

Avid Learning Amplifies Voices of Cultural Sustainability and Environmental Innovation at COP28 UAE

As India completes its **G20 Presidency**, it has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to **sustainable energy solutions and climate action**. As the host nation, India stood as an exemplar, showcasing that the fight against climate change transcends borders and is a collective endeavor that demands action and dialogue.

In the same spirit, **Avid Learning**, an advocate for the influential role of arts and culture in driving social change and fostering dialogue is proud to participate at the global stage of **COP28 UAE - United National Climate Change Conference**, scheduled from 30 November to 12 December 2023 at Expo City, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and will be attended by heads of state, government officials, industry leaders, academics, and representatives from civil society organizations.

Avid Learning is presenting **two programs in the Green Zone** at COP28 in line with the conference's cross-cutting themes of **technology and innovation, inclusion, frontline communities, and finance**. Driven by the fundamental belief in the transformative power of the arts and showcasing the individuals who drive this change, this special endeavor is the continued convergence of two of Avid Learning's most acclaimed programming series: **Sustainability Now** and **Uncovering Urban Legacies**.

In April 2020, Avid Learning launched the '**Sustainability Now**' series. This thematic and purpose-driven series comprises thought-provoking discussions and captivating performances aimed at empowering our audiences to become agents of positive change, active catalysts, and custodians of a sustainable future. To date, this series has featured over **60 visionary change-makers and speakers across more than 40 programs**, delving into diverse topics such as Architecture and Urbanism, Conscious Clothing, Sustainable Luxury, Arts, Tourism, and Technology, among others.

In 2021, Avid Learning conceptualized the '**Uncovering Urban Legacies**' series, a captivating exploration of small yet unique communities and their profound cultural legacies that have historically, economically, and socio-culturally shaped the vibrant trading port city of Bombay/Mumbai. This series has embarked on a journey to unravel the stories of **eight diasporas** and their intricate influence on the city's landscape. The most recent installment delved into the original inhabitants of the city, the **Kolis**, uncovering their rich history and cultural contributions.

Avid Learning has a long-established relationship with the vibrant city of Dubai and eagerly anticipates the continuation of its collaboration with the cultural hub. The journey began in 2012 and extended into 2013 when Avid Learning sponsored and supported **The Hatch**, a screening room and center created at the heart of the **Art Dubai** fair. The dedicated space featured a rolling program of artists' talks, presentations, and film and video screenings. In 2018 Avid Learning facilitated a leading not-for-profit organization to support the opening night of Taj Express, an internationally acclaimed cultural program

of Indian origin at the prestigious **Dubai Opera House**.

Event Details:

Program 1 Climate Warriors and Their Pathways to Sustainable Solutions

A dynamic conversation with dedicated climate champions and visionary entrepreneurs working for environmental solutions, including, **Heeta Lakhani**, *Founder & Director, ClimAct Foundation & Co-Founder, Youth Negotiators Academy*, **Aaran Patel**, *Co-Founder, Earth Focus Kanha*, and **Rewant Ruia**, *Director, Essar Group*. The speakers will discuss the role of education in climate change mitigation, youth engagement strategies, the increasingly important transition to Green Energy, Green Steel, and current and expected future trends with the moderator **Mairu Gupta**, *Founder & CEO, Antkind*.

When: Friday, 8th December, 2023 | 1:00 PM – 1:40 PM

Where: Youth Hub

Program 2 Koli Fishermen of Bombay: Guardians of Cultural Sustainability

A vibrant musical, celebrating the Kolis, the indigenous inhabitants of Bombay, and their profound connection with the sea. Set against the picturesque backdrop of Mumbai's coastline, the unique performance pays a heartfelt tribute to the rich Koli culture and heritage. It also highlights their resilience in the face of the most urgent challenges like climate change, industrialization, and overfishing, while demonstrating their commitment to marine conservation. The production is led by **Parag Tandel**, *Artist and Visual Auto-Ethnographer of Koli Community*, **Yuki Ellias**, *Actor and Theatre & Film Producer*, and **Tej Arun Chandiwale**, *Choreographer*.

When: Friday, 8th December, 2023 | 5:30 PM – 6:00 PM

Where: Green Zone Stage

Celebrate the cultural richness of the Kolis and get inspired by visionary climate champions to contribute toward the collective efforts to address climate change and build a more sustainable future.

Press: Ayesha Dadachanji (ayeshah.avid@gmail.com)

Register at: <https://www.cop28.com/en/green-zone>

About Speakers:

Heeta Lakhani

Heeta is a climate educator and entrepreneur dedicated to empowering vulnerable groups in intergovernmental decision-making and taking climate action. As Founder & Director of the ClimAct Foundation and with a Masters in Environmental Studies from TERI University, she is dedicated to nurturing change-makers who combat the climate crisis with knowledge-based action. Heeta was introduced to the United Nations Climate Change (UNFCCC) process at COP21 in 2015 and served as the Global Focal Point for YOUNGO during 2020 & 2021, playing a pivotal role in elevating youth voices on the global stage. She co-founded the Youth Negotiators Academy in 2022, to promote inclusivity in national delegations by training youth to be effective negotiators in the UN intergovernmental processes.

Aaran Patel

Aaran works in climate philanthropy as Director of climate at The Nand & Jeet Khemka Foundation, which has been involved in climate change mitigation for 30 years. He is the co-founder of Earth Focus Kanha, working on landscape restoration through nature-based livelihoods and contextual education with forest-dwelling communities. He has also consulted on climate with organizations in the development, private and public sectors. Aaran is a Master in Public Policy graduate from the Harvard Kennedy School.

Rewant Ruia

As a member of the founding family of Essar, Rewant has developed considerable knowledge and experience in the oil & gas, refining, metals & mining, and infrastructure sectors. His global exposure, fresh perspectives and arc of activities have contributed to Essar's strategy and operations. Rewant has been focused on Essar's expansion in overseas markets and has been involved in identifying and investing in new business opportunities for the group. He is focused on Essar's greenfield expansion, acquisition opportunities in core economy sectors, as well as strategic operations across Essar's investments. His understanding of global markets helps drive the strategy of Essar as well as complex financings and transactions. Rewant's aspiration is to transition the organizational portfolio from assets built over the last fifty years to assets that are state-of-the-art and relevant for the next fifty years.

Mairu Gupta (Moderator)

Mairu is a media & tech executive with 15 years of experience in scaling both corporate and early-stage companies across advertising, sports, music and blockchain. He is currently the Founder & CEO of Antkind - a digital communications collective for brands focused on climate action & sustainability. Most recently he led the Polygon-incubated Layer-E, where he launched Flipkart's decentralised metaverse. Previously, Mairu led the digital business for Sony Music across South Asia and before that, Mairu was part of the NBA founding team in India and led their content and media distribution business through a 5 year stint. Earlier in his career, he spent 8 years in advertising agencies such as Saatchi & Saatchi, Young & Rubicam, Jack in the Box, among others.

About Artists

Parag Tandel

Parag is a visual auto-ethnographer who archives what he perceives around him and his relationship with the scenery he inhabits. His visual art and socially engaged art practices are raising issues of loss and identity. He is archiving prevailing circumstances and intervening in the oral narratives regarding the colonial and imperial history of the Fisherfolks of Mumbai. Tandel earned a Diploma in Creative Sculpture from M. S University, Baroda (2005) after completing a Diploma in sculpture and modeling from Sir J.J School of Art, Mumbai (2003). Tandel's solo exhibitions include Chronicle at TARQ, Mumbai (2016) and Autopolisphilia curated by Noopur Desai at Sudarshan art gallery, Pune, India (2018) as well as Pregnant Room 1 and Pregnant Room 2, both showcased at Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai (2008 & 2010).

Yuki Ellias

Yuki is a communications expert, executive coach, and consultant for business leaders across the globe. She leverages 20 years of experience as an actor and director, bringing tools from the stage and the creative processes to leaders - enabling them to engage their teams and clients with more creativity, courage and impact. As an instructional designer, she has developed a manual for leadership development solutions. This includes business storytelling, executive presence, and building stronger client relationships. Her trainings facilitate skills relevant to trust and negotiation, growth mindset and behaviours and support crucial conversations. Her clients span across industries and include banking, consulting, ITES, pharma, FMCG, law, auto, media and retail. Yuki is also a multi award winning actor and producer. She has toured the world with her shows and performed at leading venues and festivals. She was the pedagogical adviser and teacher at the Drama School Mumbai and is currently a member of the Board of Studies at Wilson College, Mumbai.

Tej Arun Chandiwale

Tej Chandiwale, Vice President of Kalakar Institution of Dance has represented India on several platforms all over the world for International festivals since the last two decades. He has been associated with the Bollywood film industry as a Choreographer and as Assistant choreographer to Mr.Devang Desai, Mr.Adil Shaikh, Miss. Shabina Khan, to Longines Fernandez and many such prominent choreographers in the field of Indian Cinema. Kalakar dance group has been associated with CIOFF (UNESCO) for representing folklore festivals in Europe in almost every consecutive year since 1985. It has also been associated with ICCR to perform dances of India for the Indian community in South Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius.

About Avid Learning:

Avid Learning is Essar's cultural philanthropy arm and India's leading arts and cultural programming platform. Founded in 2009, over the past decade and counting, Avid Learning has presented over 1400 multiverse and hybrid programs, domestically and internationally. With a vision to democratise the arts, create new audiences, and deepen engagement in India's burgeoning creative sector, Avid Learning thoughtfully curates diverse events that embrace the spirit of collaboration.

It brings together the best of Indian and international think tanks, artists, intellectuals, cultural experts, and policymakers across a variety of multidisciplinary genres and new-age topics in Visual & Performing Arts, Literature, Culture & Heritage, Education, and Design & Technology. In all its efforts, Avid Learning stands true to its motto that #LearningNeverStops.

About Essar Group:

The Essar Group was founded in 1969. The 21st century for Essar has been all about consolidating and growing the businesses, with mergers and acquisitions, new revenue streams and strategic geographical expansion. Essar Energy is one of India's largest private power producers with over 14-year operating track record. Essar Energy Transition (EET) is redefining investment in energy by focussing on hydrogen, decarbonisation, new energy infrastructure and biofuels, creating a fully integrated energy transition hub at Stanlow, United Kingdom. This hub is poised to become one of the largest Energy Transition Hubs in Europe. EET's portfolio includes Fuels, Hydrogen, Infrastructure and Biofuels, which presently include operating entities such as Vertex, EET Future Energy, Essar Oil UK and Stanlow Terminals Ltd.