

BALIPARA FOUNDATION

Assam • India

13TH
EASTERN HIMALAYAN
NATURENOMICS™ FORUM
— 2025 —

10th & 11th December
Guwahati, Assam



THE ASSAM
ROYAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY
— GUWAHATI —

Recommendations Report
SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP



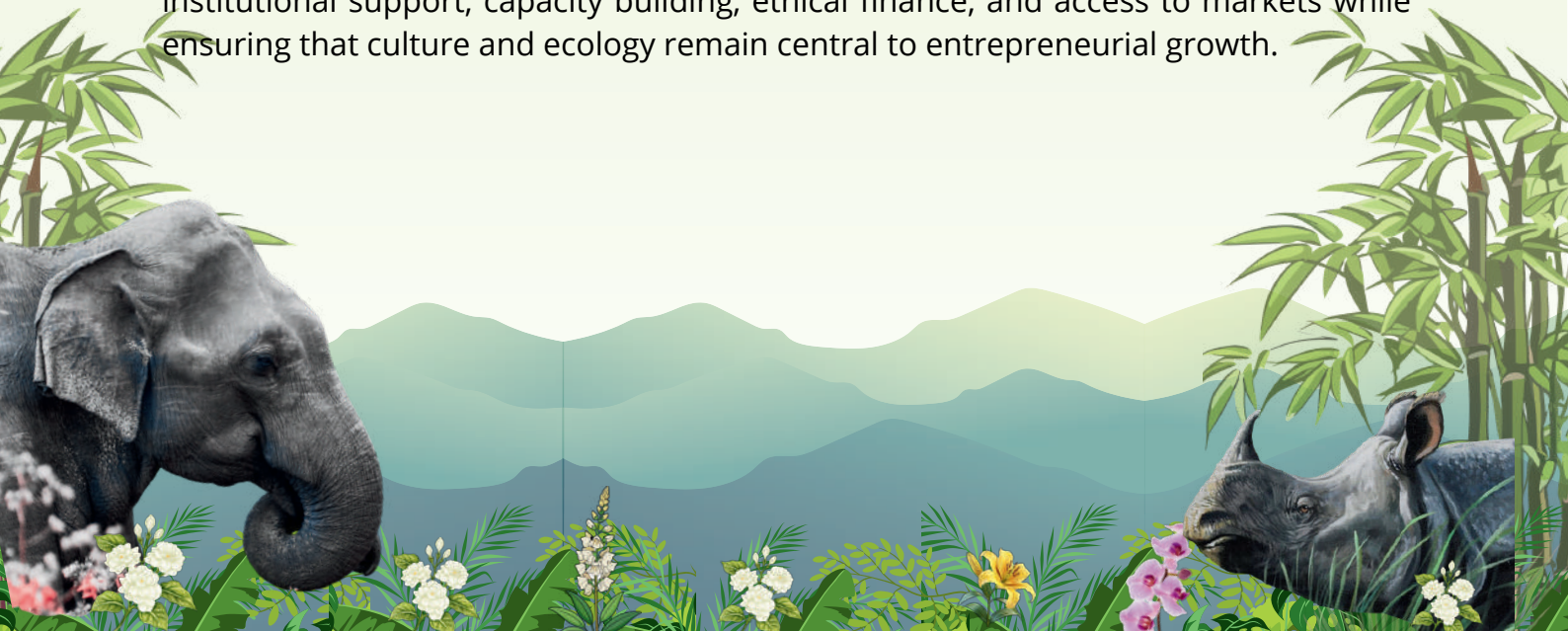
OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

The deliberations at Royal Global University explored sustainability and social entrepreneurship as transformative pathways for addressing ecological degradation, social inequity, and livelihood insecurity in the Eastern Himalaya. The discussions recognised that sustainability in the region cannot be confined to environmental protection alone, but must extend to inclusive economic systems that prioritise community well-being, regenerative development, ethical production, and long-term resilience.

Social entrepreneurship emerged as a critical mechanism for bridging the gap between environmental responsibility and market-based value creation, especially for women, youth, farmers, artisans, and forest-dependent communities who remain at the margins of conventional economic systems. The conversations underscored the importance of re-imagining entrepreneurship as a tool for community empowerment and ecosystem restoration, rather than purely profit-driven enterprise building.

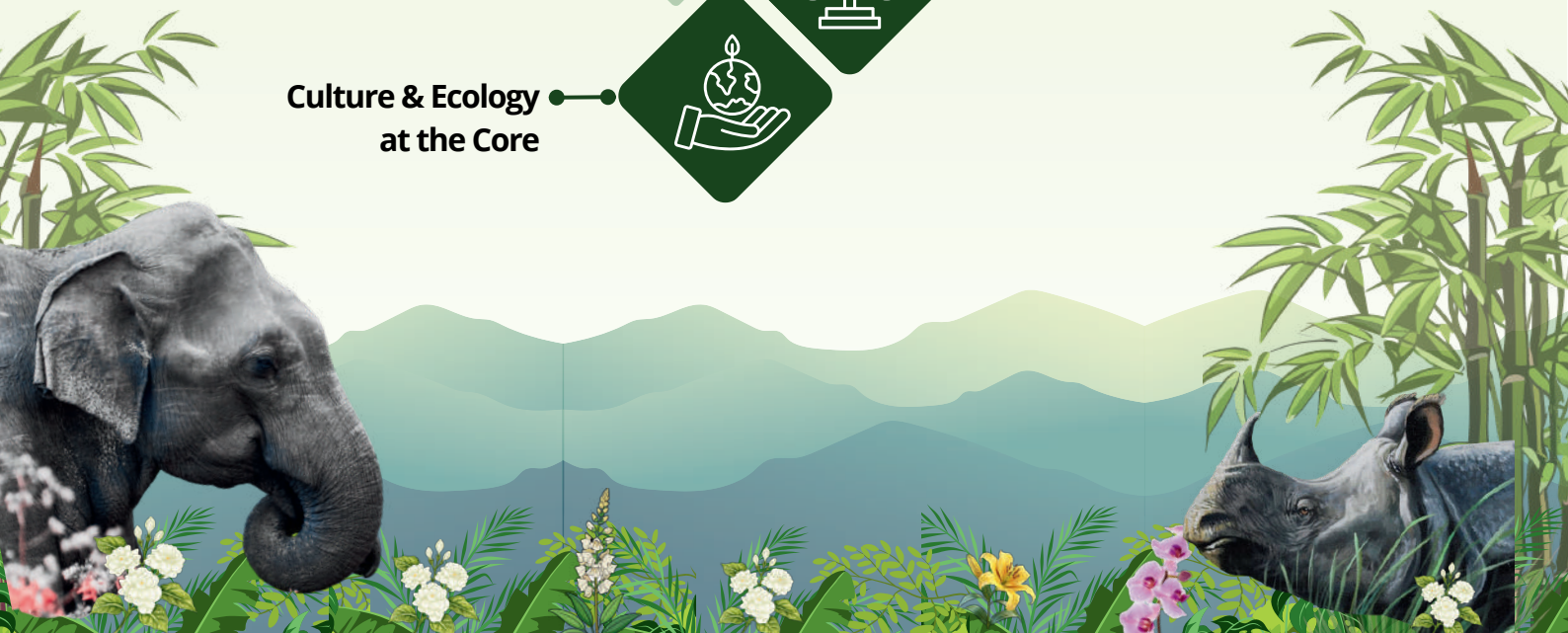
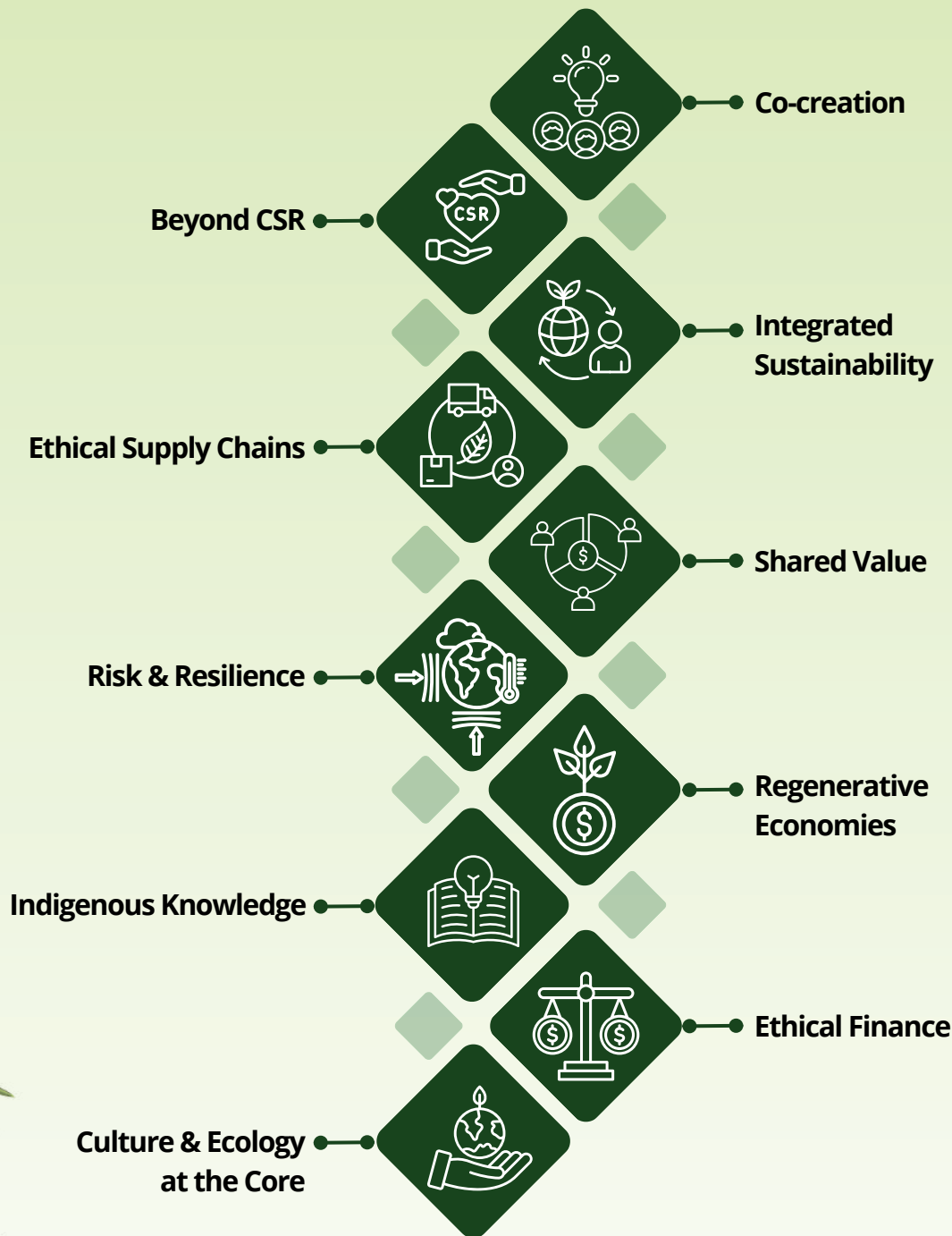
A key emphasis of the forum was the critical role played by corporates not only as funders or market actors, but as co-creators of sustainability pathways. Corporate participants articulated a clear shift in how sustainability is being defined within business ecosystems: moving away from compliance-driven CSR and peripheral environmental initiatives towards integrated models that embed environmental stewardship, social equity, ethical supply chains, and long-term value creation into core business strategies. Sustainability, as articulated in these deliberations, was increasingly framed as risk mitigation, resilience building, and shared value generation where business success is inseparable from the health of ecosystems and communities.

A key insight from the forum was that regenerative economies already exist in traditional practices, indigenous knowledge systems, local production, and informal mutual aid networks. The challenge is to strengthen these systems through institutional support, capacity building, ethical finance, and access to markets while ensuring that culture and ecology remain central to entrepreneurial growth.





REIMAGINING SUSTAINABILITY FROM CSR TO CO-CREATION





"Success of India will be success of the world. Partnership between India and Norway is practical and effective in terms of sustaining mountains and ecosystems."

**-Her Excellency May-Elin Stener,
Ambassador of Norway to India**



"Youth are the torchbearers of change. Leadership is a responsibility, and Balipara Foundation has been able to sustain that commitment. The mountains won't remember how we extracted from them, but how we revived them."

- Dr. Ravi Kota, Chief Secretary, Govt of Assam



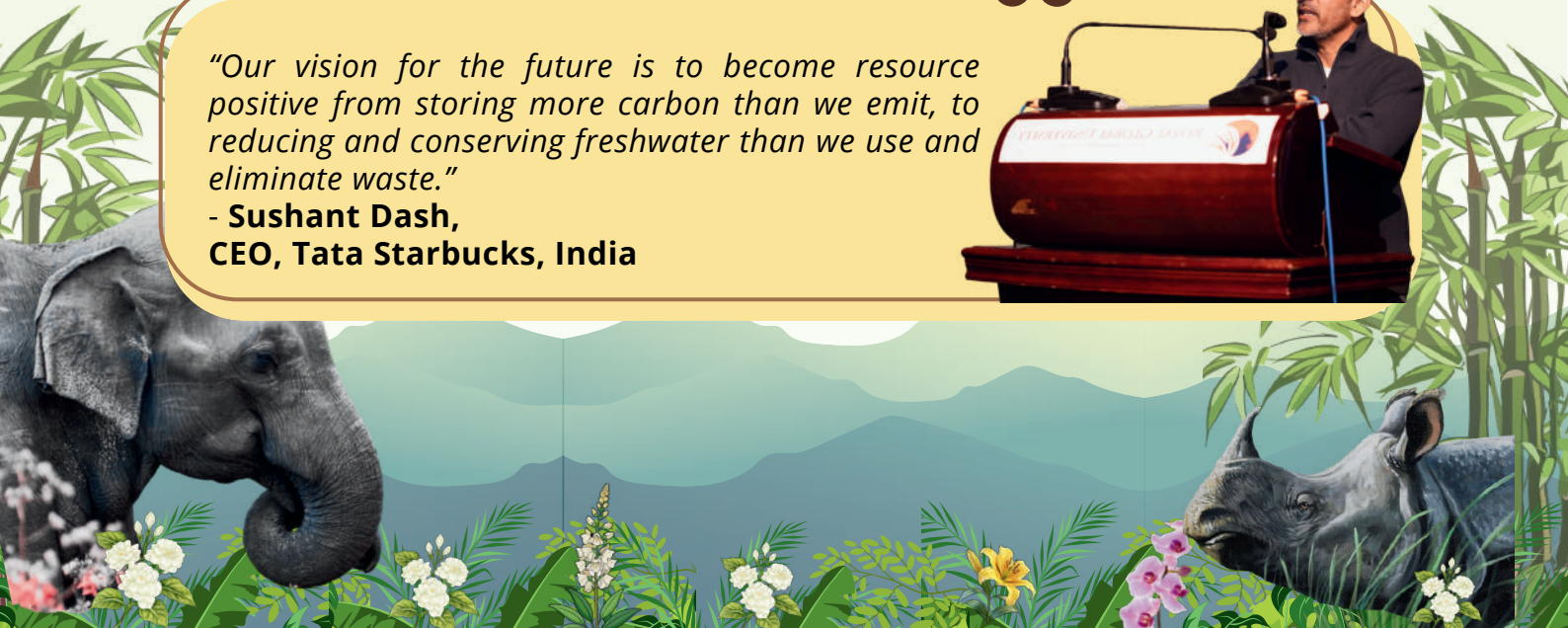
"From a corporate lens, environmental stewardship was once viewed through compliance or philanthropy. But today the understanding has matured. We now recognise this region as an ecological treasure and system deeply connected to water security, agriculture and economic resilience across the sub-continent."

-D B Sundara Ramam, Vice President Corporate Services, Tata Steel India and Director, Tata Steel Foundation India



"Our vision for the future is to become resource positive from storing more carbon than we emit, to reducing and conserving freshwater than we use and eliminate waste."

**- Sushant Dash,
CEO, Tata Starbucks, India**



CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

Fragmented Ecosystem for Social Enterprise Development

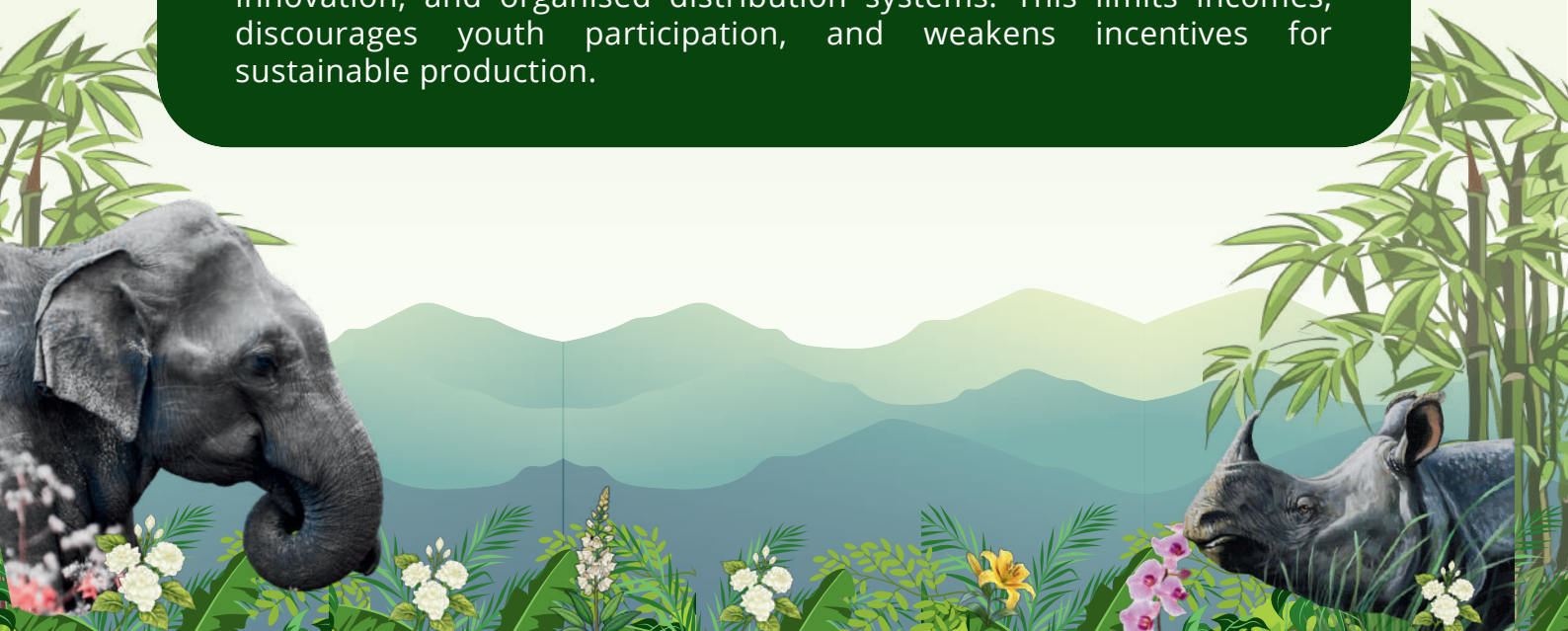
Despite growing interest in social entrepreneurship, the enabling ecosystem remains nascent and fragmented. Early-stage entrepreneurs face barriers including weak incubation support, limited mentorship, poor financial literacy, low exposure to impact markets, and lack of structured pathways for enterprise scaling. Institutional collaboration between academia, industry, and communities remains limited, constraining knowledge exchange and innovation diffusion.

Limited Access to Ethical and Patient Capital

Entrepreneurs working in sustainability and community-based enterprises require long-term, risk-tolerant financing aligned with environmental and social outcomes. However, available credit and investment options largely prioritise rapid financial returns, excluding grassroots innovators, women entrepreneurs, and small producers. High transaction costs, collateral requirements and lack of financial inclusion further restrict access to capital.

Weak Market Linkages and Value Retention

While the Eastern Himalaya produces unique and culturally significant goods, including handlooms, handicrafts, agro-forestry produce, wellness products, and eco-tourism services, most value is captured outside the region. Producers lack branding, certification, design innovation, and organised distribution systems. This limits incomes, discourages youth participation, and weakens incentives for sustainable production.



CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

Skills and Capacity Gaps

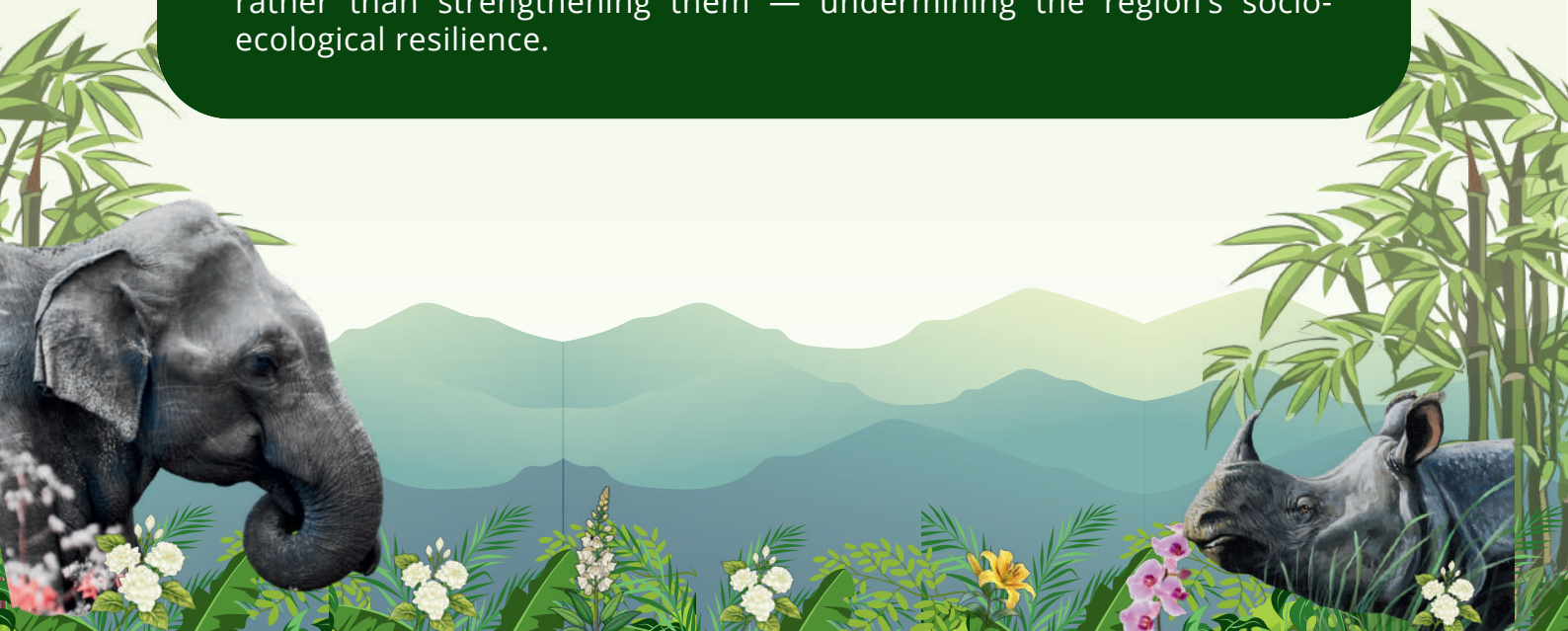
Discussions highlighted that many potential social entrepreneurs lack exposure to enterprise management, digital literacy, legal compliance, environmental standards, and impact assessment. Women and rural youth face additional barriers such as mobility constraints, social norms, and unequal access to networks and training platforms.

Policy and Institutional Disconnect

Existing development and financial policies often do not differentiate social enterprises from conventional businesses. As a result, initiatives aimed at sustainability and regenerative livelihoods operate without targeted policy incentives, formal recognition, or institutional incubation support.

Cultural and Ecological Knowledge Not Embedded in Business Models

Modern entrepreneurship models frequently undervalue indigenous knowledge, heritage skills, and cultural capital. This leads to standardised business approaches that risk eroding traditional systems rather than strengthening them — undermining the region's socio-ecological resilience.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a Structured Social Entrepreneurship & Sustainability Incubation Ecosystem

RATIONALE

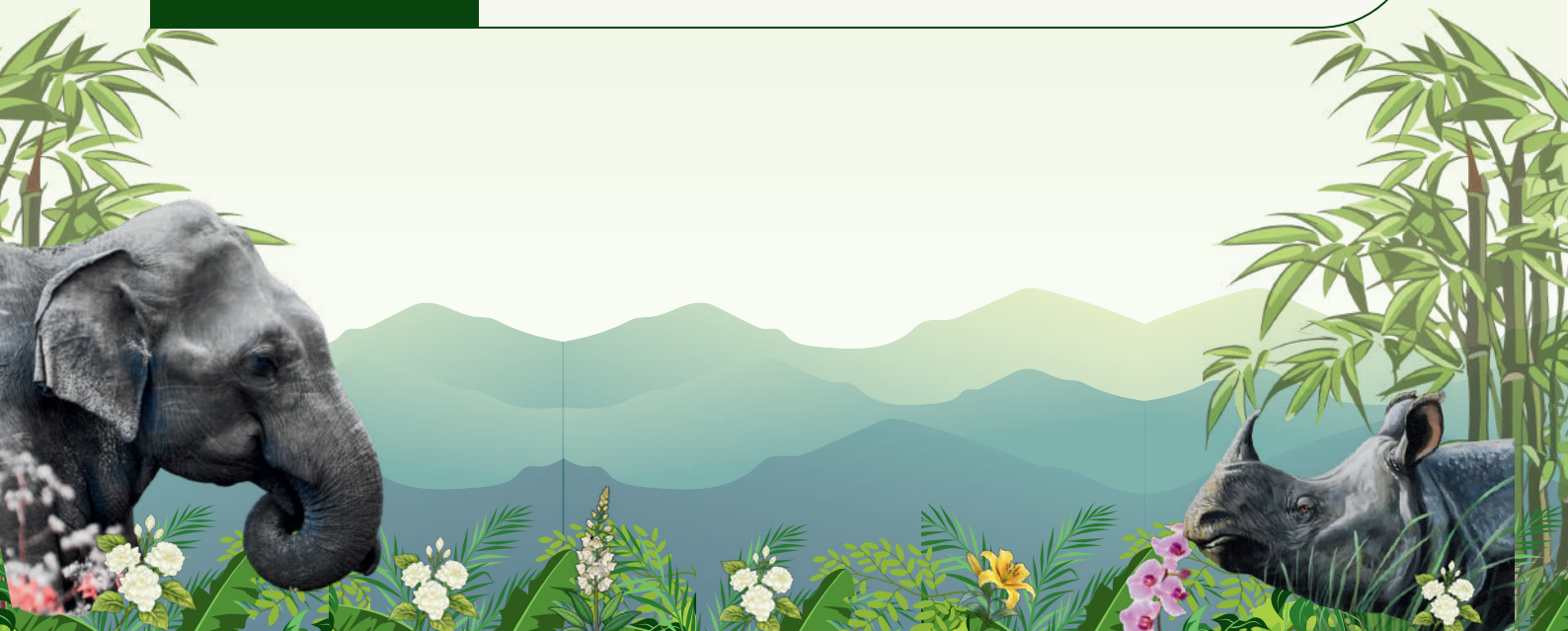
A dedicated institutional ecosystem is essential to nurture region-specific innovation that aligns economic development with environmental stewardship and social equity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create university-anchored incubation centres focusing on sustainability and community-centric enterprises.
- Facilitate mentorship networks linking entrepreneurs with industry leaders, financial institutions, and development practitioners.
- Develop structured training modules on business planning, sustainability standards, legal literacy, digital enablement, and impact assessment.
- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration across business, environmental science, social work, and technology programmes.

IMPLICATIONS

A structured incubation system will formalise pathways for ethical entrepreneurship, reduce risk for early-stage innovators, and embed sustainability principles into enterprise DNA.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Expand Access to Ethical and Patient Capital

RATIONALE

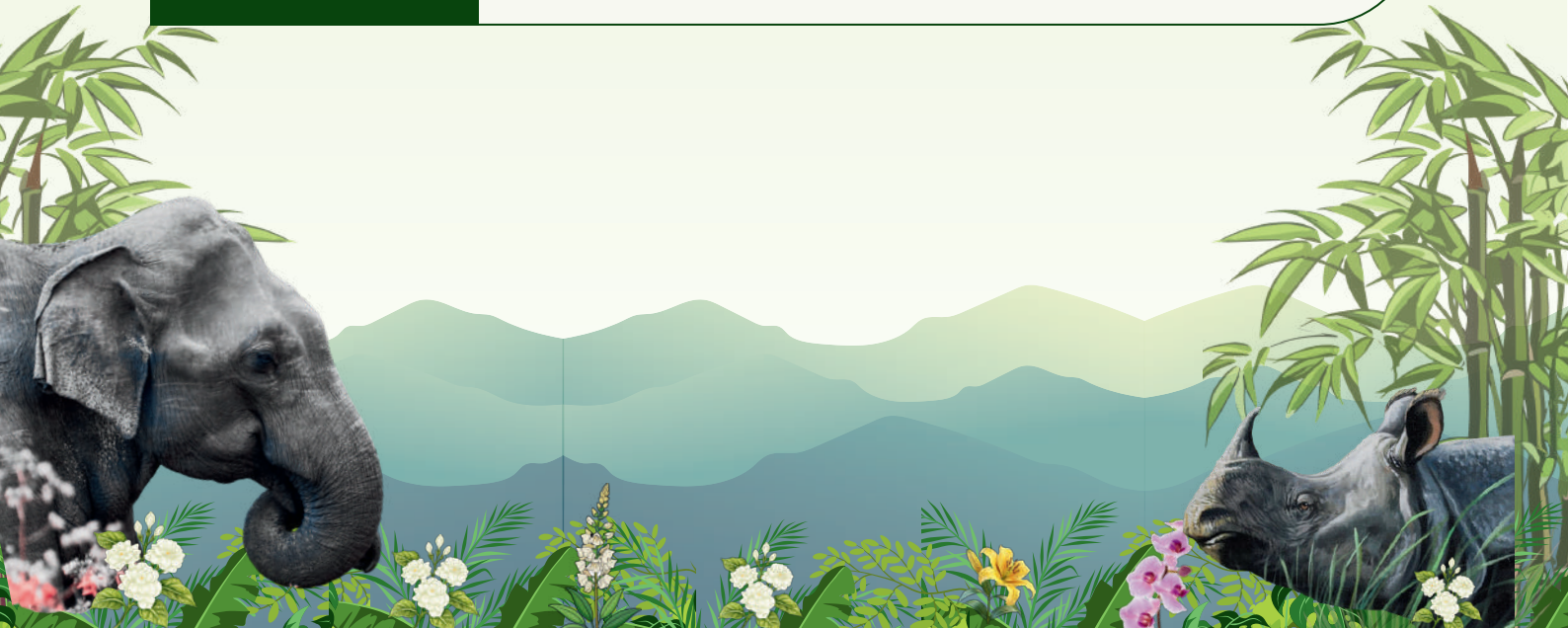
Social enterprises require financial systems that recognise environmental and social value creation alongside financial returns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote blended finance, impact funds, and zero-interest or low-interest community capital pools.
- Develop micro-credit and women-focused financing tailored for grassroots entrepreneurship.
- Incentivise banks and investors to support regenerative enterprises through policy recognition and risk-sharing mechanisms.
- Encourage transparent impact reporting frameworks that demonstrate social and ecological value.

IMPLICATIONS

Improved financial access will enable inclusive participation, reduce vulnerability, and accelerate transition toward regenerative local economies.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Strengthen Market Linkages and Local Value Chains

RATIONALE

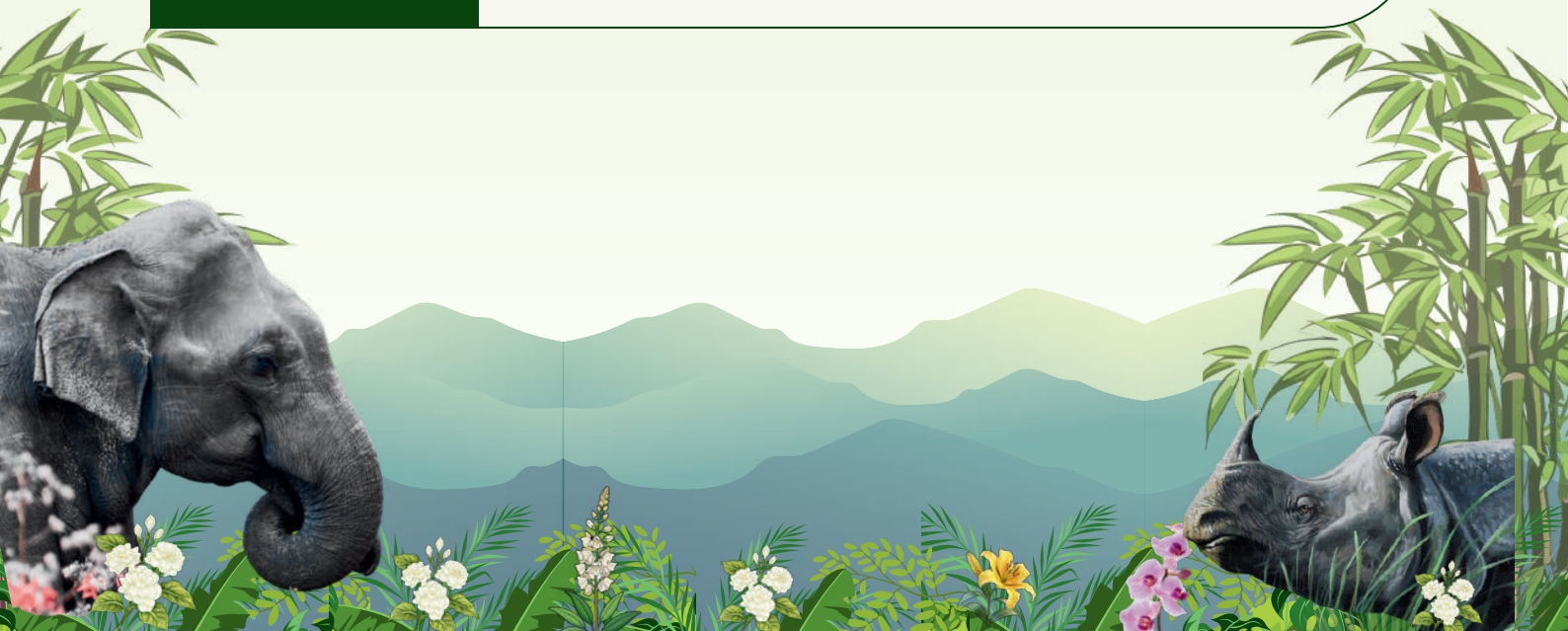
Sustainable enterprises thrive when local producers retain value and access resilient, ethical markets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build strong regional branding platforms celebrating cultural heritage, ecological responsibility, and traceability.
- Support community producer companies, cooperatives, and women-led enterprises.
- Facilitate partnerships with ethical retail platforms, tourism networks, and conscious consumer markets.
- Promote design innovation, quality certification, and storytelling-based marketing.

IMPLICATIONS

Enhanced market ecosystems will increase incomes, preserve cultural identity, and create incentives for sustainable production.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Integrate Indigenous Knowledge and Culture into Enterprise Models

RATIONALE

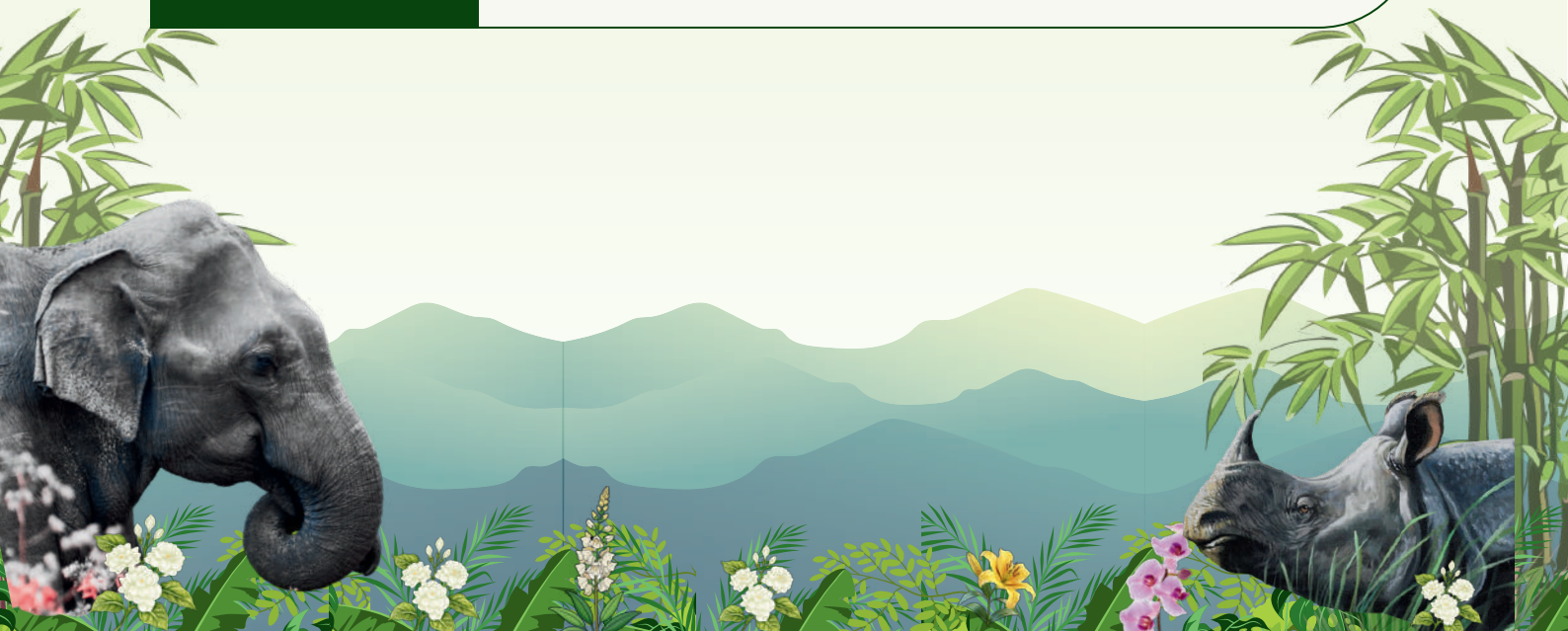
Cultural intelligence and traditional ecological knowledge are critical assets that differentiate the region's enterprises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recognise heritage crafts, agro-ecological practices, and local wisdom as intellectual capital.
- Promote co-creation models where communities retain knowledge ownership.
- Encourage curriculum and research programmes documenting heritage techniques and regenerative systems.
- Ensure enterprises reinforce — rather than extract from — cultural and ecological systems.

IMPLICATIONS

Embedding culture strengthens identity, sustainability, and authenticity of social enterprises.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Develop Youth and Women Leadership Pathways

RATIONALE

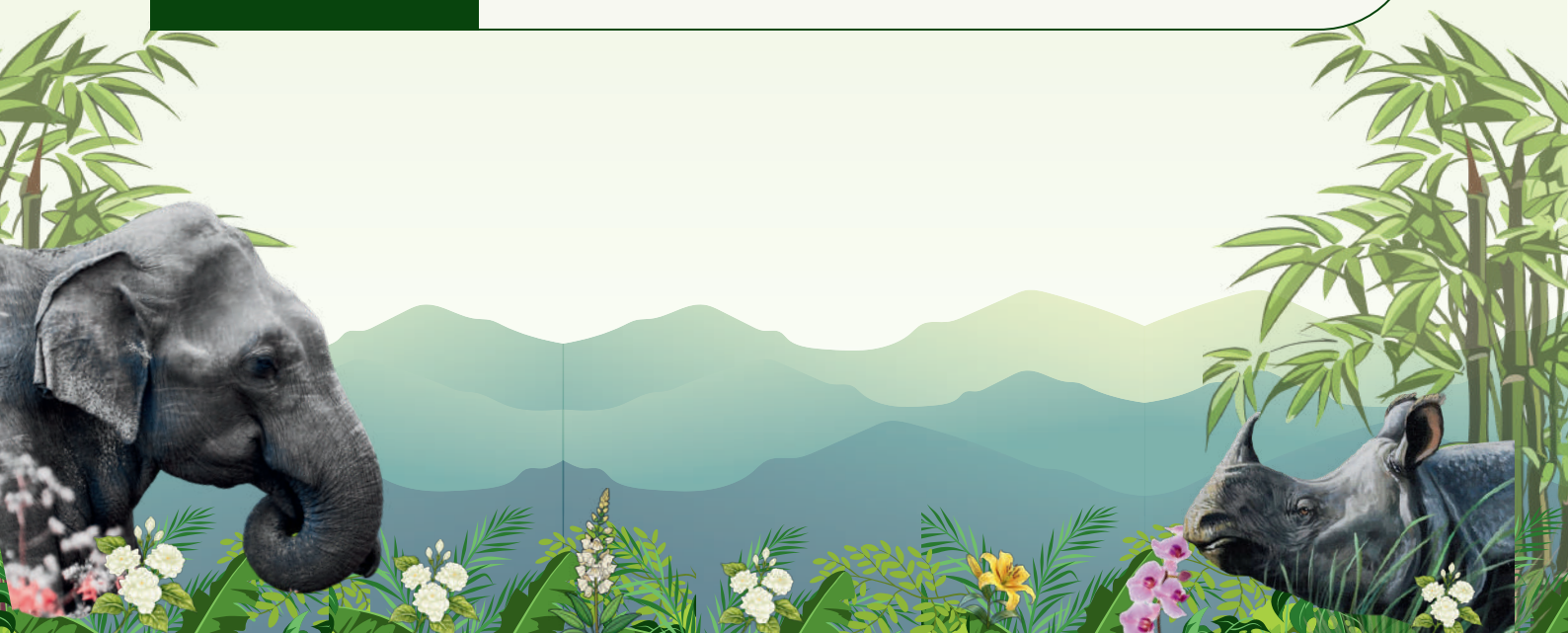
Youth and women hold transformative potential but remain under-represented in leadership and enterprise ownership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create leadership fellowships, scholarships, and training residencies focused on social entrepreneurship.
- Build safe and supportive learning environments for rural and first-generation entrepreneurs.
- Provide exposure visits, mentorship, and peer learning platforms.
- Promote flexible, home-based and cooperative enterprise models for women.

IMPLICATIONS

Enhanced participation builds inclusive, resilient leadership ecosystems and inter-generational continuity.



WAY FORWARD

The forum highlighted that sustainability and social entrepreneurship must evolve as a collaborative regional movement rather than isolated initiatives. Academic institutions, private sector actors, development agencies, and communities must co-create ecosystems that align economic value with environmental ethics and social justice.



SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES

(1 - 3 YEARS)

Create small-scale financing windows for women and grassroots entrepreneurs.

Conduct exposure and skill-building workshops across campuses and rural hubs.

Establish pilot incubation and mentorship programmes in universities.

Initiate market access partnerships for community-based products.



MEDIUM-TERM PRIORITIES

(5 - 10 YEARS)

01

Institutionalise regional social enterprise ecosystems.

02

Integrate sustainability entrepreneurship into academic curricula.

03

Scale regenerative value chains across sectors such as agriculture, crafts, eco-tourism, green services and circular economy models.

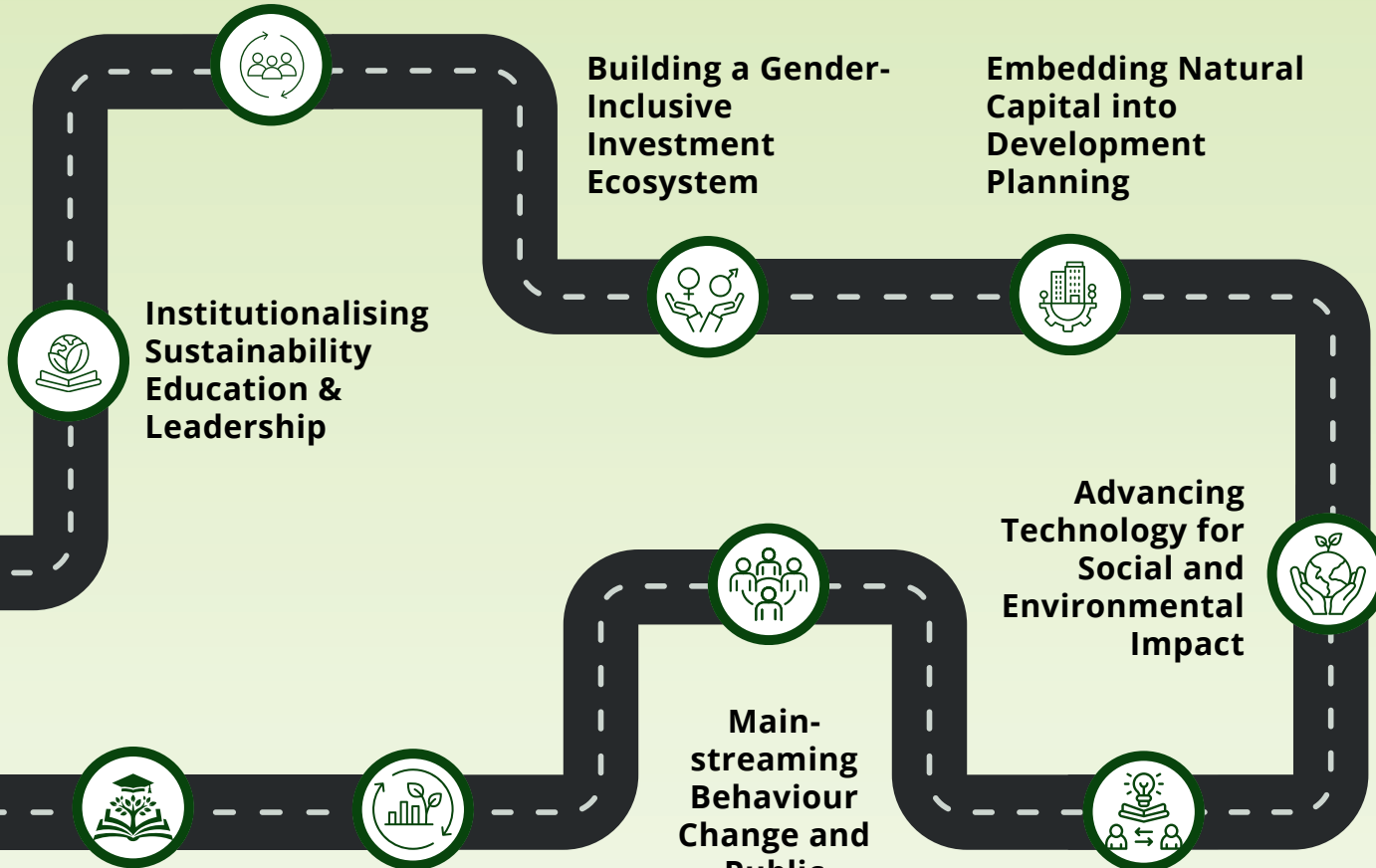
04

Position the Eastern Himalaya as a national hub for ethical and inclusive entrepreneurship.



LONG - TERM PRIORITIES (10 - 20 YEARS)

**Strengthening
Community-Owned
Value Chains**



**Building a Gender-
Inclusive
Investment
Ecosystem**

**Embedding Natural
Capital into
Development
Planning**

**Institutionalising
Sustainability
Education &
Leadership**

**Advancing
Technology for
Social and
Environmental
Impact**

**Main-
streaming
Behaviour
Change and
Public
Engagement**

**Creating a Regional
Knowledge &
Collaboration
Network**

**Transform the
Eastern Himalaya
into a hub for
regenerative
entrepreneurship
driven by women,
youth, and
Indigenous
knowledge.**

**Strengthen
biocultural
economies where
innovation, equity,
and ecosystem
stewardship shape
sustainable growth
for future
generations.**



OUTCOMES FROM PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ASSAM ROYAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY (RGU)

1. Guardians of the Eastern Himalaya Initiative

As a key outcome of the EHNH partnership, Assam Royal Global University (RGU), Balipara Foundation, and the Assam Investment Advisory Society (AIAS) jointly launched the “Guardians of the Eastern Himalaya” initiative. This collaborative platform is dedicated to the protection, regeneration, and sustainable development of the Eastern Himalayan region, with a strong focus on youth leadership and inter-institutional collaboration.

The initiative aims to:

- Represent the voice and aspirations of youth in safeguarding the natural heritage, biodiversity, and cultural landscapes of the Eastern Himalaya.
- Foster collaboration and seamless communication among participating students, schools, universities, and partner institutions to enable meaningful knowledge exchange and actionable outcomes.
- Oversee structured planning and implementation, ensuring that programs, timelines, and activities remain aligned with the initiative’s long-term ecological and socio-economic objectives.
- Provide leadership and mentorship to student participants across partner institutions, enabling smooth execution, collective learning, and sustained engagement in conservation and climate action.
- This initiative positions youth as active stewards of the Eastern Himalaya, bridging academia, policy, and on-ground conservation action.



OUTCOMES FROM PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ASSAM ROYAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY (RGU)

2. Green Economy & Sustainable Investment Pathways

Another significant outcome of the EHNH partnership with RGU is the co-development of a Green Economy and Sustainable Investment framework for the Eastern Himalayan region.

Through this outcome, EHNH and RGU aim to:

- Strengthen academic–industry–policy linkages to promote investments aligned with nature-based solutions, regenerative land use, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, renewable energy, and green infrastructure.
- Build student and faculty capacity to understand green finance, ESG principles, climate-risk-informed investments, and impact-driven business models relevant to fragile mountain ecosystems.
- Create a pipeline of investable green projects emerging from the Eastern Himalaya by connecting local enterprises, community initiatives, and conservation programs with responsible investors and institutions.
- Position RGU and Balipara Foundation as a regional knowledge hub for green economy discourse, research, and innovation, contributing to long-term ecological resilience and inclusive economic growth in Northeast India.

This outcome reinforces the EHNH vision of integrating ecology into the economy, ensuring that development in the Eastern Himalaya is both financially viable and environmentally regenerative.





CONCLUSION

The discussions at Royal Global University reaffirmed that sustainability and social entrepreneurship together offer a powerful pathway for shaping resilient, inclusive, and regenerative futures in the Eastern Himalaya. When entrepreneurship is grounded in ethics, culture, ecological responsibility, and community empowerment, it becomes more than a livelihood strategy but a vehicle for social transformation. The way forward lies in nurturing supportive ecosystems, unlocking equitable finance, strengthening local value chains, and enabling youth and women as leaders of change. By embedding sustainability at the core of enterprise development, the region can demonstrate how economies can grow while restoring nature, preserving identity, and uplifting communities.



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