

# Climate and Environment Portfolio

ROHINI NILEKANI PHILANTHROPIES  
2024







“ We need a broader lens through which to understand the connections between conservation, climate change and development. Even in the Anthropocene, ‘humans first’ cannot be realised without keeping biodiversity at the heart of the debate. How can we together unleash a new creativity to redefine human flourishing? ”

— **Rohini Nilekani**

Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies Foundation

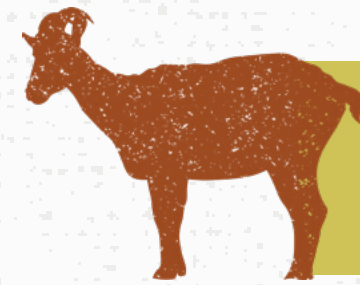
Biodiversity underpins  
the health of the planet  
and has a direct impact  
on all our lives





# Peek into Biodiversity loss data

Biodiversity loss refers to the reduction in the number of genes, individual organisms, species, and ecosystems in any given area



69% average decline in wildlife populations since 1970 till now (WWF)



As species vanish at a rate not seen in 10 million years, more than 1 million of plant and animal species are currently on the brink because of human activities (Reuters)



\$44 trillion of economic value generation is moderately or highly dependent on nature and the services it provides (WEF)



The world lost a football pitch-sized area of tropical forest every six seconds in 2019 (WRI)

SOURCE · WEF, WWF, Reuters, Britannica





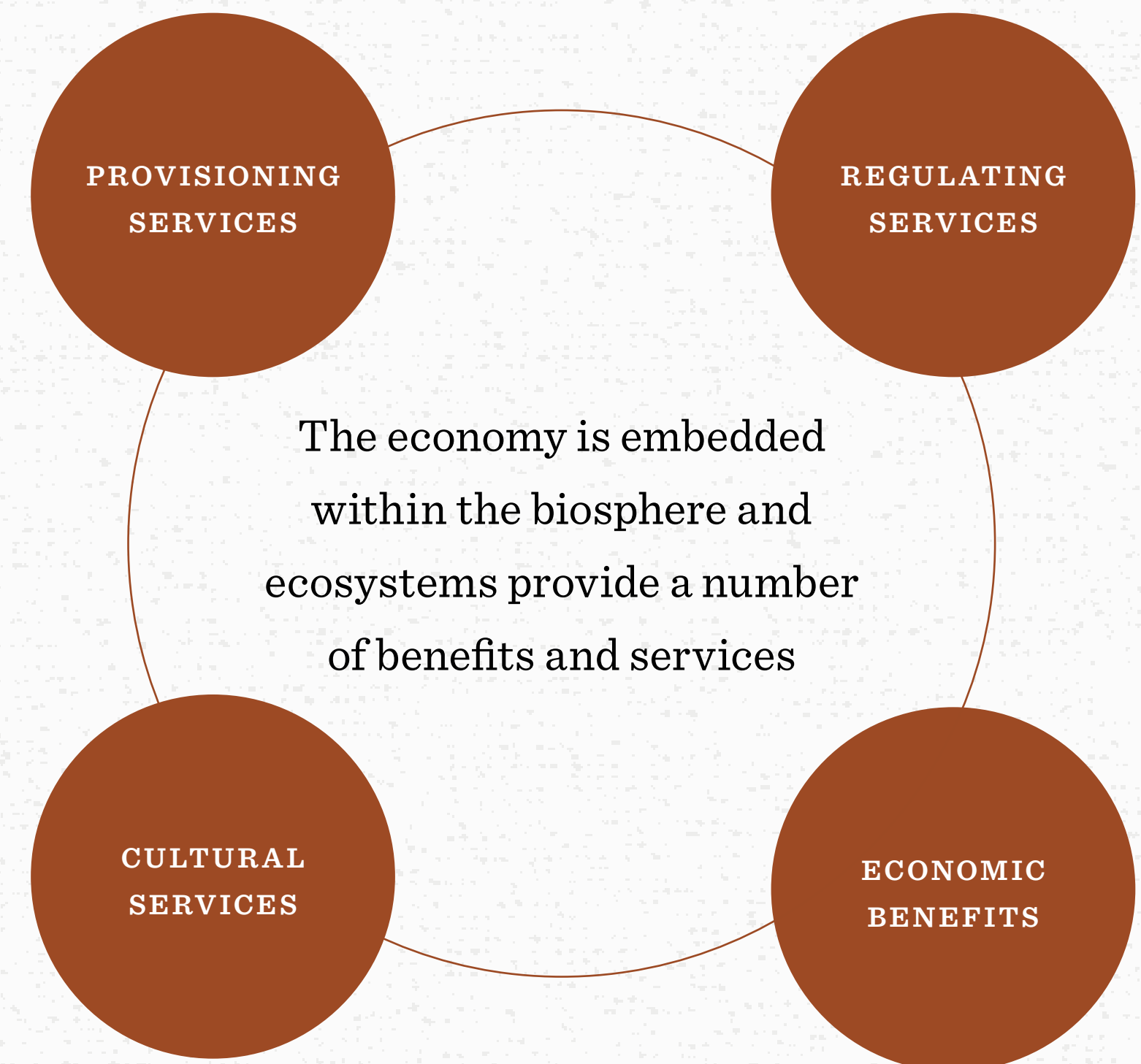
# Biodiversity loss matters. Why should we care?

## PRIMARY DRIVERS

- Habitat Loss
- Over exploitation
- Invasive Species
- Pollution
- Climate Change associated with Global Warming



Human population growth, increased consumption and reduced resource efficiency are responsible for the biodiversity loss we are experiencing today



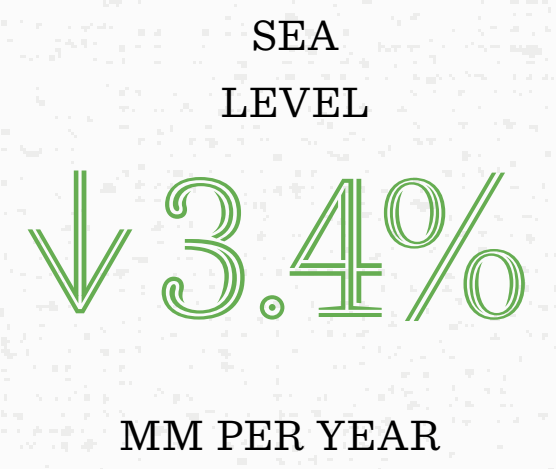
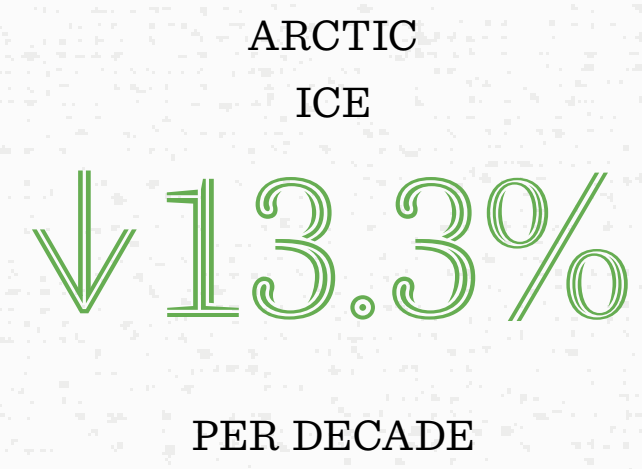
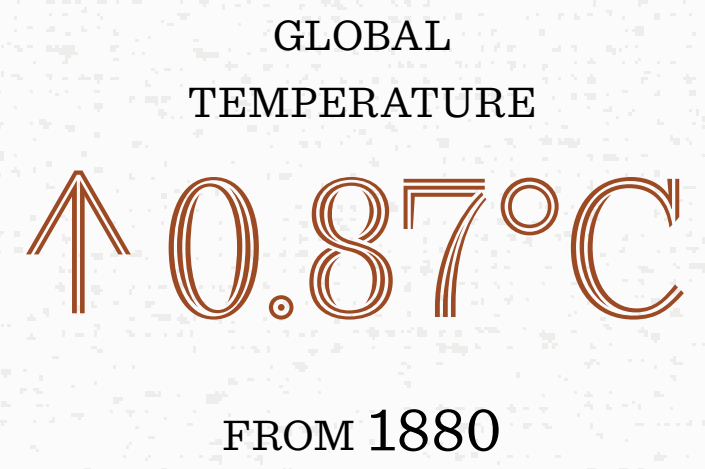
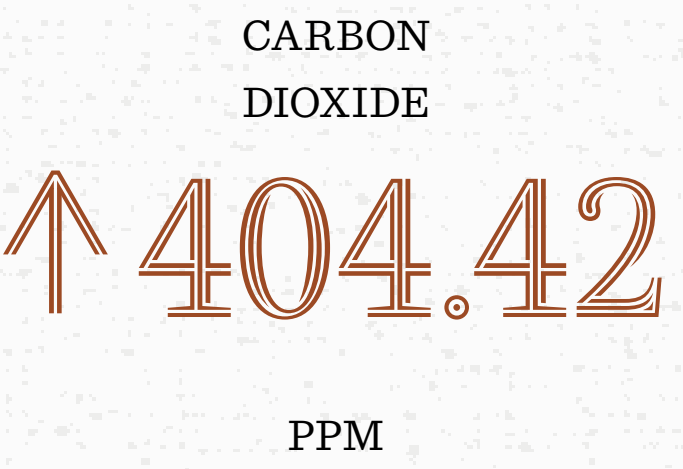
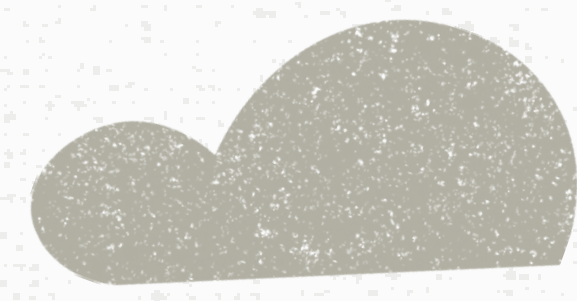
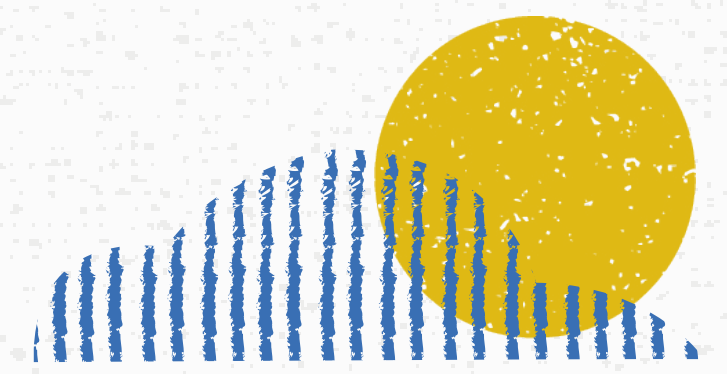
Simultaneously,  
climate change has not just  
accelerated biodiversity loss,  
but is threatening decades of  
developmental progress





# Peek into Climate Data

Human influence on climate systems is evident. If left unchecked, the climate crisis will increase the likelihood of pervasive and irreversible catastrophic impacts for everyone



SOURCE · Point of No Return; <https://densitydesign.github.io/teaching-dd12/es01/group01/>

Data as of December 2024



# The Challenge & the Opportunity

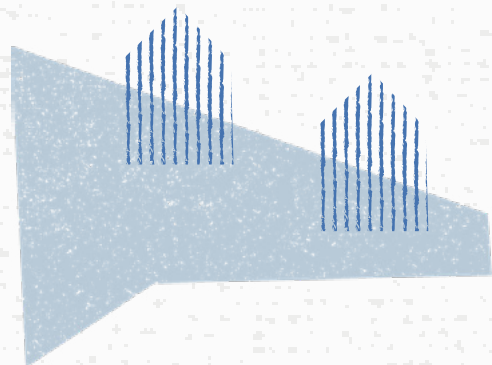
A chance for domestic philanthropy to take bold action



In 2019 alone, India incurred **over \$69bn in economic losses** due to climate-related events



India risks **34m jobs lost from heat stress** by 2030, resulting in losses of up to **4.5% of India's GDP**



By 2050, **35m people in India will face annual coastal flooding** — destroying infrastructure, livelihoods and lives

yet...

1-2% of overall domestic philanthropic funding in India in 2022 mobilised towards climate action;

domestic public and private climate financing was heavily indexed towards energy and transportation (ICC)



# RNP's approach

A 30-year journey focused on community-based conservation,  
tackling biodiversity loss, and supporting locally relevant climate  
adaptation and resilience



Key considerations in our approach  
& the need for a holistic lens



Being mindful of  
Inter-connectedness

Nurturing  
Diversity

Looking at Impact  
as a spectrum





# Currently, we support **40+ organisations** across climate resilience and adaptation, and conservation and biodiversity related themes

ACT Environment	Conservation India	Koshish	Tech4good Climate coalition program
ALT EFF	C-STEP	Krapavis	Uthhan
Arghyam	Dakshin	Nature Conservation Foundation	WELL LABS
Asar	Dusty Foot	Palluyir Trust	Wildlife Conservation Society
ATREE	Ecological Restoration Alliance (ERA)	Sahajeevan	Wildlife Conservation Trust
Biodiversity Collaborative	Farmers for Forests	SEEDS	Wildlife SOS
Bird Alliance	India Climate Collaborative	Shola Trust	Wildlife Trust of India
Centre for Wildlife Studies	Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, Tirupati	Spudnik Farms	WWF
CEEW	Keystone	Sustainable Futures Council	YouCAN
		Tech for Wildlife	



# A Legacy of Giving

More than 310 crores INR in climate & environment giving by Rohini Nilekani and RNPF



1997 -2001	2002-2006	2007-2011	2012-2016	2017-2021	2022-present
Seeds of Environmental Awareness	Diving Deep into Water Issues	Bridging Water and Wider Agro-Ecology	Exploring Diverse Environmental Frontiers	Embracing Holistic Conservation and Climate Action	Catalyzing Systemic Climate and Environmental Change
1.35 crores	62.15 crores	91.18 crores	7.30 crores	32.67 crores	90.99 crores







# Current Portfolio at a Glance

Two pillars of our work

## Conservation and Biodiversity

PILLAR 1

Human-Wildlife Interactions
Species Conservation and Habitat Loss
Community Engagement and Livelihood Generation
Biodiversity Loss
Tackling Invasive Species and Protecting and Restoring Ecosystems.

## Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation

PILLAR 2

Strengthening communities' capacity to adapt to their ecological, social, and economic systems to climate shocks, while balancing developmental and livelihood needs
Circular economy
Disaster risk reduction and prevention
Heat preparedness, adaptation and resilience investments
Nature-based solutions
Sustainable agricultural practices

So, what have  
we learnt?





## Common Themes Covered

### PILLAR 1

# Understanding Our Conservation & Biodiversity Work

Leveraging our strengths

- 1 Human-Wildlife Conflict
- 2 Livelihood generation and community centric conservation (forest rights etc)
- 3 Species conservation and providing for habitat loss
- 4 Mitigating and tackling biodiversity loss and the presence of invasive species
- 5 Protecting and restoring ecosystems





## Functional Levers

### PILLAR 1

# Understanding Our Conservation & Biodiversity Work

Leveraging our strengths

- 1 Research, knowledge dissemination, platforms
- 2 Capacity building of civil society organisations and government systems
- 3 Coalitions, ecosystem building
- 4 Policy advocacy and regulatory reforms
- 5 Community engagement, loss and damage funds/compensatory mechanisms for communities





1

# Human Wildlife Conflict & Co-existence

## OVERALL REFLECTIONS

### Technology and Innovation

Technologies such as early warning systems, electric fencing, and GPS tracking of animals, mobile phone-based alerts has proven to reduce human-wildlife conflict (NCF, WTI, Keystone, WWF, WWF, WCT)

### Research and Monitoring

Research on conflict-causing species revealed their movements, habitat preferences, and evaluated mitigation measures through monitoring conflict incidents and outcomes. (WWF, NCF, WTI, WCT, WCS)

### Habitat Management and Corridor Creation

Conserving and restoring wildlife habitats and creating corridors is challenging due to difficulties in securing land.

### Community Engagement and Compensation Schemes

Community engagement is vital, and compensation schemes must be paired with multipronged approaches to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

### Emergent area Behaviour change and Co-existence

Looking at culture, religion and social beliefs to mitigate conflicts (WCS)







2

# Mitigating biodiversity loss, community centric conservation, and livelihood generation

## OVERALL REFLECTIONS

### **Conservation and livelihoods**

Community engagement and sustainable development has become crucial: Some look at conflict mitigation measures, while others have begun to take a more holistic approach and are also involved now in their overall livelihood and developmental challenges (WWF, NCF, Dakshin, Keystone, WCT)

### **Participatory decision making and successful interventions**

Benefit sharing and participatory decision making: Benefit-sharing mechanisms, such as revenue-sharing agreements, ecotourism revenue distribution, or access to sustainable livelihood opportunities has helped in ensuring the sustenance of conservation programs. (Farmers for Forests, Keystone, ATREE)

### **Emergent Area**

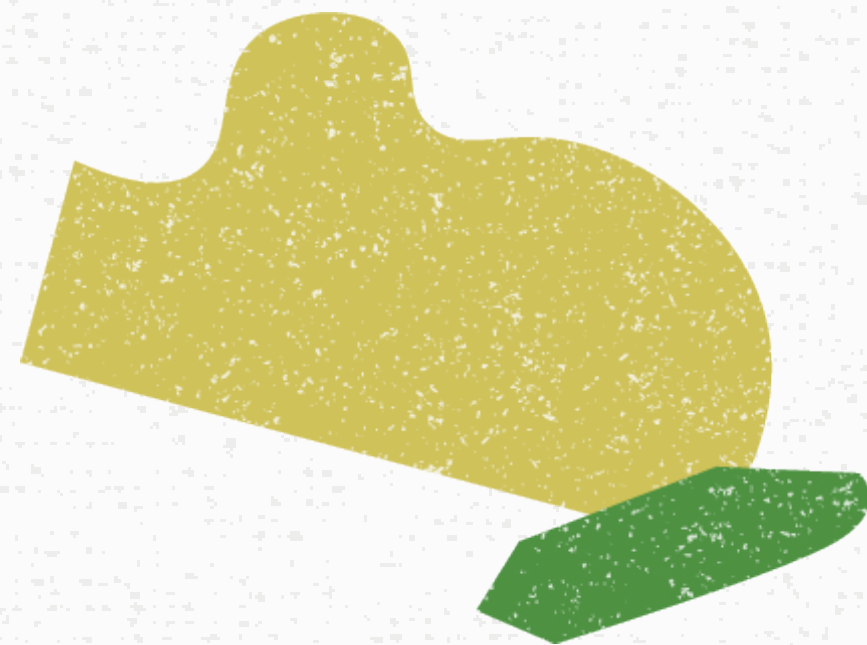
Thrust on cultural systems and traditional indigenous knowledge systems, combined with emerging evidence, to engage with communities crucial (Keystone, Dakshin, WCS)



3

# Species Conservation

## OVERALL REFLECTIONS



### Species Richness

A focus on a range of species has seen significant progress in conservation by partners : Birds, Tigers, Elephants (other species looked at include Nilgiris Tahr, gharial, Asiatic lion, rhino, amphibians/reptiles etc (ATREE, WWF, WCT, WTI, IISER, Bird Alliance)

### Key Challenges

Poor governance, supporting wildlife species outside of protected areas, habitat loss and fragmentation, disappearing of commons, poaching and illegal trading have been the big challenges contending species conservation work by our partners (CWS,WTI WWF, WCT)

### Land and Securing Corridors

Securing corridors is becoming even more politically controversial; coming up of protected areas has helped

### Emergent Areas

Public engagement and citizen science and mobilisation efforts have been another emergent way to look at conservation of species (CWS, Bird alliance)



4 & 5

## NASCENT AND EMERGENT THEMES

# Invasive Species & Protecting and Restoring Ecosystems

## OVERALL REFLECTIONS

### **Invasive Species**

While tackling the removal of invasive species, models that prioritise community participation and ownership have shown success (Shola Trust)

### **Scaling ecological restoration requires a hyperlocal approach**

Ecological restoration is a very careful practice, and the differences in landscapes require a hyperlocal approach (Shola Trust, NCF)

### **Common and Open Source Platforms**

Open source public goods like ecoregion documents and the setting up of the germination techniques database by ERA have leveraged the power of the community



# Power of Storytelling

Supporting documentaries, films, conferences & related efforts

## Documentaries/Films/Theatre

A Thousand Leopards in the Sea  
Colonies in Conflict  
Day Zero - a sci-fi play on climate change  
The Nilgiris

## Conferences, Film Festivals & Exhibitions

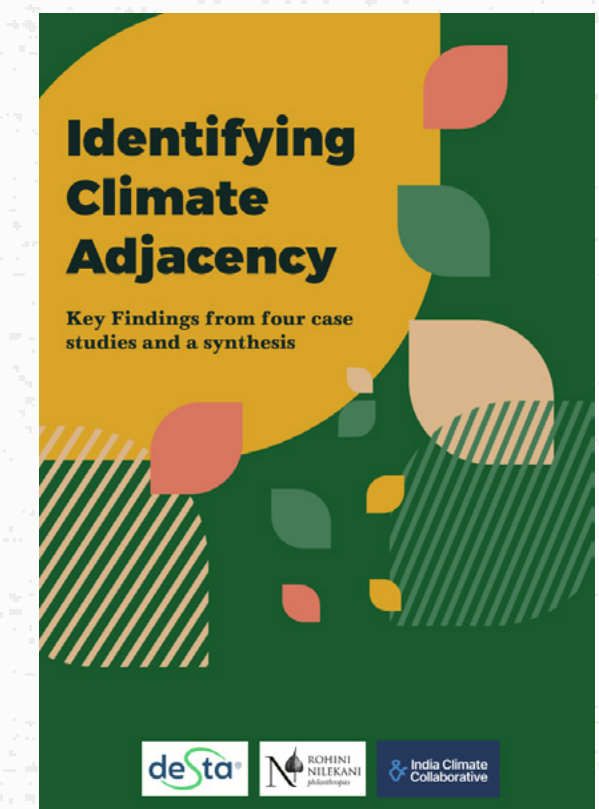
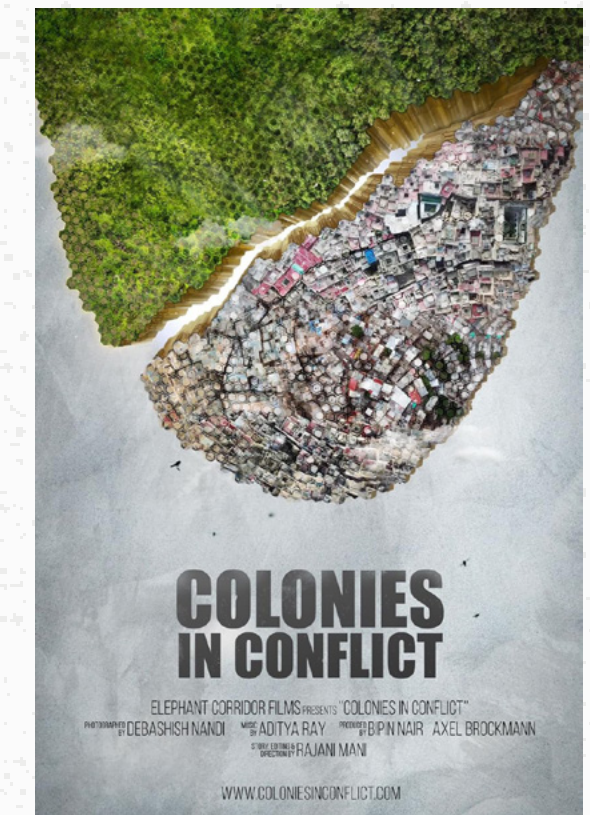
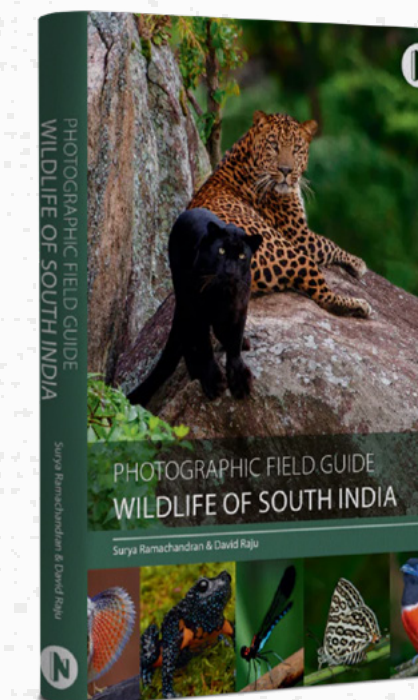
Indian Wildlife Ecology Conference  
Rooting for Tubers  
Consortium of Agro-ecological  
Transformation  
ALT EFF  
Living Lightly  
Nilgiriscares

## Report

Community Resilience & Climate Action,  
Landscaping the Field of Agriculture in India  
Climate Adjacency

## Conferences, Film Festivals & Exhibitions

Marginlands  
Photographic Field Guide - Wildlife of South India  
Pillars of Trees (NCF)



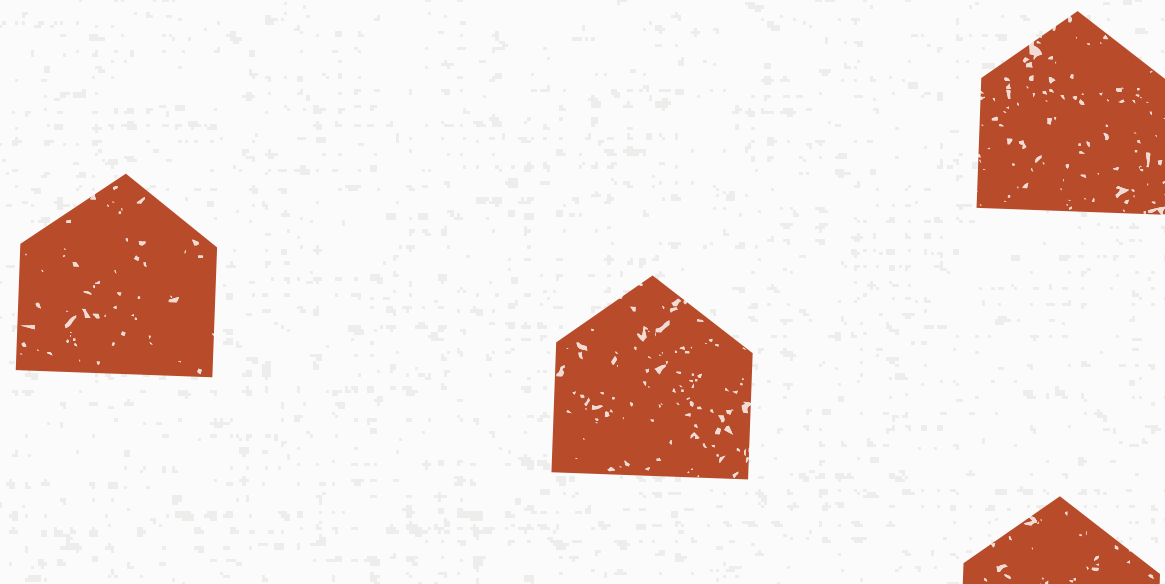


## Areas of Focus

### PILLAR 2

# Building our work in Climate Adaptation and Resilience

- 1 Disaster Risk Reduction and Prevention
- 2 Heat Adaptation
- 3 Sustainable Agriculture Practices
- 4 Nature Based Solutions







## PILLAR 2

# Building our work in Climate Adaptation and Resilience

## Functional Levers

- 1 Research, knowledge dissemination, platforms
- 2 Capacity building
- 3 Coalitions, ecosystem building
- 4 Policy advocacy and regulatory reforms
- 5 Community engagement and mobilisation





# Climate Adaptation and Resilience

## OVERALL REFLECTIONS

### **Climate sensitive development**

Building the capacity and resilience of communities to adjust and adapt to their ecological, social and economic systems to climate shocks

### **Climate risk and vulnerability assessment**

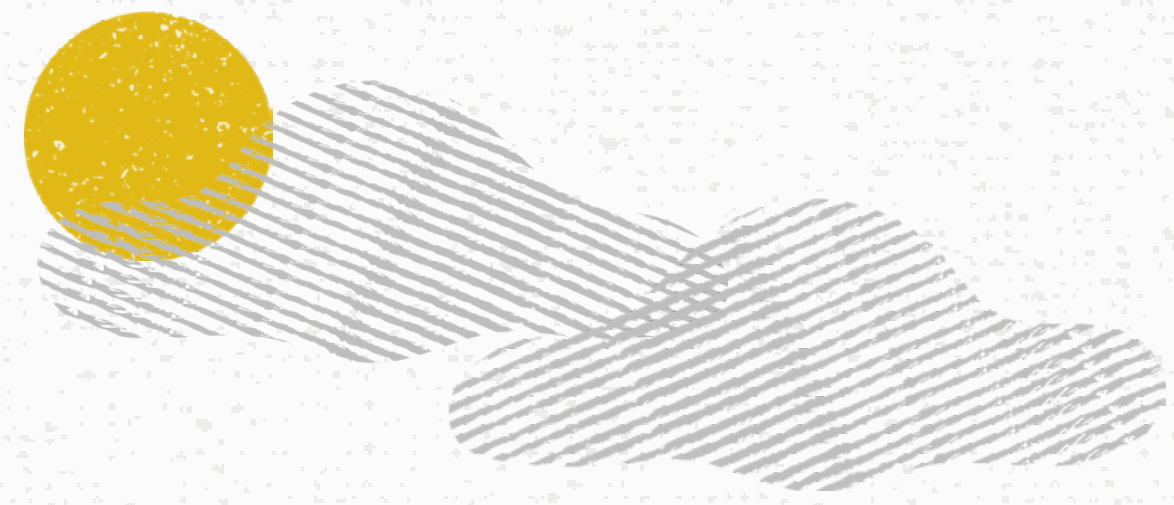
Climate risks heighten vulnerability; it becomes critical to assess, identify, and monitor these risks to be able to build community resilience

### **Climate adaptation future proofs developmental gains**

Providing for adaptation enhances developmental gains as it is intrinsically linked to building resilience through livelihood challenges

### **Adaptation and Mitigation as a continuum**

Taking an ecosystem level approach that appreciates interconnectedness and diversity is crucial.



## PILLAR 2

# Case Studies



### Key Focus Areas

Disaster prevention and resilience

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### Key Intervention

- An open data platform – Akshvi that enables communities to report the impact of climate change and disasters on their lives.
- A platform to build a hyper-local loss database.



### Key Focus Areas

Supported the climate resilience vertical

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### Key Intervention

- Climate Risk Atlas
- Thane Heat Action Plan and Automation of Heat Plans across the country
- Sustainable agriculture program



### Key Focus Areas

Mobilisation of domestic philanthropy towards climate

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### Key Intervention

- Mobilised more than USD 100 million in commitments to catalytic climate priorities in India
- Built a network of over 135 partners across the globe, advancing India-centric collaborative solutions to accelerate climate action

# A quest for a people and planet friendly society



Support public goods through research and capacity building

Support program delivery through grants; balancing speed and scale with systemic long term outcomes

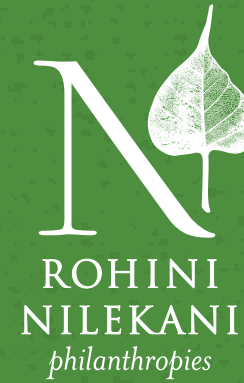
Enable collaboration through platforms and coalitions

Mobilise domestic philanthropy

The Power of Storytelling in influencing attitudinal and behavioral change







# A quest for a people and planet friendly society

**Thank you!**