BALIPARA FOUNDATION

Assam • India

# EASTERN HIMALAYAN NATURENOMICS™ FORUM

2024-25

# IMPACT REPORT

FOR THE FUTURE OF THE

# Third Pole

AND THE

# Eastern Himalaya

# Contents



INTRODUCTION

# EASTERN HIMALAYAN NATURENOMICS™ FORUM

Since 2013, the Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum has been a catalyst for transformative discussions on rewilding the Eastern Himalayas. By bringing together experts and local communities, we have successfully strategized and implemented initiatives that not only restore landscapes and conserve biodiversity but also enhance livelihoods and incomes across the region.

Our interventions include agroforestry programs, habitat restoration initiatives, and community-led conservation efforts — all designed to create sustainable economic opportunities while preserving natural ecosystems. By integrating income-generating activities with conservation, we empower local communities to thrive in harmony with nature.

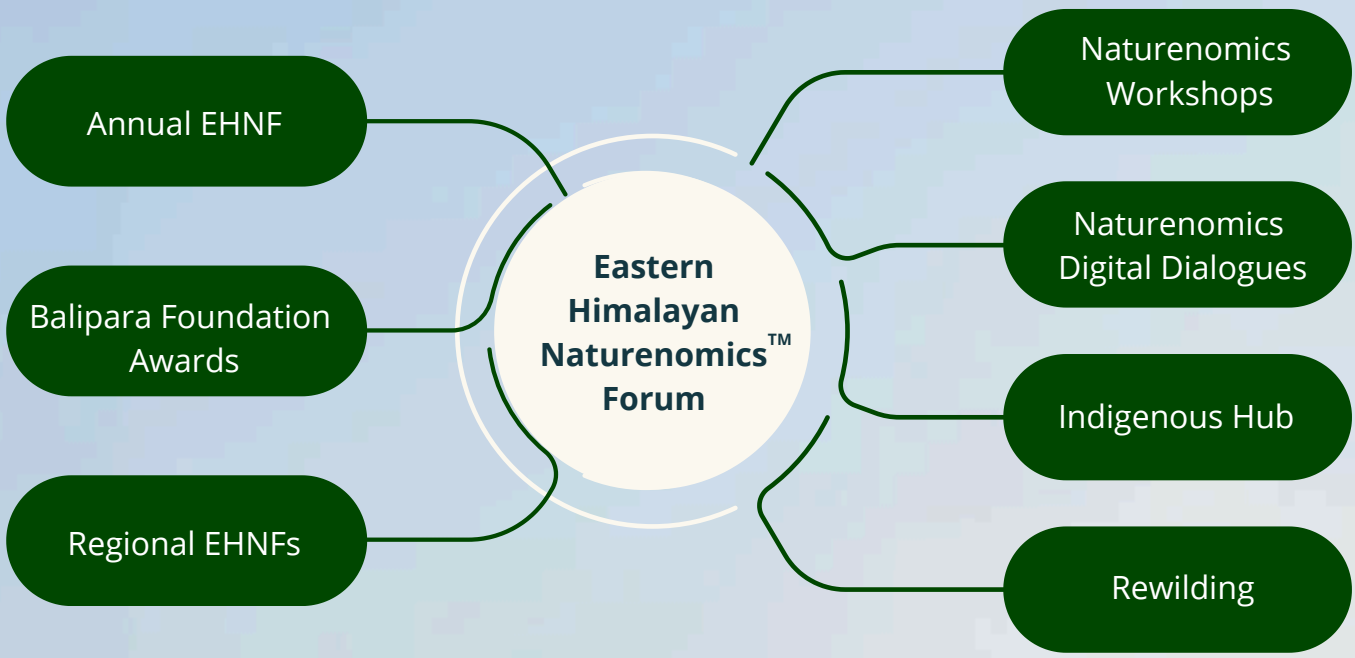
The Forum has also played a crucial role in fostering partnerships between conservation organizations, government agencies, and local businesses, supporting small-scale enterprises and eco-friendly practices. Through capacity-building workshops and training programs, we equip communities with the skills and knowledge needed to engage in sustainable livelihoods.

At its core, our mission is to not only protect the environment but also improve the well-being of those who call the Eastern Himalayas home. By driving collaborative initiatives and innovative solutions, we strive to balance conservation with economic growth, ensuring a resilient and prosperous future for both people and nature.

# For the Eastern Himalaya

# IMPACTS

## 2024-25




**1217**
Lives Reached

**200+**
Species Conserved

**600+**
Youth Engaged

**20+**
Countries

**56775**
Natural Assets created through plantation

**30+**
Knowledge Partners

**2000+**
Participants

**1300+**
Publications Supported

ANNUAL

# EASTERN HIMALAYAN NATURENOMICS™ FORUM

26-27 NOVEMBER 2024

# IMPACTS

**100+**
**SPEAKERS**

**20+**
**COUNTRIES**

**100+**
**COMMUNITY REPS**

**600+**
**YOUTHS**

**1000+**
**PARTICIPANTS**

# HIGHLIGHTS

## The Third Pole & Climate Resilience

- The Eastern Himalayas, part of the Third Pole, is a vital water source for over a billion people.
- Protecting the Eastern Himalaya is not just a regional necessity—it is a global priority. Its role in climate regulation, carbon sequestration, and sustaining livelihoods makes it one of the most crucial frontiers in the fight against climate change. Urgent science-driven conservation, policy intervention, and community-led resilience strategies are needed to secure the future of the Third Pole.

## Biodiversity & Habitat Conservation

- Protecting keystone species is essential for ecological balance—preserving natural corridors can mitigate habitat fragmentation.
- Community-led conservation models ensure long-term biodiversity protection while enhancing local livelihoods.

## Watershed Management for Livelihoods

- Upstream and downstream communities must collaborate to restore watersheds, ensuring sustainable fisheries and agriculture.
- Integrating traditional knowledge with modern conservation strategies enhances water security.

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MODERATOR


KAIZAD M. BHARUCHA


SOURAV ROY

## Decarbonization & Energy Transition

- Industries must shift towards renewable energy to align with India's Energy Transition goals.
- Decentralized renewable solutions can empower rural communities, providing energy security while reducing emissions.

## Media as a Conservation Catalyst

- Storytelling can drive action—leveraging media platforms to amplify conservation challenges and solutions.
- Bridging the gap between scientists, communities, and policymakers through impactful narratives fosters awareness and engagement.

## Communities as Conservation Stewards

- Shifting from a beneficiary mindset to active ownership ensures sustainable conservation efforts.
- Indigenous knowledge systems, including traditional medicine and agroforestry, are crucial for ecosystem restoration.

## Human-Elephant Coexistence

- Moving from conflict mitigation to fostering harmonious human-elephant interaction through technology-driven early warning systems.
- Restoring natural migration routes and habitat connectivity is key to reducing encounters in human settlements.

## Sustainable Land Management

- Regenerative agriculture and agroforestry can restore degraded lands while ensuring food security.
- Policy frameworks must support local land stewardship to maintain ecosystem balance and combat desertification.

# BALIPARA FOUNDATION AWARDS

The Balipara Foundation Awards 2024 recognized conservationists from 13 locations across the Eastern Himalayan region, ensuring a 50:50 gender balance. This year, the awards placed a special emphasis on riverine ecosystems, highlighting the crucial role they play in biodiversity conservation. A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to an individual for his remarkable contributions in identifying and documenting fish species in Manipur, preserving invaluable aquatic biodiversity.

Beyond river conservation, the awards honored individuals working to sustain both nature and livelihoods. Beekeepers, butterfly and bird conservationists, and environmental stewards from across the region were celebrated for their efforts in fostering ecological balance while supporting local communities. Even in urban areas like Guwahati, significant progress has been made in restoring Deepor Beel, a Ramsar site vital for wetland biodiversity and migratory birds.

These awardees represent a diverse range of conservation efforts, from preserving fragile ecosystems to promoting sustainable livelihoods. Their dedication and resilience continue to safeguard the Eastern Himalaya's rich biodiversity. The Balipara Foundation Awards serve as a platform to amplify their impact, inspiring future generations to take active roles in conservation and ecological restoration.

| 13 | 10000+ | 750 | 1100+ | 35+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No. of case stories** | **Habitats restored (No. of trees)** | **Species Preserved** | **Livelihoods Impacted** | **No. of Publications** |


BALIPARA FOUNDATION
AWARDS
Guwahati, Assam, India


BALIPARA FOUNDATION
AWARDS
Guwahati, Assam, India


BALIPARA FOUNDATION
AWARDS


India


AWARDS
Guwahati, Assam, India


12th
BALIPARA FOUNDATION
AWARDS
Guwahati, Assam, India


AWARDS
Assam
(Video)


India

# MANJIT PATIR

## Restoring Dhakuakhana's Ecosystem

**7**
**Hectares restored**

**11,000**
**Total Natural Assets**

**30+**
**Community Members Involved**

With the completion of the final phase of the rewilding grant in Dhakuakhana, Manjit Patir has successfully planted over 20,000 trees, addressing soil erosion and mitigating human-wildlife interactions caused by floods. The initiative introduced over 15 diverse tree species, creating a resilient ecosystem that supports both wildlife and local communities.

Beyond ecological benefits, the project fostered community involvement, engaging over 35 members in habitat restoration efforts. Their participation not only strengthened environmental awareness but also ensured the sustainability of the initiative.

Though the grant has ended, Manjit and the community remain committed to their mission. They continue planting trees and restoring habitats, demonstrating the power of collective action in safeguarding their environment. Their efforts stand as a testament to the impact of grassroots leadership in fostering long-term ecological and community resilience.

# SHIKALI & ZHIMOHOLI

## Restoring Sukhai's Lost Biodiversity

**10**
**Hectares restored**

**10,000**
**Total Natural Assets**

**7+**
**Species Restored**

Sukhai, once home to vibrant bird and butterfly populations, has faced significant ecological decline due to deforestation and hunting. Over time, the forest became a source of timber rather than a thriving habitat. Determined to reverse this trend, Shikali and Zhimoholi have launched a large-scale forest regeneration initiative.

By identifying and planting income-generating and bird-friendly species like gooseberry and wild apple, they are restoring biodiversity while ensuring economic benefits for the community. Their initiative has actively engaged local members in habitat restoration, fostering a collective commitment to conservation.
The first phase of their efforts saw the planting of nearly 10,000 trees, with an impressive 75%+ survival rate—remarkable for Sukhai's dense landscape. This success reflects consistent maintenance and monitoring, ensuring the saplings adapt to their surroundings. Shikali and Zhimoholi's work is not just reviving the forest; it is rekindling hope for a balanced coexistence between people and nature.

# BALANCING NATURE & LIVELIHOODS THROUGH AGROFORESTRY

### IN SANGTI VALLEY, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

## Impacts

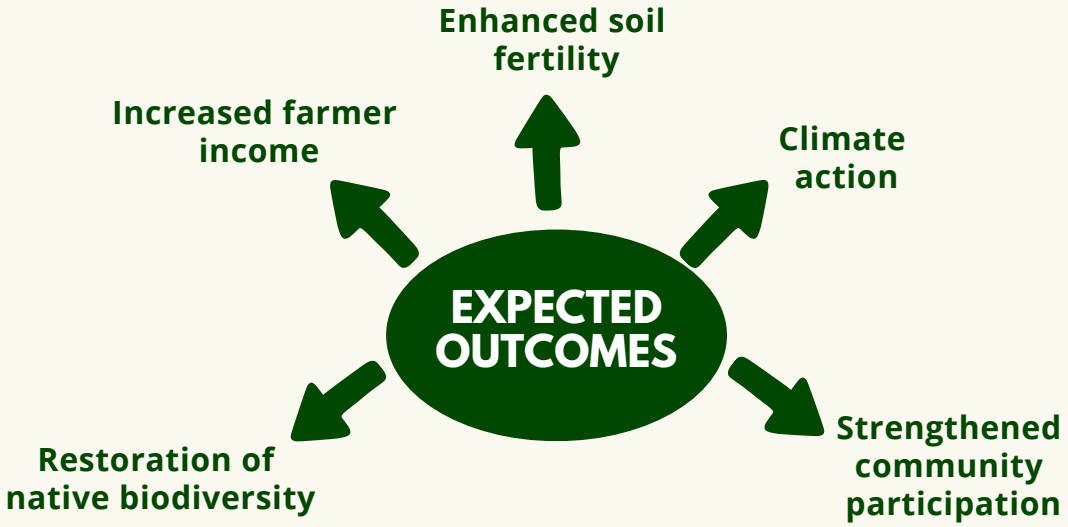
**1150**
saplings planted

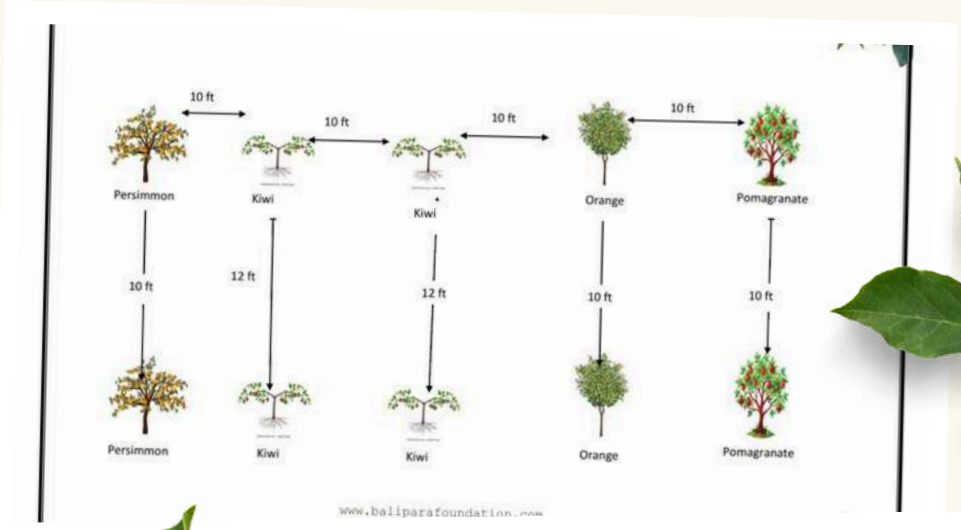
**4**
native species planted - Kiwi, Orange, Persimmon and Pomegranate

**13**
Community members- Livelihoods impacted

**1.9**
hectares restored

The agroforestry initiative in Sangti Valley integrates ecological restoration with economic opportunities for local farmers, ensuring long-term sustainability. Implemented across 1.9 hectares of land, the project is strategically divided into 13 plots, each designed to suit the valley's unique climatic and ecological conditions.




10 ft
10 ft
10 ft
10 ft
10 ft
Persimmon
Kiwi
Kiwi
Orange
Pomagranate
12 ft
12 ft
10 ft
10 ft
Persimmon
Kiwi
Kiwi
Orange
Pomagranate
www.baliparafoundation.com

# REGIONAL EASTERN HIMALAYAN NATURENOMICS FORUMS 2024-25

The Regional Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum serves as a platform to document impactful conservation efforts, showcase successful habitat restoration initiatives, and amplify the voices of community champions. By identifying the most pressing challenges faced by local communities and exploring viable solutions, the forum lays the foundation for meaningful discussions and action. Through this process, it drives long-term change by empowering rural communities in the Eastern Himalayas, setting a global precedent for sustainable development. By addressing social, economic, and conservation challenges, the forum contributes to the larger vision of wildlife conservation and habitat restoration, fostering resilient and thriving ecosystems alongside sustainable livelihoods.

In 2024, we conducted regional forums across Tripura, Assam (Kaziranga), Arunachal (Sangti Valley), Assam (Dima Hasao, Nanadisa Village), Arunachal Pradesh (Longding) and Mizoram (Aizawl), ensuring tangible outcomes. These forums focused on biodiversity restoration, sustainable livelihoods, and waste management.

In Dima Hasao's Nanadisa Village, with the local community we aim to establish a recreational area with indigenous species and habitat restoration activities. This initiative will provide local youth with access to ecological knowledge, especially since many face challenges in reaching Haflong for education. Similarly, in Longding, Arunachal Pradesh, habitat loss due to hunting has significantly impacted biodiversity. To address this, our interventions focus on habitat restoration and alternative livelihood opportunities, ensuring both biodiversity conservation and economic resilience. Additionally, the regional forums tackled knowledge-sharing, training, waste management, and income generation through local resources like bamboo. Through these efforts, we have successfully formed over 10 new partnerships, identified three additional sustainable income avenues, and addressed the increasing waste challenge in these regions.

# FARMING FOR THE FUTURE

## Sujit Langthasa's Mission for Sustainability & Growth

Sujit Langthasa, a young farmer from Nanadisa in Dima Hasao, made a conscious decision to leave behind his corporate career and return to his village. With a desire to contribute meaningfully to his community, Sujit has dedicated himself to both farming and empowering those around him. Since returning, Sujit has focused on improving the agricultural practices on his own land. He has cultivated a variety of crops, including fruits like litchi, pineapple, and lemon, along with vegetables, creating a balanced and productive farming system.

By combining traditional methods with modern techniques, Sujit has been able to increase productivity while maintaining sustainability. His success has not only provided for his family but also served as a model for others in the village.

In addition to his farming efforts, Sujit is deeply committed to the growth of his community. He actively collaborates with fellow villagers, encouraging sustainable practices and exploring ways to improve local livelihoods. Sujit has also been involved in ecological restoration and rewilding initiatives, helping to shape a more sustainable future for the region. Through his work, he is playing a key role in making Nanadisa more resilient and self-sufficient, with a focus on both agricultural prosperity and environmental responsibility.

Sujit's story encourages others to rethink their connection to the land. His journey illustrates the powerful impact of returning to one's roots—not just for personal fulfillment but for the collective betterment of the community. With his leadership, Nanadisa is gradually moving towards a future where economic growth and environmental sustainability are intertwined, guided by a young man who is reimagining possibilities for his village.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## 6
## FORUMS

- Biswanath, Assam
- Agartala, Tripura
- Sangti Valley and Longding, Arunachal Pradesh
- Nanadisa Village, Dima Hasao
- Aizwal, Mizoram

## 5
## CORE SITES OF RESTORATION

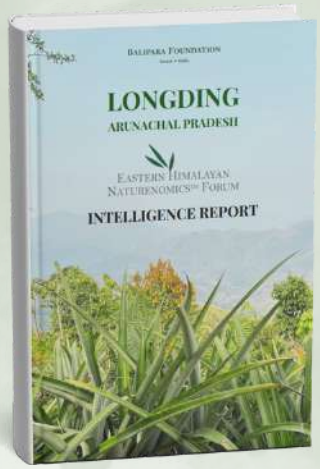
## 1
## FORESTER/RANGER TRAINING

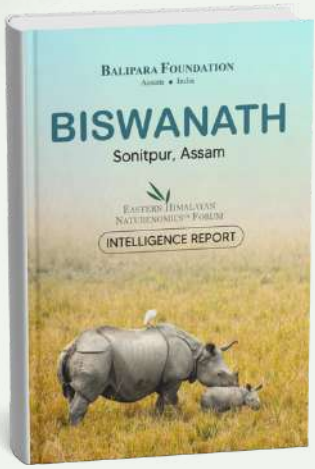
## 10+
## PARTNERS

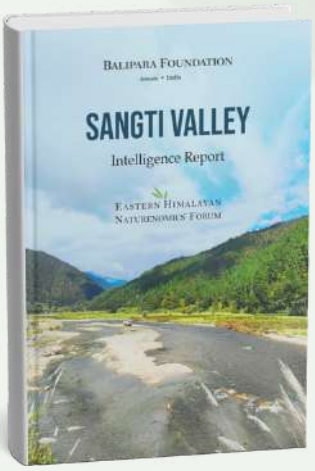
## 200+
## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

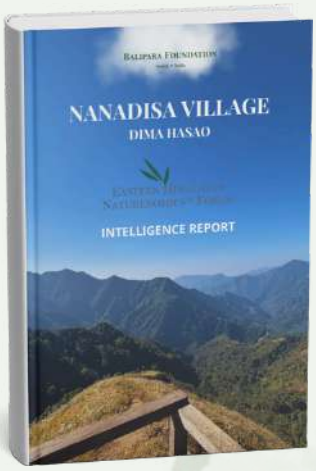
## 6
## PUBLICATIONS

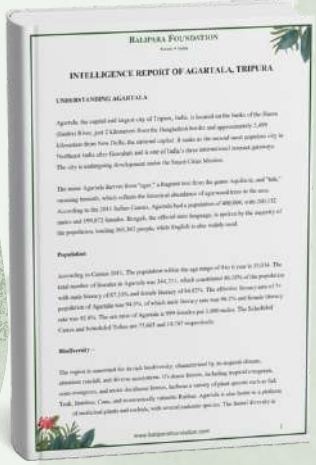
# PUBLICATIONS RELEASED AS OUTCOME OF THE REGIONAL EHNFs 2024-25




# NATURENOMICS™ DIALOGUES

**24**
**SPEAKERS**

**5000+**
**DIGITAL IMPRESSIONS**

**6**
**COUNTRIES**

The Naturenomics™ Digital Dialogues served as a vital precursor to the Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum, laying the foundation for broader discussions on conservation and sustainability. These dialogues brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including academicians, policymakers, and experts, fostering meaningful exchanges on nature conservation. By leveraging the digital platform, the sessions transcended geographical boundaries, connecting local and global voices and expanding the collaborative network for impactful conservation efforts.

In July and August 2024, the Naturenomics™ Dialogues hosted six insightful sessions, each exploring critical themes related to forests, technology, and youth engagement in conservation.


## KEY SESSIONS & OUTCOMES

Held in July and August 2024, the six dialogues explored critical themes shaping conservation today. The session on Watershed Conservation and Management in the Eastern Himalaya emphasized integrated watershed management as a tool for climate resilience, ensuring water security and sustaining biodiversity. Forests for Our Future – Stories from the Yesteryears and Today highlighted the role of intergenerational knowledge and indigenous wisdom in shaping forest conservation strategies. The Technology for Conservation session showcased advancements in habitat monitoring, AI-driven conservation, and remote sensing for biodiversity protection. Meanwhile, Forests for Health – Bridging Ecosystem Conservation and Public Well-being underscored the intrinsic link between healthy forests and human health, advocating for nature-based healthcare solutions. The discussion on Sustainable Livelihoods from Forest Ecosystems explored eco-friendly economic models, balancing livelihoods with conservation through sustainable forest-based industries. Lastly, Integrating Sustainable Land and Waste Management Across Diverse Ecosystems addressed regenerative land-use practices, waste management solutions, and ecological restoration to enhance community resilience.

These dialogues reinforced the necessity of stakeholder engagement and participatory governance for inclusive and effective environmental management. They emphasized the critical role of youth leadership, traditional ecological knowledge, technological innovations, and cross-sector collaborations in shaping a sustainable future, setting the stage for deeper discussions at the Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ Forum 2024.

# NATURENOMICS™ WORKSHOPS

## 2024-2025

**Rural Futures Mobilization and Assessment**
Rupa, Arunachal Pradesh

**Policies for Achieving Environmental & Socioeconomic Outcomes for Forests in the NE,** Guwahati, Assam

**Rural Futures Mobilization**
Udalguri

**Workshop on Social Entrepreneurship, USTM**
Meghalaya

**Workshop on Species Identification and Green Jobs Opportunities**
TISS, Guwahati

**Voices of the Community**
Kartik Chapori, Assam

**Wings of Unity: Protecting the Greater Adjutant Stork**
Balipara, Assam

**Geodiversity and Biodiversity: An Intrinsic Connection**
Balipara, Assam

**Rural Futures Mobilization and Assessment**
Pynursla

**Workshop on Social Entrepreneurship & Economic Resilience**
Sanskriti The Gurukul, Guwahati

**The Synergy of Biodiversity, Agroforestry & Waste Management**
Akshar School, Guwahati

**Inspiring Young Minds for Conservation, Wood-Land Festival**
Balipara, Assam

# IMPACTS

1. Approximately 550+ participants.
2. Connected rural and urban youth, blending diverse expertise to drive impactful and collaborative conservation efforts.
3. Innovative perspectives on conservation emerged, deepening the understanding of nature's ecological and cultural significance.
4. Bridging grassroots wisdom with scientific advancements became a key focus, highlighting the power of integrating traditional knowledge with modern approaches.
5. Strengthened global collaboration by engaging with international organizations, fostering a united vision for conservation and sustainability.
6. Expanded partnerships with universities, engaging youth in research, restoration projects, and conservation-based enterprises, ensuring long-term environmental stewardship.

# NATURENOMICS™ WORKSHOPS

The Naturenomics™ Workshop served as a dynamic platform for community engagement, fostering the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and regional perspectives essential for effective conservation efforts. Attended by community members, students, youth from schools and universities, conservation experts, and other key stakeholders, these workshops became focal points for highlighting local experiences and collective wisdom.

A key strength of the workshop was its role in bridging the gap between communities and experts, enabling direct interaction, dialogue, and knowledge exchange. By fostering these connections, the workshops facilitated two-way learning, where communities could access expert insights, and experts could gain valuable on-ground perspectives.

Through collaborative discussions, the workshops not only facilitated the shar no ing of traditional ecological knowledge but also played a pivotal role in shaping bottom-up conservation strategies. By integrating community-driven insights, they enabled the co-creation of sustainable solutions, ensuring that conservation programs were both culturally relevant and impactful. Naturenomics™ workshops reinforced the power of grassroots initiatives, emphasizing the importance of open communication and participatory governance in building a resilient and sustainable future.

# INDIGENOUS HUB

The Indigenous Hub addresses critical challenges such as natural disasters, climate change impacts, the erosion of indigenous knowledge, and rural-urban migration by fostering community-driven solutions. It begins with comprehensive need assessments, ensuring that local stakeholders actively participate in designing and implementing interventions that align with their needs and traditional practices. The Hub promotes indigenous livelihoods by providing training and support in sustainable income-generating activities such as piggery, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, and fisheries, enabling communities to strengthen their resilience while maintaining ecological balance.

To safeguard traditional knowledge, the Hub documents and preserves indigenous practices through research publications and the construction of nurseries and rest houses, ensuring the conservation of native plant species and architectural techniques. Additionally, it builds strategic partnerships with government agencies to facilitate access to scheme benefits, financial support, and specialized training. Collaboration with think tanks, civil society organizations, and research institutions further enhances the effectiveness of interventions, ensuring that community-approved initiatives are backed by scientific expertise and policy support. Through this holistic approach, the Indigenous Hub empowers communities to preserve their heritage while creating sustainable and climate-resilient livelihoods.

**40**
**People benefiting from 3 alternate livelihoods generating income**

**10+**
**New partnerships and collaboration**

**10**
**Youths trained on alternate livelihoods**

**2**
**Additional sites**


Training on
Fishery Management
সজাগতা অভিযান

# REWILDING SANGTI VALLEY

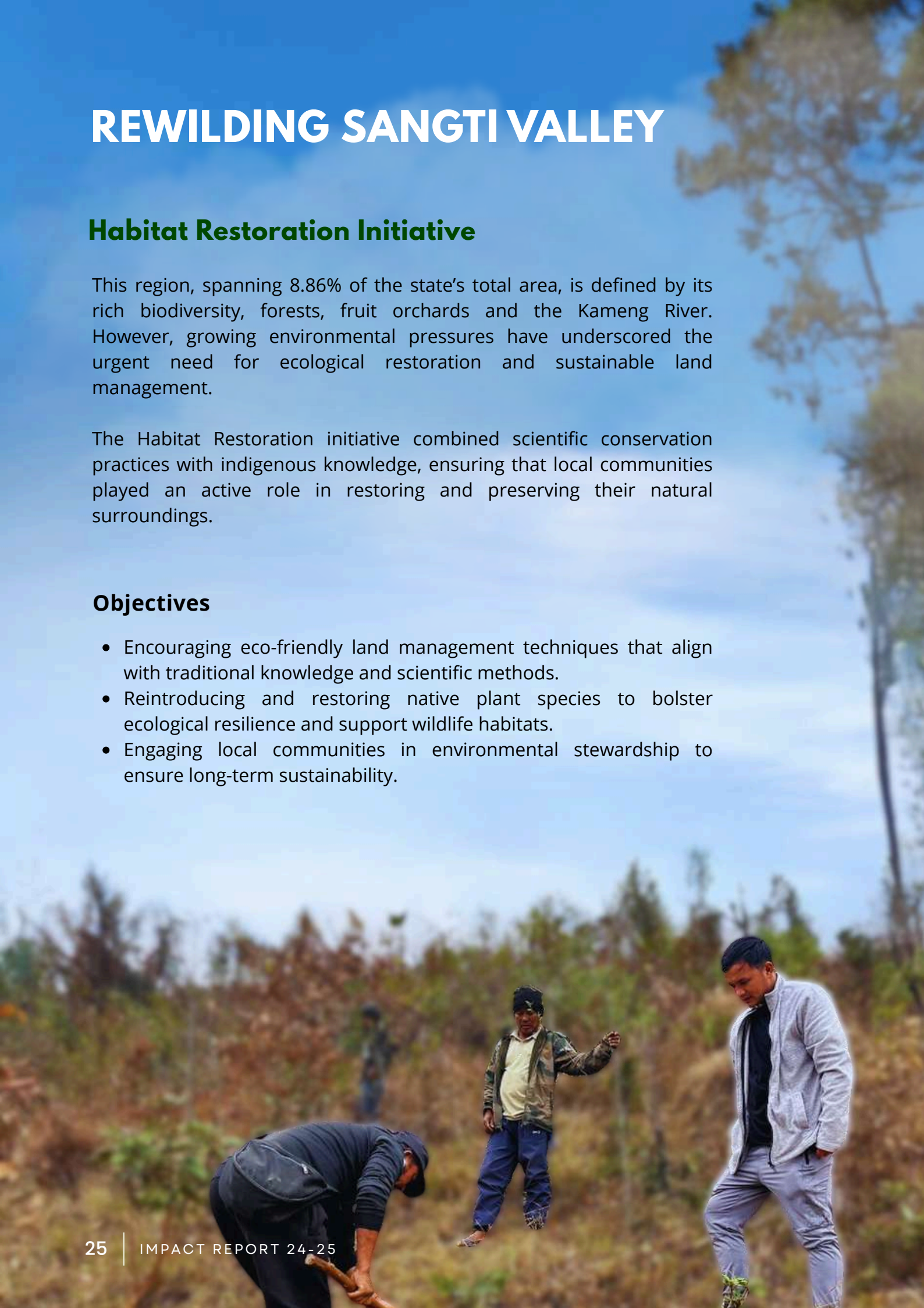
## Habitat Restoration Initiative

This region, spanning 8.86% of the state's total area, is defined by its rich biodiversity, forests, fruit orchards and the Kameng River. However, growing environmental pressures have underscored the urgent need for ecological restoration and sustainable land management.

The Habitat Restoration initiative combined scientific conservation practices with indigenous knowledge, ensuring that local communities played an active role in restoring and preserving their natural surroundings.

### Objectives

- Encouraging eco-friendly land management techniques that align with traditional knowledge and scientific methods.
- Reintroducing and restoring native plant species to bolster ecological resilience and support wildlife habitats.
- Engaging local communities in environmental stewardship to ensure long-term sustainability.



## Impacts

**23944**
saplings planted

**₹58,000**
incentive income generated for community

**145**
person's days employment created

**24.8**
hectares covered

The large-scale plantation of native tree species like oak, alder, neem, pine, rhododendron, cherry blossom and modar aims to enhance soil stability, improve water retention, and restore the valley's ecosystem.

## Post plantation map

## Community Involvement and Sustainable Livelihoods

Community members actively participated in the plantation drive, learning about sustainable land management while contributing to ecological restoration. The initiative also created temporary employment opportunities and encouraged long-term engagement through awareness programs on conservation and agroforestry.

# RESTORING RUPA

## A Community-Led Habitat Revival in Arunachal Pradesh

Rupa boasts a diverse landscape, with elevations ranging from 213 meters to 4,114 meters AMSL. This variation supports a unique agroclimatic zone, making the region ideal for diverse flora and fauna. Recognizing the need for ecological conservation, a large-scale habitat restoration initiative aimed to restore degraded landscapes, enhance biodiversity and foster community stewardship in environmental conservation.

### Objectives

- Promote sustainable environmental practices that integrate conservation with community livelihoods.
- Enhance regional biodiversity by restoring native species and strengthening ecosystem services.
- Empower local communities by involving them in conservation efforts and fostering environmental stewardship.

## Impacts

**41,131**
saplings planted

**₹74,800**
incentive income generated for community

**187**
person's days employment created

**17**
hectares covered

## Post plantation map

The restoration efforts focused on planting a diverse mix of native species like oak red, oak white, alder, neem, cherry blossom, pine and rhododendron to ensure ecosystem resilience and long-term sustainability.

A defining feature of this initiative was the active participation of local communities, who played a crucial role in tree planting, site preparation, and long-term monitoring of sapling growth. By involving local stakeholders, the project not only restored degraded habitats but also created a sense of environmental ownership among the residents of Rupa. By integrating science, community participation, and ecological vision, this project contributes towards the long-term goal of creating resilient landscapes and sustainable livelihoods in the Eastern Himalayas.

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