

People and Nature Fund

- **Overview**

The People and Nature Fund (PNF), is initiated by Keystone Foundation as a funding facility for grassroots groups working on issues of environment protection and livelihoods of vulnerable communities in India. The fund recognises the important role of grassroots initiatives as communities are key implementers of environment and development agendas. They face the brunt of adverse changes and are impacted the most by global policies. Striving to make a change is often most palpable in the field and its relevance to the world is striking.

Keystone Foundation (<http://keystone-foundation.org/>) a not-for-profit registered Trust working with indigenous hill communities in Tamil Nadu since 1994. Keystone works across three states in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) with tribal communities in 150 villages covering a population of 25,000 people. The program areas include work on livelihood, conservation, environmental governance and special initiatives for indigenous people, addressing culture, health and nutrition. Keystone has also started work on water resources covering wetlands, springs and issues related to waste and sanitation.

In the past few years, Keystone has incubated and launched three new institutions, which are closely linked and work together:

- Last Forest Enterprises Private Limited (<http://lastforest.in/>): A marketing company that procures, value adds markets through our network of Green Shops and other outlets in India. It follows fair trade, organic and slow food principles
- Aadhimalai Pazhangudiniyar Produce Company Ltd. (<http://aadhimalai.in/>): This is the first tribal owned Producer Company, consisting of 1609 tribal farmers and gatherers. It is owned, led, and managed by tribal people from the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. It has one unit in Hasanur, Erode district and 5 other units in Nilgiris and Coimbatore districts of Tamil Nadu.
- Nilgiri Natural History Society (<http://nnhs.in/>): This is an outreach society geared towards generating awareness among youth, tourists, and citizens on the importance of natural history. It brings out a half-yearly journal, conducts programmes for schools and has a membership of over 200 citizens.

Keystone Foundation's theory of change has been that the issues of natural resources and rural development are interlinked and are best addressed through eco-development initiatives amongst indigenous people in India's mountainous and adjoining regions. The approach is of addressing the challenges of conservation, livelihoods and enterprise development through appropriate-knowledge and action, technologies, socio-economic innovations and institutions, thereby ensuring the well-being of communities as well as the environment.

Keystone has established fruitful working relationships and platforms for shared learning with various Indian authorities, such as the State Forest Departments of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Chhattisgarh, with NABARD and TNPVP – the livelihood programme in Tamil Nadu.

Keystone's latest knowledge partner is Cornell University, which collaborates on the Nilgiris Field Learning Centre (NFLC). This programme started in 2015 with a full 15 weeks in the spring semester where six undergraduate students from Cornell and a corresponding number of adivasi youth from the



Nilgiris together undertake a transformative educative experience. This includes theory, practice, observations, indigenous and traditional knowledge about land rights, health, community wellness, biodiversity, water, waste, hill ecosystems, governance in the district and anthropological aspects.

Keystone is a founder member of the NTFP-EP, Asia (<http://ntfp.org/>), a collaborative network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations in South and Southeast Asia, and is member of IUCN, the World Conservation Congress.

One of the key partners in many of Keystone's endeavours has been Both ENDS (<http://www.bothends.org/en/>), an environment and development organization based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, with over 25 years' history of working with civil society organizations in India and other Southern countries. Both ENDS has amongst others been involved in developing an Indo-Dutch Environmental NGO Fund within the framework of formal Dutch-Indian bilateral collaboration, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC, GoI).

- **The Backdrop**

India

India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. With a population of 1.3 billion¹ this challenge can only be met by fast expansion of infrastructure, growth in energy and thereby industrial production. The nation is at crossroads if one considers that energy production falls short of keeping pace with India's GDP growth aspirations and burgeoning urban-industrial needs for power. The new government continues efforts made by the previous government to adjust social and environmental safeguards. Safeguards which are perceived as hindering economic development, namely, Forest Rights Act (FRA) and the legally enshrined powers of (tribal) village councils (Gram Sabha) under Panchayat Extension of Scheduled Areas (PESA). The government pursues fast track environmental clearances, especially for projects which are supposed to be of national interest – developments which often take place in forested-tribal areas.

India has a robust framework- of social-environmental legislation, which stipulate, for example that 33% of India's land mass should remain under forest cover. Progressive pieces of legislation and jurisprudence concerning the rights of the tribal population – such as the PESA and FRA vest far reaching powers with village communities and, in theory, designate much of these tribal-forested areas as off-limit to mining and other forms of large scale development.

Despite these laws, there are issues of violations and poor. Between 2011 and 2015, ~81,207 hectares of forests have been diverted for other purposes². Often, this has impacted of tribal access to forests – to water, non-timber forest produce (NTFP), wild foods, sacred spaces, and ancestral domains. Most of the areas see large scale migration of these people for seasonal or permanent employment and the old rhythms of tribal life are disturbed. This causes an erosion of their traditions, knowledge and infuses a mainstream value system in a largely egalitarian society. Women suffer the brunt of this situation, being deprived of their right to food, water and safe environment. Their specific roles in managing land, homes and families, is made more difficult. Those who migrate, have to face new

¹ <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/india-population/> on 17.03.2016

² <http://www.cseindia.org/content/ministry-environment-and-forests-diverting-forestland-development-projects-much-faster-rate->

³ <http://www.greenclearancewatch.org/>



situations and sometimes unsafe environments in mining areas, large towns or as agricultural labourers⁴.

Today, India has large problems with malnutrition and stunting in the population. A survey conducted by the ministry of women and child development in 2013-14, found 29.4 per cent of children (aged less than three years) to be underweight (low in weight for their age), while 15 per cent were wasted (low weight for their height) and 38.7 per cent were stunted (low in height for age)⁵. A myriad of unsustainable policies and schemes have resulted in this situation, overlaid with issues related to migration and lack of jobs.

In some areas, due to long term neglect, Maoism has come to stay. These largely tribal and forest areas, face stress due to extremist and insurgent activities on one side and the huge security force on the other. The Government has created a special wing for Left Wing Extremism to address the situation⁶. In the past years, the strife is getting worse and all attempts to stand for innocent tribal people have been squashed⁷. Bastar is a prime example of this situation. Some partners are working in this region with communities and governments, especially the Forest Department, to address the agenda of conservation and local livelihoods.

According to the 2011 census, the tribal population in India is about 8.6 % of the total 1.2 billion⁸ i.e. whopping 0.104 billion. , What are choices that can be put forth to them? There are many examples of sustainable development across the country⁹, of efforts being supported by NGOs to build local models of social action, with support to traditional knowledge and practice, indigenous foods, forest protection and monitoring, sustainable harvesting of forest produce, enterprise development, etc. Building young leaders amongst them, enabling the community to withstand the powerful pace of the growth and vested interests is important by the rule of law. Huge capacity building measures are required to take these laws to the community, so that they can stand for their rights and take informed decisions.

Simultaneous to this strife, is the overall loss of biodiversity, extinction of species and reduction in integrated ecosystems. With water sources reducing and an erratic rainfall pattern all life forms are under stress. A study by ATREE (<http://www.atree.org/>) shows the extent of forest degradation due to the 2 degree raise in temperature due to climate change. Environment defenders have made a lot of efforts to promote conservation and prevent biodiversity loss. There are heartening examples of how local communities have taken part in these measures. The recent phenomena across India, is the increase in negative human-wildlife interactions. With their habitat destroyed, animals find fodder and water in agriculture or urban areas. The authorities seek guidance about what can be done to resolve the situation.

In some places measures taken to declare protected areas, tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries has led to the rights of tribal people being violated. Forced eviction, rehabilitation packages have largely failed while creating core and buffer zones. Strong eco-development measures have to be put in place or resettlement and rehabilitation efforts strengthened to achieve harmony.

⁴ www.indianet.nl/pdf/MiningAndItsEffectsOnChildren.pdf

⁵ <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/indias-malnutrition-shame/>

⁶ http://mha.nic.in/naxal_new

⁷ <http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article4598.html>

⁸ <http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/indiaatglance.html>

⁹ http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2385570



About People and Nature Fund

Since about 10 years now, Keystone Foundation has been co-ordinating the Non Timber Forest Produce Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) in India. This is an Asia wide network of NGOs and community groups that are working with indigenous people and forests ([www. ntfp.org](http://www.ntfp.org)). In India, the network is spread across the country in different eco-regions, where indigenous people are present.

From 2010 to 2015, Keystone also co-ordinated the Ecosystem Alliance programme in India (<http://www.ecosystem-alliance.org/countries/india>). This further broadened the approach and added several other issues including extractive industries, legal support and action, wildlife area management, creation of eco-sensitive areas and advocacy. Members of this network have made significant impact in lobbying for better recognition of ecological systems, forest based livelihoods, lobbying for local self-governance through implementation of PESA; implementation of the Forest Rights Act, which for the first time gives lands rights to indigenous people, and many more.

Since 2014, Keystone also co-ordinates the Gender programme that works with grassroots' initiatives across India to support the position of women in relation to food, water and safe environment. This again can be ensured through access to land through FRA, and lobby against improper working conditions in mines, pollution and forced eviction. The strengthening of the position of adolescent girls and women in different situations is being addressed through grassroots' support.

Through all these experiences, Keystone has realised that it is important to integrate local action, advocacy and conservation efforts. Dialogues and action are strengthened with different issues coming together on a single platform, as there is strength in unity. Keeping the priorities of human well fare, environment justice and social action is of prime importance for the well-being of the community and the environment. This is the vision behind the PNF.

The PNF supports initiatives that enable dialogue, direct activities, improved knowledge and skills and innovation. The fund supports credible, experienced groups and individuals in India working on environment protection and peoples' well-being and livelihoods.

The strategy will be to support several small and medium groups in a cluster, with an eco-system alliance approach. This recognises the integrity of ecological regions and joins people together under a common agenda umbrella. This has seen to have significant impacts in dialogue and advocacy. Special efforts will be made to support women-led and/or women-based projects. PNF will support young community leaders with capacity building and learning agenda. PNF will work to improve strategic action amongst CSOs by backstopping, building capacities towards improved dialogue and advocacy. Practical, hands-on and in-field trainings will be given priority. Simultaneously, it will support practical initiatives, innovative interventions, action research and restoration programmes which will provide alternatives and function as models of inspiration for policy makers.

Areas of work that the PNF supports are biodiversity conservation, community action and knowledge, land tenure, access to food, water and healthy environment, village based enterprises, crafts and traditional skills. Special focus will be on tribal empowerment to address the needs of indigenous communities across India, as they are most caught up in the development race, often losing their access to land and forests and facing issues related to rehabilitation, migration, poor health and nutrition. Amongst these, women are more negatively impacted and also crucial role players. This fund will support initiatives which give women a central focus.



Themes we have worked with in the past are:

- *Conservation of Natural Resources*
- *Tribal Empowerment*
- *Environmental Justice*
- *Women Empowerment*
- *Health and Nutrition*
- *Traditional Knowledge*
- *Culture*
- *Leadership & Governance*
- *Dialogue for Policy Change (including regional themes/concerns)*

- **Eligibility**

The People and Nature Fund would support most types of non-governmental organisations that can provide evidence of their non-governmental status or charitable purpose. Priority will be given to socio-environmental groups with an agenda to promote gender balance.

In general, the People and Nature Fund will support

- *Community-based organisations*
- *Womens' Collectives*
- *Civil society collectives*
- *Non-governmental organisations (Trust or Societies)*
- *Not for profit organisations*
- *Para legal groups/individuals*
- *Independent researchers*
- *Student scholarship, fellowships*
- *Barefoot experts in all fields*
- *Community managed micro-enterprise Groups*
- *Study Grants (for studies linked to grassroots action & specific CBOs)*

- **Governance and Administration**

The fund has been initiated with some reserves of Keystone Foundation. This will be augmented with projects from different agencies. These will include national donors, Indian business CSRs, international and individual donors. Keystone will actively seek for donations to keep this fund alive.

In the new set-up, a governing board decides on grants to be made. Grants are disbursed once a year, whilst the Opportunity Facility can act upon needs and chances as they arise. The Opportunity Facility, a flexible response mechanism, can be accessed any time in response to urgent needs and opportunities. Where opportunities and needs arise, special efforts will be made (through the Opportunity Facility) to address the needs of women and indigenous communities across India.

A small administrative unit, overseen by Keystone's controller, is dedicated to administering the Fund. A grant making Committee which formally approves. A Fund Manager assisted by one of Keystone's directors, who prepares final proposals for submission to the grant making Committee. A network of advisors/experts who scout, visit, and advise on grant making.



The partners will be informed about the calls for proposal and information on the website will also be available and they can submit proposals. PNF will maintain a database of grassroots' organisations, it will invest in scouting for good groups performing effectively in the field.

- **Policies**

- PNF does not support buildings, land purchases or capital improvements.
- PNF will take a case by case approach towards emergencies and humanitarian aid.
- PNF will not support religious and political activities

- **Grant Amount**

Funds are categorised as follows:

1. Micro Grants between INR 100,000 to 500,000
2. Small Grants between INR 500,000 to 1,000,000
3. Large Grants between INR 1,000,000 to 2,000,000
4. Research Grants (for research linked to grassroots action & specific CBOs)
5. Student Fellowships – project-based
6. Opportunity Facility

- **Timeline**

To be announced

- **Currently Available Grants**

- 1. Community Empowerment Support for Indian NGOs*

The thrust of work focus on capacity building, awareness raising and policy dialogue concerning natural resources, good governance, and constitutional provisions in scheduled/tribal areas and important laws such as FRA and PESA. This includes training of local community elected representatives and involves hands-on activities in the field with very tangible immediate and positive results such as forest and wetlands restoration and livelihood projects. There will be a focus on education and health, nutritional surveys, status of safe drinking water for local communities and remedial and preventive action - especially of women and children in tribal and other backwards areas. The groups will also engage in policy advocacy and help enforce the laws relevant for these areas.

Note: Partners have already been selected for this grant



2. *Green Alliance for Gender Action (GAGA)*

GAGA has a vision of: strengthening and unifying the women's rights and environmental justice agendas.

The Green Alliance for Gender Action (GAGA) brings together the Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM), Both ENDS and Mama Cash, with the World Resource Institute (WRI) as strategic partner. With FCAM, a Central American grassroots fund based in Nicaragua with extensive experience in supporting women's groups as lead agent, GAGA sets out to strengthen and unify the capabilities of grassroots groups to dialogue and advocate with and for women to claim their access to water, food security and a clean, healthy and safe environment.

GAGA has understood the need to strengthen the capacities of grassroots groups and movements, who are experts on their contexts, the problems they are facing, and options for improving their situations but who are often ignored and marginalised in decision making processes about managing natural resources. It is a strong grassroots movement that can lobby for change that meets the needs of the poorest and most marginalised people, and act as a constituency that can call upon decision makers to ensure policy changes are implemented. Unlike other professional NGOs, who mainly operate internationally on the interface between women and environment, GAGA will work with both national and grassroots groups to bridge the gap between local and international lobby and advocacy (L&A).

Note: Grant Opening: May/June 2016

- **People and Nature Fund Office**

The People and Nature Fund is maintained at Keystone Foundation, Keystone Centre, P.B. No.35, Groves Hill Road, Kotagiri 643217, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu. Phone: +91-4266-272277, 272977

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Letter Of Enquiry