with the Karnataka Jesuit Higher Education Commission, organized a one-day national seminar on “Climate Literacy and Environmental Governance: Empowering the Next Generation” at Eric Mathias Hall, Maffei Block. The seminar brought together students, scholars and educators from various disciplines and states across India, providing a platform to exchange ideas on climate literacy, environmental governance and sustainable practices.

The seminar was inaugurated by Mr. Vijay Moras, Trustee of CFAL, Co-Lead of The AMARA (Prakrutiye Pragati) Initiative, Mangalore. He emphasized the importance of small, consistent actions in combating climate change, noting that human progress and environmental well-being must advance hand in hand.

During his presidential address, Rev. Dr. Praveen Martis SJ, Vice-Chancellor of St Aloysius (Deemed to be University) drew connections between environmental issues and social justice, social equity and the interdisciplinary nature of the social sciences. He reminded the participants that climate neglect and lack of awareness are collective failures and called for climate advocacy that goes beyond literacy to actionable insights. He also emphasized the Jesuit mission of “Care for the Common Home.”

The keynote address was delivered by Mr. Vijay Moras. He began by stressing the lack of sensitivity among people toward climate issues, presenting his observations with facts, figures and scientific insights. He remarked that climate change is not only about reasoning and data but also about human emotions and social responsibility, emphasizing the role of humanities. Drawing attention to the Mangalore context, he spoke of the AMARA initiative and its role in community-based climate resilience. He concluded on a reflective note asking participants to visualize a greener and cleaner Mangalore and surroundings, inspiring the audience to imagine and work towards such a reality.

The technical session was delivered by Dr. Smitha Hegde, Biologist, Principal and Director of Research at CFAL, on the theme “Role of Urban Biodiversity in Climate Resilience.” She presented a practical study on tree counts and temperature variations in Mangalore city, reflecting

on the idea that “we are nature” and reminding us that taking more without giving back will only deepen our climate crisis. Stressing upon the UN Sustainable Development Goals, she put forward the need for redefining development to prioritize sustainability, empathy and responsibility.

In the panel session Dr. Haridas V. R. addressed on Climate Justice & Sustainable Agriculture, stressed that climate change is not a “new normal” but a crisis with consequences like disasters, diseases, poverty, and migration. Mr Karthik Ponnappa – Co-founder, Smarter Dharma, focused on embedding sustainability into decision-making by linking it with business value. Ms. Rishika Pardikar emphasized the importance of accurate climate reporting in raising awareness and driving action. All the discussions highlighted practical solutions for climate action, the integration of sustainable practices into governance and the pivotal role of information in driving awareness. Participants actively engaged with the panelists, exchanging ideas and posing thoughtful questions.

Through expert talks and panel discussion, the seminar emphasized the importance of informed decision-making, advocacy and collective action in building a sustainable future. Valedictory programme was graced by Rev Dr Melwyn S Pinto, Secretary of Karnataka Jesuit Higher Education Commission encouraged the participants to play an active role in preventing climate change and being the agents of change in the society. Dr Gerald D Siliva and Dr Roshan Monterio coordinated the event and Dr Shwetha Rasquinha, Head – Department of Social Work and Dr Loveena Lobo, Director of Maffei Block were present. A total of 230 students, academicians and scholars were present during the seminar. On 30th September a total of 30 scholars presented their papers contributing to the knowledge of environmental justice.