

BALIPARA FOUNDATION

Assam • India



10TH EASTERN HIMALAYAN NATURENOMICS™ FORUM

———— 11 - 13 December, 2022 ————
Dhaka, Bangladesh

ECOLOGY IS ECONOMY

ABOUT THE BALIPARA FOUNDATION

Launched in 2007, the Balipara Foundation takes a community-based approach to conservation through a proprietary concept **Naturenomics™ (Nature + Economics)**. Building on the principle of **ecology is economy**, we equip **indigenous & forest-fringe communities in the Eastern Himalayas to manage their natural assets, creating resilience against the climate crisis for both biodiversity and people.**

The Foundation's multidisciplinary team of over 50 people passionately collaborates with indigenous & forest-fringe communities to achieve this through **Rural Futures: rewilding to create sustainable livelihoods & socioeconomic mobility while restoring natural capital.** Through the enriched natural capital, communities in the Eastern Himalayas **access & deliver universal basic assets** such as education, healthcare, renewable energy, etc.

THE RURAL FUTURES VISION

Where?

From Snowline to Sealine – the Eastern Himalayas

Spanning from Eastern Nepal to China's Southwest mountains, the Eastern Himalayas are both biodiversity and culturally rich, with over **400 indigenous communities and 12,000 unique species.** Today both communities and rare species are **threatened by rampant deforestation and ecological degradation, shrinking livelihoods and climate change.** But the region's rich forests offer the perfect opportunity for an experiment in alternatives to extractive growth by **reconciling people and biodiversity through restorative natural capital economies: the Naturenomics™ Civilization.**

How?

Rural Futures – Natural Capital & Universal Basic Assets

Initial payment for restoration **rewilding programmes create sustainable incomes and businesses for forest-fringe communities,** incentivizing them towards **natural capital regeneration.** Sustainable businesses through **agroforestry, bamboo, mushrooms and mindful tourism** enhance natural capital values, enabling communities to become **self-sufficient, accessing and delivering universal basic assets & services** such as healthcare, education, renewable energy and access to water.



Why?

The Naturenomics™ Civilization – Ecology is Economy

Nature underpins the economy and extractive, ecology-destroying growth has spurred the climate crisis, calling for a fundamental rethink of how we use natural capital. Through Rural Futures, we **strengthen local natural capital economies supported by sustainable businesses.** The outcome is **an alternative to exploitative and destructive growth: sustainable development that balances lives, livelihoods and land to build resilience among communities and biodiversity on the frontlines of climate change.**

ECOLOGY IS ECONOMY – DHAKA 2022

Securing the economic future of the Eastern Himalayas through climate and biodiversity action at the 10th Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum

The world faces an **unprecedented crisis of rising temperatures, super cyclones, raging wildfires, virulent viruses, vicious floods and dying wildlife**: global collapse that risks the lives and livelihoods of billions driven by the **overconsumption and extraction of natural capital to surge economic growth**.

The latest IPCC assessment is clear: adapt or die. The climate crisis already costs the world \$200 billion annually because of ever-worsening natural disasters. **By 2050, climate inaction will cost the global economy \$23 trillion.**

Our planet's biodiversity is facing the sixth extinction event according to scientists, due to climate change, habitat loss and overexploitation. Since the 1970s, nearly 70% of our wildlife populations have been lost. **Within the next 20 years, 500 species are expected to go extinct**: the same number of species lost over the entirety of the 19th century.

Eastern Himalayan countries are on the frontlines of both climate and biodiversity crises today. South Asian countries are expected to face the worst consequences of climate change, from rising temperatures to floods and droughts. These changes are already having devastating consequences for the lives and livelihoods. In 2020 alone, 4.4 million people were displaced in Bangladesh because of climate change.

The next ten years are imperative to place ecology front and center on global and national agendas, to combat growing threats to the world's food, water and survival systems and its rural communities. Building on the campaign to recognize **Ecology is Economy** initiated in 2020, the 10th Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum seeks to drive this agenda for transformation in the region. Investing in a transition to ecology is economy is no longer optional: it is a necessity.

WHY BANGLADESH?

On the frontlines of the climate & biodiversity crisis

The risks posed by climate change are compounded by the loss of dense forests in the Chittagong Hill tracts and along the coastline in the Sundarbans, diminishing overall watershed resilience.



\$3.2 Billion

In economic losses between 2000-2019, because of climate change



60%

Of all Bangladesh's people live in high climate exposure areas: a figure likely to increase over the next 2 decades



215 sqkm

Total green cover lost in 2020, according to Global Forest Watch. Deforestation rates in 2006-2014 reached levels last seen in 1930-1975, when most forest was lost.



26%

Increase in overall soil salinity. Damaging crop yields and forcing migration for fresh water.

A climate leader

Bangladesh has been one of the leading voices behind the drive to include financing for loss and damage in global financing agreements. It has also played a key role in drawing global attention to the urgent need for more adaptation funding. These negotiations secured a commitment to increase adaptation funding to half of all climate funding by 2025, and an agreement to keep negotiations on compensations for loss and damage open for the future. As the current chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, **Bangladesh has been instrumental in creating the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2030 – to transition the country towards growth through climate resilience by the turn of the decade.**

Bangladesh's forward-looking approach and commitment to international coalition-building demonstrates its leadership potential, to transform the Eastern Himalayan region, particularly towards the management of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna Delta & watersheds.

Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 & Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2030

Looking to the future, the Delta Plan is the most comprehensive plan on climate adaptation needs in the region, covering both human and ecological wellbeing in critical hotspots like the Sundarbans. **The Delta Plan's holistic approach must anchor climate adaptation in the Eastern Himalayas**, tackling both human and ecological wellbeing and restoring vital ecosystems like the Sundarbans and forests that regulate the region's watersheds.

10TH EASTERN HIMALAYAN NATURENOMICS FORUM IN BANGLADESH



Shared Challenges

Eastern Himalayan nations face common climate change induced pressures like water scarcity, food security, desertification, and habitat and biodiversity loss, as well as highly agricultural dependent rural populations facing poverty and other socioeconomic challenges.

The Eastern Himalayan region unites some of the fastest growing global and developing economies today, with young and ambitious populations increasingly concerned about their ecological future: India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, China & Myanmar. Its shared challenges and opportunities and its shared ecosystems, stretched across rivers, mountains and forests, highlight the need for the region to pool its interests, share resources and cooperate on the international stage to drive attention and support for adaptation & mitigation both upstream and downstream in the region.

The Forum 2022 in Dhaka will focus on how Bangladesh and the Eastern Himalayas can make most of this opportunity through

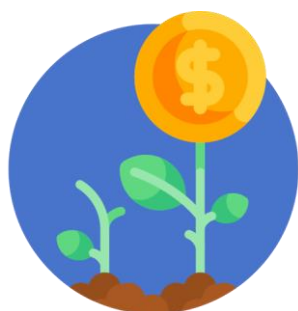
- Integration of interdependence of Ecology and Economy
- Social, Economic, Environment and Enhanced Climate Resilience through the Delta Plan for development
- Valuation of Natural Assets
- Transboundary Ecological Diplomacy



Shared Opportunities

Common geography, food systems, climatic conditions and climate adaptation and mitigation, as well as educated, ambitious young populations seeking job opportunities in sectors that can withstand or adapt to climate-related challenges

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS



Valuing Natural Assets
Creating Ecological Budgets - Nature Capital Debt for Social Mobility
Consensus building for ecological budgeting and pathways to using natural asset values to raise debt for social development



Rewilding the Eastern Himalayas
Building Resilient Landscapes from Snowline to Sealine
A regional plan for rural employment & economic opportunities through rewilding forest & agricultural lands from snowline to sealine



Transboundary Ecological Diplomacy
Action for Conservation
Preserving and enhancing shared ecological assets through collaboration, effective monitoring and sustainable use agreements



Transparency
Technology for Participatory Natural Asset Management
Digitalizing monitoring of shared ecological assets & technology for participatory natural asset management



Wellbeing
Building Bridges between Development and Conservation for Human Resilience
An ecological & climate agenda for development recognizing the interdependence of human & ecological wellbeing



Democratize Forest Management
Enhancing Ownership of Indigenous Communities & Gender Inclusion
Charting the role of indigenous communities & women and their expertise in rewilding the Eastern Himalayas

LAUNCHING A REWILDING JOURNEY IN BANGLADESH



Rural Futures Living Lab

Piloting the Rural Futures model for forest restoration and agroforestry linked incomes that give communities the agency to pursue their wellbeing aspirations & enhance their socioeconomic mobility, aligned to the principles of the Delta Plan



Indigenous Voices & Leadership

Bringing together indigenous communities to platform their solutions and build networks to document their knowledge & their capacity to research & share their climate stories & traditional knowledge



Net Zero, Nature Positive Economy

Rewilding Bangladesh's degraded forest lands could create as much as \$2 billion in natural capital values and create employment for more than 85,000 rural households and sequester nearly 1 million tonnes of carbon annually



Technology for Monitoring the Depletion of Forest Cover & Natural Assets

With rapid developments in AI, machine learning apps and predictive ecosystem modelling, incorporation of technology in governance & community is crucial to our understanding of climate change, projecting future impacts, designing diplomatic policies to achieve regional targets



Linking the Delta Plan Upstream

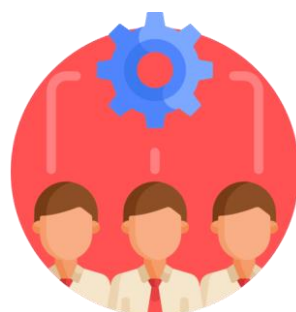
Momentum for anchoring the Delta Plan & the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan upstream through ecological diplomacy for India, Nepal, Bhutan and China to adopt rewilding initiatives that manage the watersheds of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna Basin

HOW



Key Policy Recommendations

Based on contributions from key experts, thought leaders, practitioners & businesses, policy recommendations for key action points to foster climate resilience & community wellbeing through rewilding, leveraging carbon markets & enhancing biodiversity



Knowledge Sharing

Through keynotes from leaders & experts, panels, exhibitions, paper presentations, workshops & roundtables



Key Action Partnerships

Between businesses, communities & practitioners for rewilding – including leveraging carbon markets & technology for rewilding



Expert Networks

Pre-launch events bringing together diverse experts & stakeholders to share their knowledge and contributions both at the forum & through publications & thought leadership

A REWILDING JOURNEY THROUGH THE DELTA PLAN 2100



One of the key goals of Bangladesh's Delta Plan 2100 is the conservation and protection of wetlands and ecosystems, recognizing the indivisible need to manage rivers by effectively managing terrestrial ecosystems like forests. **The Delta Plan recognizes a critical truth about the climate fact today: biodiversity preservation is the backbone of climate adaptation & resilience.** Taking a holistic approach to water security and social problems like poverty means tackling the real impact of ecosystem and biodiversity loss on communities – and using the restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity as an opportunity to build resilience for rural and indigenous communities. From Sylhet to the Chittagong Hill Tracts down to St. Martin's Island, rewilding degraded ecosystems can play a critical role in meeting the goals of Bangladesh's Delta Plan: not only to conserve its ecosystems, but to rebuild mangrove storm breakers, reduce erosion & landslide risks, minimize flood damage and create climate adaptive livelihoods for rural & indigenous communities.

Rewilding the Sundarbans: Conserving & Restoring Mangrove Ecosystems

As cyclonic storms in the Bay of Bengal amplify and multiply due to climate change, the Sundarbans form a critical storm breaker: absorbing the first shock of the storm and reducing the velocity and impact of storm surges. With cyclones increasing in intensity and frequency, communities around the Sundarbans have had their livelihoods disrupted – increasing the chances of them seeking to either directly exploit forest resources for their livelihoods, or else to do shrimp farming to meet their needs. These disruptions have weakened the integrity of the ecosystem **and since the 1970s, the Bangladesh Sundarbans have lost between 66 – 127 sqkm of area as per LANDSAT data** (Aziz & Paul, 2015). A full-scale rewilding plan for the Sundarbans to both conserve and restore disappearing mangrove ecosystems can provide conservation-linked livelihood opportunities for adjacent communities, mitigating economic drivers of the ecosystems' destruction, while meeting the Delta Plan 2100 goal of preserving & conserving the ecosystem for Coastal Area climate resilience.



Rewilding Indigenous Forests: Rejuvenating the Chittagong Hill Tracts

The Delta Plan 2100 recognizes erosion and landslides as one of the critical areas of intervention for the Chittagong Hill Tracts. **Data from Global Forest Watch (2020) indicates that between 2001-2020, the area lost over 6890 hectares of primary forest.** Local reports and commentary by conservation organizations show a link between the loss of these forests and increasing water scarcity in the region: a pattern playing out in neighbouring India. Other reports suggest that natural forests are being replaced by orchards, with timber logged being channelled into a booming furniture industry – leaving local communities dislocated from their traditional agricultural livelihoods. **Meeting the Delta Plan 2100 strategy for water security & integrated river management in this area will necessitate a rewilding of its forests.** A full-scale rewilding plan for both forests and agricultural lands will not only preserve but optimize the ecological value of this territory, while creating circular forest economies for indigenous communities struggling to maintain their livelihoods.

KEY FORUM OUTCOMES

➤ Increasing investments in rewilding

- Fostering partnerships with businesses and investors to build rewilding programmes in under-invested areas such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts
- Collaborations with local organizations & indigenous networks for implementing rewilding programmes
- Leveraging global carbon markets to generate international interest in rewilding the region



➤ Launching the RuFu Fellowship programme

- A 1.5 year fellowship programme to train Eastern Himalayan indigenous youth & young environmental leaders in the science and administration of rewilding through practical on the ground training – first batch to begin in October 2023
- Provision of grants for successful fellows on graduation



➤ Rural Employment & Economic Opportunities through Rewilding & Agroforestry

- Launching a living lab by 2023 for rewilding & agroforestry in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with indigenous communities
- Facilitating adoption of climate-resilient agroforestry practices & sustainable sourcing for raw fabrics with the fashion industry
- Transboundary cooperation for rewilding & conservation



➤ Using Technology to Monitor Shared Natural Assets

- Launching a remote-sensing platform for monitoring the health of forests – i.e. invasives, monocultures, degradation, deforestation hotspots – across the transboundary region



➤ Leveraging Ecosystems Services

- Leveraging carbon markets for rewilding
- Cohesive carbon market policies in the region
- Driving natural capital valuation & carbon plus valuation (i.e. biodiversity & other ecosystems services) in the region



KEY LEADERS

CONFIRMATION OF PARTICIPATION : Emeritus professor at Cambridge University – **Sir Partha Dasgupta**, leading evolutionary ecologist - **Dr. Kamal Bawa**, Food Sovereignty Leader – **Vandana Shiva**, IG Patel Professor of Economics And Government at London School of Economics - **Lord Nicholas Stern**, Director of European Forest Institute – **Marc Palahi**, Director Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies – **Ambassador Tariq Karim**, Former Foreign Secretary of India & Prime Minister's Special Envoy For Nuclear Affairs and Climate Change – **Ambassador Shyam Saran**, Director, Sustainable Landscapes and Restoration – **Dr. Ruchika Singh**, World Resources Institute India, to name a few.

CONFIRMATION IN PROCESS: World's leading economists - **Joseph E. Stiglitz** and **Jeffrey Sachs**, African Climate Activist - **Elizabeth Wathuti**, Managing Director Boston Consulting Group, Japan - **Tsusaka Miki**, President International Union for Conservation of Nature - **Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak**, American climate justice activist - **Jamei Margolin**, in addition to galaxy of key dignitaries from Cambodia, Norway, Peru, China, Argentina, Netherlands, to name a few.

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ABOUT THE EASTERN HIMALAYAN NATURENOMICS™ FORUM

Understanding the need for exploring the ingredients of success in conservation and sustainable livelihoods, the Balipara Foundation launched the **Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum** in 2013 to find solutions leading to important lessons for the communities and others, at all levels, from local to global.

Starting the dialogue with Asian Elephant conservation to exploring the crucial role of rural communities in the Eastern Himalayas and supporting rural economies and livelihoods, seven years (2013-2019) of Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum has led to participation from over 20+ countries, 2000+ distinguished speakers and participants from multi-disciplinary fields and recognized 113 Balipara Foundation Awardees.

The Forum seeks **to generate grassroots, actionable solutions to rewild the landscapes of the Eastern Himalayas** and empower local communities to be the stewards of their natural assets.

Over the years, it has emerged as an interdisciplinary platform bringing together stakeholders across the spectrum to foster knowledge sharing, for future collaborative efforts on community-led conservation.

With this vision and endeavor to bring together local stakeholders in communities, conservation and livelihoods to debate pressing issues and opportunities for action, **Regional Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forums** were launched in the year 2019, with successful deliberations held across India's Eastern Himalayas.

BUILDING RURAL FUTURES IN THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS

Building Collaborative Networks

For Learning, Action & Investments

The Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum has brought together multiple streams of experts over the years, enriching the science, business and social practice behind the Balipara Foundation's Rural Futures model for rewilding. The Forum serves as a platform for connecting new partners, identifying new areas and needs for intervention that the organization can fulfil, connecting with new communities and young leaders interested in driving change in their communities. Through the **Ecology is Economy** thematic, the forum has become a platform for charting a strategy and building action networks for rewilding degraded lands across the region – including connecting interested investors and businesses to communities who can lead these rewilding programmes.



IMPACT



200+ projects
Through Earth Heroes



2000+ hectares
Forest land restored through grant recipients



2800+ people
Supported through sustainable livelihoods linked to rewilding



600+ species
Conserved through Earth Heroes



530+ Publications
Supported



RURAL FUTURES INDIGENOUS HUB – The platform was launched in 2020 to empower indigenous people as researchers, documenters of their knowledge, advocates for their own climate resilience and storytellers of the lived realities on the frontlines of climate & biodiversity crisis.



REWILDING THE INDIAN EASTERN HIMALAYAS GRANT- Launched in 2021, the grant delivers INR 5,00,000, to a grassroots individual or community organization working towards implementing a human-centric conservation model that restores healthy ecosystems.



LOCAL NETWORKS FOR REWILDING – Through the Regional Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum platform, communities in Zunheboto, Nagaland initiated a rewilding programme in their community-conserved area in partnership with us, and we identified community partners in Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh to expand rewilding in their locations

REACH US

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