



**UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE**

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SÉMINAIRE ÉNERGIE – ENVIRONNEMENT  
Conférences 2025 - 2026

## **Women Heat Action Cooperatives responding to extreme heat in India's Informal Settlements.**

**Vivek Gilani**  
(cBalance)

**Jeudi 28 mai à 17h15**

**Université de Genève  
66 Boulevard Carl-Vogt, 1205 Genève  
Salle 1 (rez-de-chaussée)**

**Conférence en présentiel suivie d'un apéritif**

**Diffusion en direct avec Zoom : <https://unige.zoom.us/j/66272209617>  
ID de réunion : 662 7220 9617  
Code secret : 305678**

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## **L'orateur**

Vivek is an Ashoka Fellow and an Environmental Engineer. He is the founder and employee of cBalance, an employee-owned collective practicing principles of sociocracy and with a max-to-min salary ratio of 1:5. As Director of cBalance, he has been appointed to mitigate climate pollution generated by the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Shanghai World Expo by the UNEP.

He was appointed by MoEF / CII to report India's Industrial Greenhouse emissions to the UN as part of NATCOMM Reporting Requirements from 2014 to 2018.

He is Director of the 'Fairconditioning' program which is altering university Architectural Curricula to make climate-crisis responsive design a non-negotiable value of the greenwashed 'built-space economy' in India.

As Director of the Informal Housing Thermal Comfort Program, he directs a system-change program to inclusively co-create and pilot test passive design-based retrofit solutions and devise service delivery solutions (through local women's cooperatives) with support from local administrative and political structures/institutions, to address extreme heat stress in informal settlements.

Through the Fairtravel Program he works to engender business travel policy and practice transformations to drastically cut climate pollution from aviation in India's IT Industry.

He also works on holding elected representatives of India accountable for the promises they make by checking their performance, and letting them know they're being watched, through the efforts of the Informed Voter Project.

## **La conférence**

Informal settlements (slums), home to 60-70% of urban Indians, are victims of heat-related climate injustice; while affluent homes use climate polluting air conditioners, the urban poor bear the brunt of power cuts, which prevents them from using life-saving ceiling fans, caused by these very ACs. Furthermore, the extreme heat during summers causes roof temperatures to soar above 50°C and residents can only fall asleep after the homes cool down after midnight; detrimentally impacting sleep, causing dizziness, dehydration, breathlessness and headaches. Women are disproportionately affected by heat stress, as they often awake hours before other family members to perform household care-work; a nascent 'sleeping pill' epidemic is unfolding wherein women domestic workers are taking these pills almost daily for 4 months a year to fall asleep amidst extreme indoor heat.

The Fairconditioning Program has been working on grassroots innovation approach since 2021 to address this issue. The talk unpacks the 4 year evolution of development of a catalogue of appropriate-technology based affordable roof-retrofit solutions for building heat stress mitigation that have been enveloped through participatory design methods with residents of the informal settlement and pilot tested in 230 buildings in 6 Indian Cities.

The talk also presents insights from the field-test phase of a Women's Heat Action Cooperative (WEHAC) program in India which offers these cooling products and services to residents who pay an affordable estimated monthly-installments (EMI). Finally the talk also outlines the work of policy 'hacking' (i.e reinterpreting, repurposing) of existing policies (eg. livelihood programs, women's empowerment programs) to unlock seed-capital for the WEHACs.