



TWENTY SEVENTH
ANNUAL REPORT
2020-21





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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CBO** - Community Based Organisation
- CSOs** - Civil Society Organisations
- CHWs** - Community Health Workers
- FRA** - Forest Rights Act
- IFR** - Individual Forest Rights
- IIFM** - Indian Institute of Forest Management
- ICDS** - Integrated Child Development Scheme
- MoUs** - Memorandum of Understanding
- MNREGA** - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- NABARD** - National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
- NBR** - Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve
- NTFP** - Non-Timber Forest Produce
- NTFP-EP** - Non-Timber Forest Produce Exchange Programme
- NGO** - Non Governmental Organisation
- NNP** - Narasimhanaickenpalayam
- PNF** - People and Nature Fund
- PNC** - People and Nature Centre
- PNP** - Perinaickenpalayam
- RTI** - Right to Information
- ULBs** - Urban Local Bodies
- WASH** - Water Sanitation and Hygiene



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A consolidated income and expenditures for the past financial year covering all projects.

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OUR PEOPLE

We are a group of people from different walks of life, with varied interests, distinctive social backgrounds and assorted school of thoughts.



FOREWORD

APRIL 2020 - MARCH 2021

RIDING THE COVID WAVE

For a considerable amount of time now, the Nilgiris District has remained a red zone during the first Covid wave which has thus far continued unabated. Many people we know have sadly lost their lives and this is becoming more and more common. Most if not all of us have lost a friend, a relative, or someone from our neighbourhood. The Covid virus has attached itself to the ecology of this place. The close-knit settlements, the social culture and the vaccine hesitancy are challenges that we face as we gradually ride this wave. However, since April 2020, Keystone has been closely working with the District Administration on tackling the pandemic in the District.

Pictures of migrants walking last year have etched our memories. Legal and regulatory changes have limited the role of NGOs and influenced our activities. Despite all this, our work endures on a war footing. Our team has creatively adapted to the new remote work reality. Fieldwork has taken place as far as is reasonably practicable. Importantly, our community stewards across programmes have showcased leadership qualities to manage work on the ground. Through this, new systems of work have emerged making the best of things.

On another note - we have two new Directors! Dr. Anita Varghese heads the Biodiversity group constituted by - Biodiversity Management & Restoration, Field Courses & Research, and

Climate Change and Human-Wildlife Interactions components. And Dr. Jyotsna Krishnakumar heads the Community Wellbeing group constituted by - Traditional Livelihoods, Land Rights, Health & Wellness and Water & Sanitation components. However, looking back at the year gone, each of our thematic groups has covered ground in these tough and unforeseeable circumstances:

The Biodiversity Management & Ecorestoration team has established a wetlands park, diversified urban wildlife monitoring, devised a virtual field course, and has spent time interpreting data for publications and other writings. The Community Wellbeing in the past year has developed water security plans while improving sanitation facilities, strengthened livelihood through millet and paddy revival, enhanced advocacy approaches for communities and empowered community health workers. The Organisation Development team has persistently mobilised funds, developed strategies for crisis management, experimented with the Slow Food Restaurant along with Aadhimalai and Indcoserve, dealt with audit challenges and implications - while paying heed to the other essential administrative duties.

The Network team - continued to support our network partners through the Using Diversity

project while expanding the scope through NTFP-EP India. The People & Nature Centre - have organized an archive exhibition centre on campus; set up a community foundation to revive indigenous music, and explored mountain to ocean partnerships. Stories of courage and teamwork have weaved organically throughout this year. Zoom meetings have become part of life. Wearing masks has become an essential add-on to our outfits. Social distancing and hand washing have become instinctive habits.

As I write this, I am hopeful that this is going to end. We have lived with it and to an extent know how this behaves. Our communities and partners - all have become stronger together and more focused to meet these challenges with alacrity, vision, fortitude and confidence.

Keystone Foundation is lucky to have an excellent team - experienced, confident, adaptive and rearing to go. We have the old guard, new ones who have joined and some who are in their finding their niche. Each of them has excelled during this year under duress and difficult situations - with laughter and élan.

Pratim Roy
Founder Director

WE THANK OUR DONORS

Both Ends; Conservation International; Deutsche Welthungerhilfe; Eine Welt; Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM); Global Fund for Community Foundations; Global Green Grants Fund; Global Wildlife Conservation; Misereor; Non-Timber Forest Produce - Exchange Programme; Svalorna - India Bangladesh; Dhaatri Trust; Indian Institute for Human Settlements; Axis Bank Foundation; Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives; HCL Foundation; Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies; United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO); Synchronoss Technologies India Pvt Ltd; Community Radio Association; United Way of Bengaluru; The Habitat Trust and Wipro Foundation. We would also like to thank our Board of Trustees, Advisors, individuals and wellwishers for their continued support and critical guidance.

BIODIVERSITY

COMPONENTS

APICULTURE

To promote apiculture as a sustainable livelihood for local farmers and individuals. This we envisage will potentially have a positive effect on agriculture, the wellbeing of native honey bees and the environment as a whole.

BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & RESTORATION

We are working towards improving and promoting native biodiversity. Removal of invasive plants, planting and propagating native trees, grasses and shrubs.

CLIMATE CHANGE

We aim to inform and educate local communities on key concepts associated with climate change and assess regional indicators of climate change that could help tailor local adaptation measures for communities in the NBR.

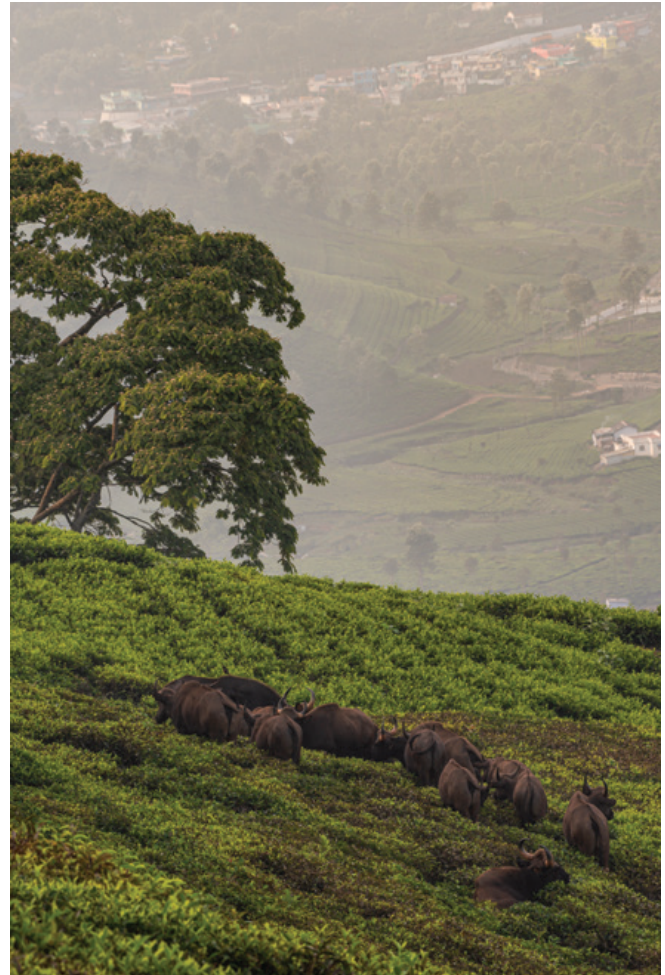
FIELD COURSES AND RESEARCH

Provide students the opportunity to work in a setting to develop and demonstrate skills, integrate the theories and practices learned in and out of the classroom and to better understand local communities & resources.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Conserving the rare habitats of the Western Ghats is imperative to sustain the distinct biodiversity comprising plants, animals, and insects found here. Through multiple approaches and integrated components - the programme aims to improve the health of the whole ecosystem while addressing other issues that arise due to habitat degradation.

Our fundamental approaches include building evidence through research for achieving efficacy in implementation, engage and involve stakeholders for an appropriate action plan, build local capacities for success efforts, and disseminate learnings with citizens, school children and youth to foster responsible action.



Though each component under the programme has a specific focus, they work in a manner that complements and underpins each other. Beekeeping activities reinforce the importance of native plants and efficient use of natural resources complimenting the biodiversity management and restoration interventions that are carried out to improve natural habitats. This in turn ensures equal access to resources for wildlife and communities - a crucial mitigation measure to reduce human-wildlife interactions. On the other end, communities are involved in ecological monitoring thus enabling them with adequate scientific and technical knowledge that strengthens community-based management. These approaches and learnings are developed into modules for students to experience through field courses and action research.

Essentially, as a result of these concerted actions, the programme envisages to generate long-term solutions that have a positive outcome for biodiversity that benefits all species.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR 2020 -21

The lockdown of March 2020 saw us quickly redoing our strategies and redesigning our work to adjust to the times. The complete lockdown in April – May gave us time to look at our data and publications that were long pending. The team met once a week to analyse data, refine protocols and discuss new insights about the work. A manuscript about the Gaur monitoring work was prepared and an extensive protocol for wildlife monitoring was formulated. Locally based field teams took more leadership and continued the onsite monitoring work. Only one aspect of our work that could not take place was the outreach and summer camps that we usually conduct.

This too quickly turned around when we started a conservation education program through virtual platforms. We started first with the children of the staff. One memory that we will never forget is the fatigue in the eyes of the children since they were bombarded with online modules! One young person told us very frankly that he would much rather be outside playing cricket – that is when we decided we should not burden the children further. We then started to print out the activities and send copies home via the parents. This was well received and children started to ask for more puzzles, stories, and other worksheets.

A request in June to hold a summer internship ‘virtually’ from Azim Premji University left us all a bit skeptical – Virtual Field Course sounded like a proper oxymoron. We gave it our best shot and finally, all of us felt it was not such a bad thing after all. These students were an extremely interested group and that helped to keep us who were organizing the course equally keen. Since then we have offered a two-week internship to IIFM students and the Wipro Earthians.

Our field activities with the Barefoot ecologists, Wildlife stewards, and Nursery assistants continue as part of the field implementation. A few more methods were added to the wildlife monitoring to include recording stories of interactions with wildlife, tracking roadkills, focal observations and foot transects. The restoration activities were increased with wetland restoration in the factory sites of the Indcoserve Tea Cooperative especially at the Kattabettu tea factory. The first wetland park was inaugurated in February 2021 under the leadership of Supriya Sahu IAS, Principal Secretary, CEO - Indcoserve & District Monitoring Officer - Nilgiris, and by Dr. G R Chintala, Chairman, NABARD.

The Apiculture program is taking new directions and making inroads in newer areas. Work with beekeepers and honey hunters continues to be strengthened. During the pandemic times, local communities have come forward to take up beekeeping as it assures an income from their lands. This year saw us experimenting with bee fences to keep elephants at bay. Around 15 active bee boxes have been placed around the farm in Bikkapathymund to deter the elephant and even as we write this report it seems to be effective.

Finally, the pandemic has left a larger consciousness on the need to preserve and protect biodiversity and the virus has helped us get this message across better than we thought. The need for self-sustaining economies and those migrating to the cities for a livelihood is not sustainable has also hit home. The need for green jobs – whether it be as barefoot ecologists, beekeepers, food growers, native plant growers – has never been more important.



WILDLIFE MONITORING

- 31 sites are monitored across two regions - Kotagiri & Aracode. wildlife movements, behavioral patterns and interaction points etc.
- 2 transects spanning 35 kilometers each are carried out once week to collect road kill data.
- 4 transects spanning one kilometer each are carried out once week to observe local biodiversity along with citizens groups.



ECO RESTORATION

- 28 acres of land have been planted with native species. Kodanad (25 acres) and Kannerimukku (3 acres).
- 21,729 saplings of trees and grasses are in stock at our nurseries.
- Communities, local panchayat and Forest Department were involved in our restoration efforts in 2020-21.



OUTREACH

- 32 radio programmes on wildlife.
- 21 wildlife rescue; Snake (16), Sloth Bear (3) and Gaur (2).
- 8 meetings / events with communities & school children.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

COMPONENTS

TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

Reaches out to small and marginal indigenous farmers to achieve food security along with income security. This is being effectuated by extending support for sustainable agriculture and facilitating market linkages.

GOVERNANCE

This component focuses on improving communities' decision-making capacity by strengthening awareness of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and facilitating the claims for various rights under the FRA.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

The intention of our work on preventive health care is to achieve better outcomes for physical & mental wellness. Our interventions include – building awareness on gender-inclusive aspects of health, facilitating access to locally available health facilities or resources and crucially - strengthening local capacities through training of Community Health Workers CHW.

WATER & SANITATION

This component addresses questions related to water resource management in the Nilgiris and strives to ensure safe & sustainable water for humans and environmental needs.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Rapid changes and external influences have led to significant social-cultural losses that have undermined true well-being, which is inherent in the cultural practices of indigenous communities.

Community Wellbeing (CWB), a broad scope programme, embodies varied elements essential to improve the quality of life in a community. It focuses strongly on the linkages of people's wellbeing to their culture and environment.

Beyond improving living conditions, the programme enables communities to restore control of their own development trajectory instead of adhering to frameworks that are contrary to the local approaches and systems.

Some of the fundamental features of the programme are - capacitating communities to govern their own land and forests, fostering traditional livelihood practices, emphasizing culturally relevant nutritional diet practices and resolving inadequate access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructures.

Recipients of the programme's interventions are mainly indigenous communities located in the NBR. However, some projects within the programme extend support to urban marginalized communities in two town areas - Kotgiri and Coimbatore. Building resilience and adaptive capacity within communities is an intrinsic thread of CWB interventions on the ground, thus enabling them to cope and adapt over the long term - when exposed to sudden environmental stressors; negative health outcomes; shrinking access to resources, and livelihood opportunities.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR 2020 -21

As part of our interventions focusing on improving the wellbeing of the communities, we work as an interdisciplinary team and closely collaborate on meeting our project goals, outcomes, and strategic program development. We engage with the local indigenous communities, government organisations and research institutes/universities towards initiating, implementing, evaluating and strengthening program activities. The last year has been particularly challenging due to the pandemic. It limited our scope to directly interact with the community members, facilitate change knowledge on sustainable farming practices, including the preparation of organic bio-inputs and seed collection practices. Simultaneously, our work on health focused on improving health access, nutritional security and social entitlements for households, with a particular focus on women and adolescent girls. The strong link between our livelihood intervention and health intervention is also obvious here.

We also invested a significant amount of time in identifying and training close to 20 CHWs who play the essential role of linking and facilitating the larger programmatic goals of health and wellness, and its practical outcomes on the ground. The community health programme and the outcome it and/or influence ideas. Yet, the pandemic also offered us the opportunity to adapt, adopt and re-strengthen strategies to facilitate change. Through



our livelihood programme we work closely with indigenous and non-indigenous farmers, to revive farmlands in the NBR. This is particularly significant not only for its traditional relevance as an important source of nutrition to indigenous communities but also for its value as a climate resilient crop. Through our efforts on agriculture-based livelihoods, we were also able to revive traditional envisages relies deeply on the CHWs, who serve as frontline health workers. Last but not the least, serving a valuable connecting link between indigenous livelihood, health and land security, is our programme on governance. This year much of our efforts on governance were particularly focused on advocacy. We used multiple approaches and tools that included- RTI, primary data collected from the ground, direct petitions to the local government officials, use of legal aid, and seek solidarity through joining State and National coalitions, all to expedite the implementation of the FRA while building community capacities to govern and manage their forest land, and its resources.

- 5000 households are covered under the programme. This involves indigenous and non-indigenous communities across nine working regions.

- 3500 indigenous household across seven working regions - Aracode, Konavakarai, Hasanur, Pillur, Sigur, Wayanad and Nilambur.

- 1500 non - indigenous households across two working regions - Kotagiri and Coimbatore District are involved. Water and Sanitation are the key programmes interventions.

- 1300 acres of millet farms were revived across five indigenous regions - Aracode, Konavakarai, Hasanur, Sigur and Pillur .

- 750 acres of paddy lands were revived across one region - Wayanad.

- 3000 households/individuals received social entitlements across four regions - Aracode, Sigur, Pillur, Konavakarai.

7 water security plans were initiated across three areas. Kotagiri (two), Kokkalthorai (one) and Aracode (four).

4 compost pits were built for waste segregation. Bangalapadigai, Garikiyoor and Maligopayoor and Gumaramudi

7 community toilets were renovated at Samaigoodal, Kandiseddu, Gumaramudi and Maligoppai.

NETWORKS

COMPONENTS

USING DIVERSITY

The purpose of the project is to enable/support food sovereignty, traditional knowledge and local action amongst marginalised communities in India.

NTFP-EP INDIA

To provide technical and strategic assistance to community-based organisations (CBOs) and their support groups on legal aspects, advocacy, resource management, marketing and other related concerns.

PEOPLE & NATURE FUND

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 the key implementers of environment and development agendas.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Our Networks programme collaborates with grassroots organisations/groups across India

working on issues of environmental protection and livelihoods of vulnerable communities. By lending support to grassroots efforts, we address critical hurdles that communities face while pursuing self-governance, traditional resource management, and access & tenure of land/ forests.

Our partner organisations are mainly spread out across Western India, Central India, Karnataka, North East and the Western & Eastern Ghats. While we act as a facilitating agency - engagement, action and implementation are carried out by our partners. Formerly, grants and fellowships had been the standard way of allocation to partner organisations. Currently, our focus is directed towards strengthening affiliations. NTFP-EP India is one such addition to our networking endeavor. Instituted as a Section 8 company, ie (not for profit) - it functions in a manner that allows member partners to work in tandem while developing skills, conducting training and building local capacity in their respective regions.

Moreover, the network acts as a space for establishing a suitable legal environment, besides facilitating the exchange of information, experience, and expertise between NGOs, CBOs, communities and other stakeholders in sustainable forest management and particularly non-timber forest produce development.



USING DIVERSITY

Usually, this project entails traveling to meet up with partner organisations and conducting trainings along with community fellows in their fields and forests. This led to a comprehensive understanding of the needs and challenges that the Adivasi communities face with regard to local and endemic crops.

However, last year, the situation was precarious to carry out large community gatherings, seed diversity, or tuber festivals which usually facilitate - exchange of traditional knowledge pertaining to crop diversity and farming systems among the Adivasis.

Though there were few festivals on uncultivated foods during the second half of the year, they were largely held within each locale. In spite of several impediments during the pandemic, communities took up activities such as setting up nurseries, initiating steps to establish local seed banks and reviving traditional practices rather than relying on rations or the local market.

The impact was visible on the ground as we approached 2021. Seed banks are flourishing with a variety of traditional seeds, cutting off the necessity to buy hybrid seeds. Kitchen gardens have become a common space in households. Most importantly, communities have taken the onus of being forbearers of their indigenous seeds as their forefathers did.

Better insights into the project's work and the Adivasi communities involved can be found in the area-wise sections, mainly, Kerala and Central India. They have several mentions about the numerous seed banks that have been set up last year and the impact it's having on community food and nutrition security.



NTFP- EP INDIA

Conservation, Livelihoods, Policy & Advocacy, and Health & Nutrition have been the main areas of work in the year 2020-21 under the NTFP-India network. Currently, there are 14 organization's across India that are members of the network.

All these organisation's predominantly work with indigenous communities of their region. A detailed report of their work from January to December 2020 is found here. Give it a read by scanning the code.



13 community seed banks were set up across the project sites

672 families were supported with seeds and other inputs for mixed farming. Central India (512); Western Ghats (160).

8 forest garden maintained by the community have been created at Sundar Pahari, Jharkhand.

4 tuber banks/ nurseries have been set up. Tuber banks have been set up in Kerala and the nurseries have been set up in Sundar Pahari

2 ecological calendars pertaining to Paharia and Paharia Korwa have been published

39,475

seeds and saplings were distributed to communities and farmers.

Central India - 11,020 saplings and 27,575 seeds (uncultivated food trees and plants, green leafy vegetables, fruit and flower trees, tubers, bamboo and horticulture species).

Western Ghats - Amla 200, leafy vegetables 100 and wild tuber.

PEOPLE AND NATURE FUND

In July 2021 concluded the first phase of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) programme that supported the People and Nature Fund. In the past years the fund was able to support grassroots organisations to further their work with vulnerable communities in India with a focus on gender and environmental justice, and to build capacities and alliances between the organisations.

The focus of the fund was to support initiatives that enable advocacy, direct action, improve knowledge, skills, and innovation. In the past years was to support several small and medium groups across the country that are working on natural resource management, women-led or women-based projects. Besides these efforts, during the pandemic, our partner organisations undertook relief activities in their respective regions as well.

THE THEMES OF WORK TAKEN UP BY THE SUPPORTED BY THE FUND WERE ON

- Community Forest Rights and the role of women in claims and decision making

- Natural Resource based livelihoods and the role of women in conservation and resource use
- Awareness of rights through innovative communication methods
- Capacity building of youth for documentation, traditional knowledge, and indigenous people's rights

	Small Grants	Micro Grants	Fellowships
2020	9	9	4
2019	9	11	5
2018	14	6	5
2017	11	4	3
2016	8	10	-





THE OUTCOMES OF THE WORK SUPPORTED BY GAGGA IN THE PAST 5 YEARS ARE:

- Organisations were able to establish women groups and develop women leadership in the community as well in their organisations.
- Improve natural resources management with better governance and decision-making capacities amongst communities.
- Improve communication skills of community women and youth leaders through training and mentorship.
- Publications focusing on the role of women in natural resource management and sustainable use.
- Organisations could leverage funds from other donors based on their work.

Keystone was part of the evaluation process of the GAGGA programme to bring out the impact and success stories of the work done in the past five years. With the next phase of the programme in

the pipeline the focus will be on enabling direct access to donors for grassroots organisations, and to build capacities of community leaders through fellowship support.



ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

COMPONENTS

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

They manage and ensure smooth functioning of the office besides organising and maintaining appropriate paperwork as per the organisation's administrative procedures. They also address the needs of the staff when and wherever required.

COMMUNICATIONS

Acts as a medium that helps the organisation strategically focus on interactions and build outreach efforts with donors, partner organisation, other civil society organisations and the general public.

FUND RAISING

In consultation with the Management Group and Programme Coordinators, the fund raising committee works towards identifying and soliciting new funds that can expand and diversify the scope of the organisation.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Administration team and the Information Technology team work together to maintain and improve existing infrastructure that enables staff to carry out their work without restraints.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR 2020 -21

Hardly anyone would disagree that the last year had been the toughest year for NGOs to manage and carry out their work as they did in the past. The pandemic disrupted working patterns, stalled field visits and community interactions forcing us to modify project deliverables and reexamine our course of action that was set to achieve programme goals.

Additionally, new measures were taken by the government to regulate foreign donations further hampered partnerships and collaborations among NGOs which was much needed during a novel pandemic.

For the past three years, the administration and finance team have been supporting the crisis management efforts of the organisation. In 2018 and 2019, it was the devastating Kerala floods to which aid and livelihood revival support was offered. In 2020 it was the pandemic that hit us abruptly, and little was known how to deal with the emerging crisis.



Communities of the Nilgiris, mainly the marginalised and indigenous populations faced the brunt of the lockdowns. Many lost their wage labour jobs upon which their families were dependent. The grant management team was compelled to inform our donors that we intend to utilize our funds to provide immediate relief, which was the need of the hour.

As approvals were obtained by the Administration team from the District authorities to carry out relief work, the finance team quickly dispensed funds to purchase essential materials. The Finance team was constantly in touch with our staff who were leading the relief work.

Post-May, as the country was gradually unlocking, our Administration team continuously reminded us to take necessary precautions at the office and while we were in the field. Field staff mostly participated in important meetings virtually. Field visits were advised to be taken towards the end of the week, so they could quarantine themselves in the respective homes during the weekends as a precaution.

Towards the second half of the year, as work resumed, the finance team was back in the office to complete the audit for the year. Though they had some sort of a breather during March 2020 (due to lockdowns), they had a lot on their plate (auditing) which they managed to sort by September 2020.

The team initiated some renovations on campus, coordinated the Board of Trustees meeting held



at Puducherry and Women's Day celebration on campus. Though events and meetings were less in comparison with the previous year, virtual meetings posed new challenges. Our field staff continues to cope with the new virtual world.

For many years they have been experts in the field mobilising communities and conducting community meetings. Now, the so-called new normal is pushing them to adapt to new ways of working in the field. With the expertise of our IT team, constant tweaks are being made to ensure our staff is equipped with appropriate technical means to carry out their work without any hindrances.

NEW INITIATIVES:

Several steps were taken to bring our "Place to Bee" restaurant that was previously managed by our sister concern, Last Forest Enterprises Pvt Ltd. up and running.

In partnership with Indcoserve - a tea cooperative and Aadhimlai (farmer producer company) funds were solicited from the state government to acquire five food trucks. Though the concept picked up initially, the pandemic scenario robbed the opportunity to expand the services that were planned through this initiative.

Besides this, the team has also been lending support and coordinating with Indcoserve tea factory, Kattabettu in the setting up of the Wetland Park.



PEOPLE & NATURE CENTRE

COMPONENTS

ARCHIVES

The institutional archives at Keystone Foundation is an effort at consolidating programme contents and resource materials into a searchable database, primarily for internal use and access for network partners.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Community Foundations is part of a global movement through which we are facilitating better understanding and utilisation of local assets, capacities and trust of indigenous communities to enable stronger agency, representation and governance.

COMMUNITY MEDIA

Our community media (radio station and community newspaper) disseminates local alternative news and information pertaining to the Nilgiris region and its communities.

FELLOWSHIPS

Through fellowships, community archives facilitates a secure space for indigenous communities of Nilgiris to represent their identities, stories, narratives and lived experiences with complete control over their objects, documents and media of significance.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

A large part of Keystone's work is based on taking the importance and viability of indigenous knowledge back to the communities which have faced a rapid devaluation of their traditional systems at the behest of intense modernization. Along with the envisaged larger purposes, the PNC would also serve as an institutional archive of Keystone Foundation.

The centre is envisaged to disseminate information about the unique characteristics of local knowledge systems to people from mainstream communities, reaffirming the need to understand

sustainability-related aspects embedded in indigenous knowledge systems viz-a-viz modern knowledge systems.

HIGHLIGHTS

OF THE YEAR 2020 -21

Although this is one of the more nascent programmes, the activities through the year have enabled the PNC to burgeon into a platform for communities to engage with tools, methods and ideas to describe their own contexts.

Particularly relevant in this programme is the work done through Community Fellowships. The current set of community-based researchers are from the Irula, Kurumba, Paniya, Kattunayakan communities, and each of them brings their own unique research interests to the table. The Kattunaickan fellow nurtures a deep interest in exploring cultural revitalisation through community-based museums; the Toda fellow dabbles in cultural mapping through tracing old buffalo grazing corridors and Toda place names; the Paniya fellows, gather information on folklore and material cultures (especially traditional jewellery); the Irula fellows take up earnest endeavours in oral histories of elders, community media, documentation of indigenous traditions as well as cultivate similar interest in younger kids from their villages. Together, they are well on their way to creating some of the first-ever community-based archives of indigenous knowledge resources.





The research facilitated through the fellowship programme and institutional archiving materialized into an Exhibition Room and a community-curated space on the Keystone campus in November. Space was inaugurated on KF's 27th birthday, by one of the trustees Rev. Mulley. A memorable quote from him on the day that inspired some of the community resource persons present at the event was, 'History comes from the Greek word that means 'conversations', and let this be a space for more enriching conversations between communities'.

The covid year was a challenging time for many of the ongoing community media initiatives, but the teams turned this challenge into an opportunity. The Nilgiri Seemai Suddhi team, which usually met every month to edit and finalise news reports, couldn't meet for long periods this year but continued their operations through phone and WhatsApp quite efficiently. When they did finally meet, they had enough stories to publish a 2020 magazine edition of the newsletter with photos, stories from the ground and even forayed into feature writing. The expanded team of the newsletter now includes youngsters and the old guard, who together bring new synergies and smart technologies to news collection and dissemination.

The other community media initiative, Radio Kotagiri 90.4MHz, had a similar trajectory, where they took the pandemic as an opportunity to reach out to more people on the phone and reinvented programme production processes. The radio turned 8 this year, and they went from broadcasting studio-recorded programmes, to creating entirely fresh and relevant content through crowd-sourcing contributions, responding to the need for increased health awareness related to covid, and even moved

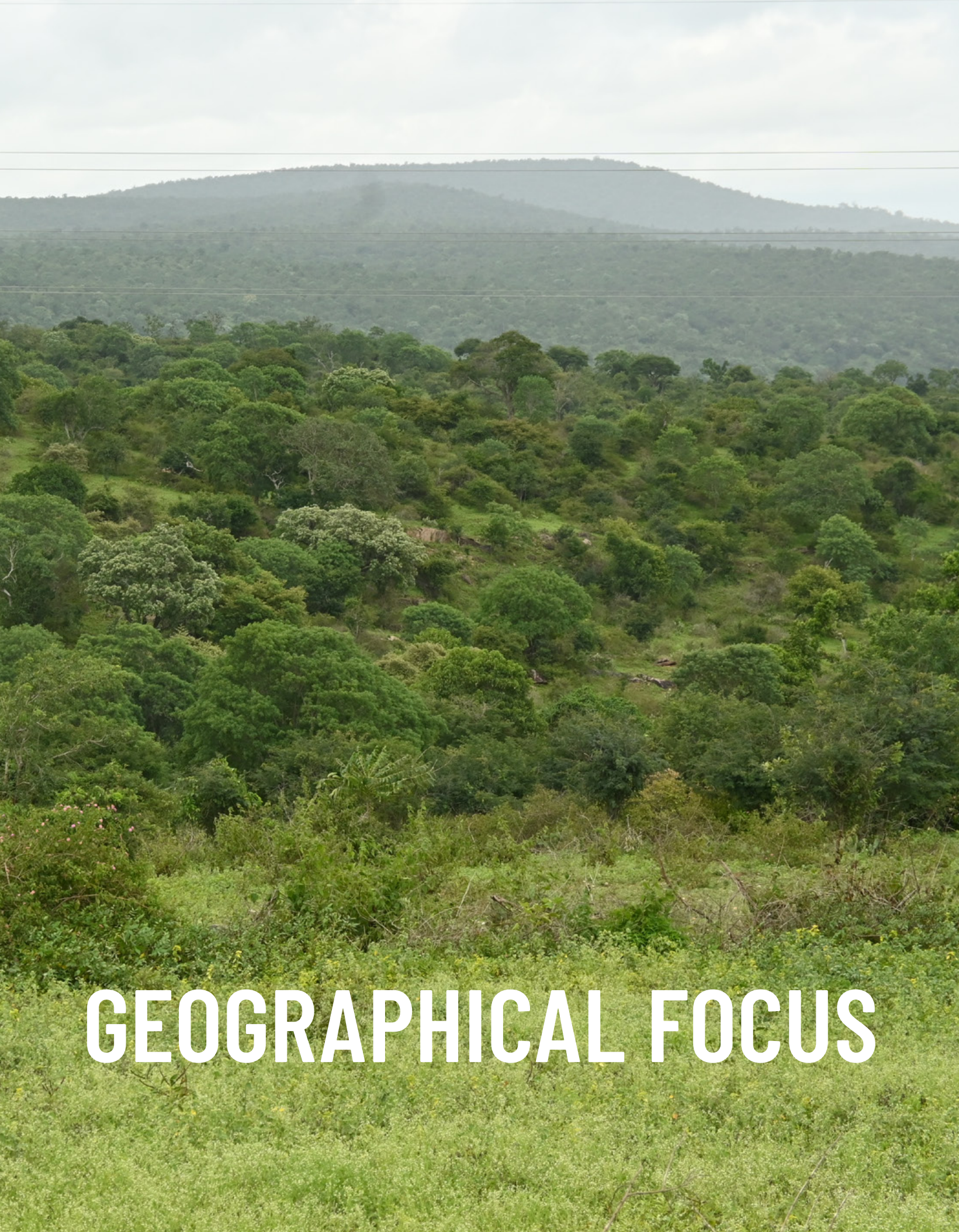
to the mode of campaigning for health. The radio team's ability to evolve during this situation and move towards narrowcasting, social media promotions, etc earned them many more listeners. The Facebook list of friends went from 550 to 8500 in seven months. At the stakeholders meeting they held in February, many of their listeners and contributors were present, and enabled a participatory synthesis of new ideas for the future.

Towards the end of the series of lockdowns in 2020, the team from PNC offered a month-long workshop in visual documentation and photography to organizations associated with the PNF network. Participants from three different states representing four different organisations participated in this month-long online workshop. Basics of photography and visual storytelling were introduced to the participants.

MOUNTAINS TO OCEANS:

Towards the end of 2020 and the start of 2021, we have also been exploring potential connections and collaborations to work towards a dream of building connections between Springs and Oceans, more specifically with Auroville and the bioregion around it. In that 6 month period, possibilities of collaboration were explored between Pitchandikulm Forest and Svaram Musical Instruments and Research - both based out of Auroville. This initiative has been set up to highlight the need for an integrated approach to landscapes and different kinds of work organisations with similar values and motivations have. This network facilitated a few exchanges between these institutions and has the potential for more work and collaborative projects to emerge.





GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS



ARACODE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION

The pandemic sparked not only a health crisis but also a widespread economic crisis that had adverse effects on communities and their food security. Contrastingly, here in Aracode, this situation yielded a productive outcome. The Iruulas of the region promptly turned to land-based livelihoods, a practice that has been a part of their tradition for centuries, besides forest produce collection.

Farmers from six villages in the region were involved in the pursuit of reviving millets which have been their staple diet. Extensive lands that remained fallow were regenerated as a variety of millet seeds (finger, little and foxtail millets) were cultivated. Besides this, farmers used this opportunity to grow other vegetables inside their *Thenai Kadu* (a mixed cropped field) for their own sustenance. Including millet, sixteen different kinds of crops were grown in the last year alone.

So in March, farmers were informed to clear their lands, as seeds and fencing support were ready for distribution in the following month. With ample time at hand, youngsters eagerly partook in the cultivation process to learn from their elders. This was a rare sight for the elders themselves.

Families stocked up half of their harvests for themselves, and the rest was either traded between them or with Aadhimalai - their own Farmer

Producer Company. The erratic weather post-July slightly affected the second harvest; however, people have stocked up what they've reaped to meet their own needs for the entire year.

With farming becoming a quotidian occupation for many in the region, bee boxes provided to them through the District Horticulture Department are being made use of. Each farmer has received eight bee boxes. Two community stewards who have been trained to handle bee boxes are helping farmers install them in their farmlands and are monitoring the bee colonies. Although millet revival has been the culmination of 2020, strides have been made on other working concepts like - water, health nutrition & wellness, eco-restoration, waste management and community foundation.

Community stewards have spearheaded all these activities on the ground. Under the waste management initiative, they've directed people to manage their household waste effectively to prevent it from running off into streams and forests. All households have been provided with hooks to store their plastic waste. Once in three months, the plastic waste collected is sent to the local panchayath. Besides this, separate dustbins for materials (bottles and leather, etc) that can be recycled have been installed in three villages.

Compost pits for agro and wet waste have also been built in four villages which are used locally.

CHWs have been at the forefront in emphasizing health, nutrition, and hygiene during the pandemic. They've played a key role in helping community members acquire social entitlements.

Porivarai – an Irula Community Foundation that was formed in 2019 set up a dedicated workshop for their handicraft work. This foundation has 20 full-time members that are continuing to make traditional musical instruments & artifacts using bamboo; producing organic inputs with the existing compost pits and collecting traditional folk stories from the region to broadcast in their own community radio called Kwol radio.

Support for increasing storage capacity for water and pipelines, interconnecting springs to village tanks was contributed, bearing in mind of Aracode being a rain shadow region. Besides household usage, the same is also used to nurture and maintain plants in our nurseries. Initially what was built to grow native plants for restoration is now being used by the community to cradle depleting native trees, grasses and NTFP saplings.

With ardent community stewards on the ground, our interventions were effortlessly enacted for the wellbeing of the indigenous people of Aracode.

Livelihoods support

165 farmers (Garikiyoor, Bangalapadigai, Vakanamaram, Kadasolai, Mettukal, Samaigoodal) received seed and fencing support.

~200 acres of fallow land were revived for growing millets.

~1500 kilos of millets were harvested last year from this region.

Waste management

555 households were involved in the waste management initiative.

Water storage facility

6000 litres storage facility has been provided to three villages in the region.

Social entitlements

~100 individuals were supported to obtain social entitlements such as ration cards, state government health insurance schemes, Aadhaar etc.



COIMBATORE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION

Basic sanitation and hygiene have been at the forefront of discussions since last year and continue to be reinforced as the most affordable way of preventing the spread of the virus and other infectious diseases. The majority of our work in the Coimbatore District is implemented across two town panchayats - Perinaickenpalayam & Narasimhanaickenpalayam (PNP & NNP) extensively addressing the underlying issue, which is, access to adequate and equal sanitation – a requisite in attaining good health.

During the first half-year when the pandemic unfolded, our efforts aimed to engage with impoverished communities on covid 19 preparedness, prevention and response whilst addressing other key issues. The team largely focused on – disseminating awareness on WASH (water, sanitation & hygiene), improving community sanitation facilities and ensuring sanitation workers' safety & wellbeing.

One notable highlight of 2020 was the formation of exclusive women's enterprise called *Yaazh* as a response to the pandemic. Comprising women from a locality called Viveknandapuram, the enterprise produced cloth masks to be distributed to the frontline workers and vulnerable populations in the city through the District Administration.

While ensuring the protection of other people, this also served as a reliable livelihood during the crisis for the homemakers who were at that point, the sole breadwinners for their families. This women's group went on to produce masks for two continuous months during the lockdown last year.

As for preventive measures, several interventions were directed towards addressing the wellness of sanitary workers who were the ones with increased risks of contracting the virus. Regular health checkups took place in collaboration with two private hospitals in Coimbatore. To standardise regular medical examinations for sanitary workers, an MoU is in progress with Karpagam Hospital, Coimbatore. 450 sanitary workers across five panchayaths (veerapandi, idikarai, gudalur, PNP & NNP) are included in this agreement.

Sessions for sanitation workers were held in association with Mastermind Foundation, Chennai to address their mental health which is often neglected. Given their nature of work, it was important to give them the space to express themselves and acknowledge their efforts as frontline workers who are last in line to receive any credit for the persistent work they do. In total, eight sessions of group counseling and fifty-five individual sessions were held in the last year.

With regard to community-related interventions, renovating existing community toilets and establishing child-friendly toilets in local *anganwadis* were taken up. More essentially, as much as community toilets are important, strengthening the operation and maintenance was equally necessary for the long run. So, in order to ensure this, a management group comprising temporary sanitation workers along with the local panchayat was formed. Trainings on bookkeeping, maintaining infrastructure, etc were given to them as a part of this intervention.

Additionally, to bring about change in behavior, several other interventions at the community level also took place. This included elders, the young and adolescents. The importance of wearing masks, washing hands regularly and other safety

norms were part of our awareness programme modules. Towards the second half of the year, several interventions at the Fecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) that was inaugurated last year took place. We engaged with students, local farmers and faecal sludge operators to inform them about the functions of the treatment plant and its scope in terms of recycling faecal waste.

In the coming year, plans are underway for better sanitation with communities taking the lead; institutionalisation of medical services for sanitary workers; enabling a circular economy to use the recycled waste from the FSTP and collaboration with Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to secure adequate sanitation for slum-dwelling communities. All of this will be carried out through planned interventions - inclusive of all stakeholders.

Livelihoods support
8000 masks were produced by Yaazh Enterprise - the women's group community enterprise.
Fecal sludge treatment plant
25 kilo liters can be recycled per day at the FTSP plant at PNP.
Community toilets
4 community toilets were renovated in PNP and NNP.
Sanitary workers interventions
9 meetings for sanitary workers from two panchayats participated in these trainings.



CENTRAL INDIA

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION

In Central India, the majority of our grassroots activities are carried out through our network-partner organisations and community fellows that are appointed from the respective communities. Our implementation spans four states namely, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra in which we work with seven different indigenous communities - Baiga & Bharia of MP; Pahari Korwa, Birhor & Kamars of Chhattisgarh; Paharia of Jharkhand and Katkaris of Maharashtra.

With the closure of markets, these communities were restrained from procuring provisions, selling their forest produce and engaging in MNREGA work. All of these adversely affected their access to food and livelihood, while the necessity was more, given the influx to rural areas from cities. During the first half of the year, the forest was the only source of food alongside the homestead farms and kitchen gardens.

In view of this, a variety of activities associated with the promotion and revival of traditional crops; strengthening of traditional shifting cultivation-based practices of the communities; vegetable cultivation in kitchen gardens; and planting of uncultivated food, trees and plants were carried out across all four states. The kitchen gardens

are aimed at making available a variety of rich, chemical-free, nutritious food to families from their homestead areas, thereby increasing their self-sufficiency in food production.

Tubers and local vegetable seeds were provided to them through the eleven seed banks that were set up in 2019-20. Most of these community seed banks are led by local villagers who have been provided training and capacity building for managing their respective seed banks. Specified distribution of seeds or saplings was important to bear in mind as traditional practices vary across regions and communities.

Interactive workshops and village-level awareness meetings on uncultivated food and traditional agriculture have been an integral part of last year's work. These sessions were carried out with women & young children to make them aware of the possibilities of growing their own food than depending on ration or the market, especially during the pandemic. Community seed banks were new concepts to many of them. Once they got familiar with the concept, many women have taken up roles to maintain seed banks in the village and have been collecting seeds from the fields they work in. Besides this, they've also collected wild seeds from the forests to store in their seed banks.

Children have also shown keen interest by participating in such trainings. Our community fellows during these workshops take the children into the forest to show them the collection and identification of wild food thus inducing them to understand their forest contributes to their wellbeing.

However, enabling these indigenous groups to assert their rights over the forests, their resources and the lands that support these resources are crucial, as they face continuous threats of being displaced from their ancestral lands. Leaders belonging to the communities have been partaking in workshops held by our partner organisations to learn about habitat rights and the process of obtaining them. Additionally, support for filing claims and developing maps has been facilitated in the last year.

Furthermore, in order to document the disappearing wild food species and to keep alive the traditional knowledge - two ecological calendars relating to the Pahadi Korwa and Pahadia communities belonging to Chhattisgarh were printed last year.

In the coming year, seed distributions have been planned before the monsoons arrive in the central parts of the country. Extending support for filing claims, compiling necessary documents and liaising with the concerned official will continue this year as well. Plans are also underway to conduct participatory research to develop ecological calendars for other indigenous communities (Sabar, Birhor, Kamar, Baiga and Bhariya) that we work with.

Seed banks	
25	seed banks have been set up across Central and Eastern India.
Seed distribution	
512	families received seed support.
Tuber banks	
2	tuber banks have been set up in from which communities can obtain seeds or roots from.
Nurseries	
11,020	saplings have been distributed to communities belonging to four different states.
Trainings/Meetings and events	
31	meetings, trainings or events related to seed banks, uncultivated food, forests right were held.
Kitchen gardens	
40	Kitchen gardens have been setup through seed distribution that provides these families with trititional.



KOTAGIRI

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION

Challenges that communities in the town area of Kotagiri face are multifaceted, requiring complementary and coordinated efforts from all stakeholders in the region. Through our work, we mainly address critical issues that can ameliorate the current scenario of extensive land use changes, inorganic farming practices, expanding human-wildlife interactions and paucity of basic amenities for marginalised communities. To a great extent, all our actionable measures are executed with the help of Local Municipalities, the Forest Department and the District Administration.

For most of last year, there was minimum engagement with community members through village meetings as a precautionary measure. During those times, our planned interventions were largely implemented through our group of community stewards. They interact with the community members daily; identify areas of interventions corresponding to the critical issues and liaison with local government offices for implementation.

Especially, they have been at the forefront of implementing restoration activities in villages and carrying out wildlife monitoring at water sources. In 2020, planting activities took place at four different sites – Kil Kotagiri, Kannerimuku, Masakal and Kattabettu. While increasing native plant

biodiversity is one important factor for carrying out restoration, there are other factors taken into consideration before choosing a particular site. Its scope of providing ecosystem services to local communities, natural habitat for wildlife or birds, proximity to drinking water sources are some of the key assessments before intervention. Community stewards continue to monitor the plants weekly while imparting locals with the capacity to act as custodians for the restored sites. One of the important highlights concerning restoration from last year took place at Indcoserve (a cooperative of small tea growers) tea factory. Close to half an acre of a wetland plot was adopted for restoration. In addition, a wetland information centre has been set up to inform tourists and local communities about the importance of encroached for construction activities.

Negligence of these natural systems causes habitat loss for wildlife which leads to increasing human-wildlife interactions in the urban parts. As mitigation measures, mapping their routes, monitoring the gaur herd, and collaborating with the Forest Department were crucial steps that continued this year as well. With over a year of continuous data, additional signage boards were installed at wildlife crossing sites inside the town and forest fringe areas. Furthermore, roadkill data is also being collected

periodically to assess how other small mammals or animals are affected by growing urbanization and the loss of natural habitats.


In one of our working panchayath called Kokkalthorai – which is the hub for growing exotic vegetables that require an immense volume of chemical inputs, human-wildlife interactions are rising rapidly. Depleting water tables and expanding invasive plants are increasing incidents of wild animals raiding crops or getting harmed due to over-fencing preventing them from moving through their natural spaces. Over the year, we’ve collected positive and negative stories from the locals. An illustrated publication of these stories for young children will be printed this year.

Some of the other serious challenges those marginalized communities in the urban parts face are access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation. Two villages located in the town area (Kanikadevi Colony & Dobikanna) with a population of close to thousands of families received monetary and infrastructure support.

Poor sanitation largely affects women and young girls as it leads to a lack of privacy and dignity. With this in mind, women groups were formed in both the settlements prior to intervention. All forms of support were allocated as per the groups’ needs and requests. Pre-fabricated toilets and other forms of infrastructure to collect and store water, facilities for proper management of household waste were the key interventions in 2020 on this front.

Eco restoration
6 acres of land were restored using native plants (stream, wetland and wildlife resting space)
Water security plan
2 Villages (Dhobikana and Shiva cottage) were provided with storage tanks, motors, water pipeline materials for drinking water and for other uses.
Water storage facilities
7000 liters of storage tanks for water were provided to two villages. Dhobikana - 5000 liters; Shiva cottage 2000 liters.
Community toilets
2 Villages were provided with pre-fabricated toilets (5 units) that will be used as community toilets (separate set ups for men and women). This benefit 1730 households.

325 households in the urban parts of the town are direct beneficiaries of our work (Water & Sanitation, organic farming and waste management).




NILAMBUR

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION

Soon after the monsoon floods and landslides, the pandemic crisis emerged. This compounded the risk communities faced while they were still coping with the preceding calamity. In light of this, our intervention in Nilambur was mainly oriented towards enhancing individual and community resilience among vulnerable indigenous populations in the region.

Community health interventions, both, curative and preventive were given utmost importance and conducted across three local panchayaths – Pothukal, Karulai and Chaliyar. At the village level, periodical (twice a month, from March 2020 – November 2020) health camps for all families across the same areas were held, as it was essential to monitor and prevent the illness from escalating. Besides this, Covid awareness camps with children, older people, and those living with chronic conditions also took place in partnership with a team from Kozhikode Government Medical College.

Adolescent and young adult mental health camps were carried out in partnership with Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the psychiatric department of Manjeri Government Medical College. Consequently, the team perceived the need to help these communities obtain social

entitlements that will extend their health-related social security benefits. Across all three above-mentioned panchayaths - a total of 823 families received social entitlements in the last year.

Regarding curative measures, nutritional interventions to boost immunity based on age groups, physiological and medical conditions were initiated. Special attention was given to one particular area where Kattupaniayas reside. Though government nutritional kits are given periodically, it is usually frittered away. Guiding them to use the kits to maintain a well-balanced diet was essential. Additionally, through our community managed nurseries that were set up, vegetable saplings (bitter gourd, cucumber, ash gourd, chilies, tomatoes and a variety of tubers) were also distributed every month.

Apart from this, in the last year, beekeeping for income generation and recreation has flourished. Several beekeeping trainings were held in collaboration with the Kerala Khadi Board and Krishi Bhavan (Department of Agriculture). We supported them with bee boxes and weekly monitoring of bee colonies. Notably, women constitute 75 % of the new beekeepers that were developed in 2020.

These interventions were implemented keeping in mind that they were unable to go to the forest that had been severely degraded by the floods. Thoduve – the newly formed community foundation enterprise initiative procures from the beekeepers and has supported in maintaining a nursery at Cherupuzha where tubers, wild plants, fruits, cash crops and vegetables are grown. An exclusive tuber bank has also been set up in 2020 at Ettapara village.

In addition to all of these, along with the local Police Department, facilitating access to drinking water by reconditioning storage tanks and pipelines that service around 250 individuals in one indigenous village was implemented.

In the imminent future, strengthening community linked livelihood initiatives; developing Thoduve community foundation enterprise through linkages with external organic markets and expanding community health services to more indigenous areas are prioritised.

Health interventions

3 panchayats (*Karulai, Chaliyar and Pothukuli*) were part of our community health programmes which include - health camp, adolescent, Covid awareness health issues, nutritional interventions etc.

Social entitlements

823 individuals were supported to obtain social entitlements to the same three panchayats.

Community managed nurseries

4 community managed nurseries were set up to provide saplings to equip households to grow their own food. 10 different kinds of tubers are also grown here. These nurseries are in *Cherupuzha, Kottapara and Appankappu*; Tuber community seed bank is set up at Ettapara.

Beekeeping

161 new beekeepers have been trained and they continue to rear and maintain their own bee boxes. 75% of them are women.

Water security plan

54 families residing in Pulimunda were supported with pipelines, motor and storage facilities.



PILLUR

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION

The Pillur valley is nestled in the dry deciduous forests, segregated from the bustle of the Coimbatore district. With close proximity to the downward flowing streams from the south of Nilgiris, farmers of the region are fortunate enough to have access to water and are even content to snap up water to grow bananas, which has been their routine crop for many years now. But in 2020, supposedly, after four decades, millet cultivation was carried out here.

Farmers belonging to 18 indigenous villages scattered in the region were a part of our seed support initiative that has been implemented across the NBR in the past year. As cash crop agriculture has been their source of income, many of these farmers are well equipped with fencing and irrigation provisions. So additionally, support for land clearing was given to each farmer allowing them to clear their lands. Farmers here received the same varieties and proportion of seeds for cultivation that were given in Aracode, Sigur and Hasanur.

Though they received seeds by April 2020, their previous crops were yet to be harvested. Only in July 2020, farmers began planting millets and some towards the second part of the year. Wholly, close to 7 tons of millets were harvested in January

2021. Communities held on to their harvests and were more than happy to trade among themselves rather than trading them for monetary returns, thus ensuring food security for their own people.

Though some have chosen to grow bananas, they have indicated that they will grow millets during the same period as they did last year. In this process, many farmers have become seed keepers by retaining millet seeds from 2020. Additionally, one farmer group has been regularly participating in the bio-input trainings conducted at the field centre by our field staff. These groups train interested farmers and supply the locally made bio-inputs to others in the region.

Apart from helping communities attain food security, work in relation to land rights has been a key highlight. In the past two years, we were able to facilitate IFRs for 80% of the inhabitants of the region, so this year, the focus was directed towards the remaining six villages that were yet to obtain IFRs.

Field staff and community stewards have taken the initiative to complete surveys for four of the six villages in 2021, and are yet to complete the remaining two which were paused due to the state elections. So far the claims submitted for the four

villages have been reexamined by the local officers and are found to be corresponding. The unsettled surveys will take place in June 2021.

One community-managed nursery, predominantly led by women has been set up in the last year. Saplings such as coffee, pepper and silver oak are grown here. Farmers who are willing to buy any of these saplings have been allocated funds through our project. The cost of the saplings in turn will be used for developing the nursery and will act as an incentive to the community members who raise

the saplings. This system allows farmers to have access to commodity crops for income and gives the women raising the saplings a revolving fund to maintain the nursery.

A great deal of work has also been done on the health and nutrition aspect in terms of facilitating social entitlements, providing nutrition kits and providing financial aid for the informed. Furthermore, newly recruited barefoot ecologists have begun surveying and monitoring the phenology of trees since the beginning of this year.

Livelihoods support

215 farmers (*Kadamancombei, mel pillur, sithugunai, kil pillur, korapathi, mannar, pochamarthur, thondai, barlikadu, sirigunar, sorandi, nellimarthur, neeradi, sethumadai, kodiur, kil sengalur, geddaikadu, verakal*) received seed and fencing support.

Fallow lands revived

~25 acres of fallow land were revived for growing millets.

Millets harvested

6 tons of millets - (foxtail, little and finger millets) were harvested last year.

Forest right claims

216 individual forest rights claims have been submitted and approved.

Community managed nursery

1 nursery is managed and maintained by a women's group that earn a small income by selling cash crop saplings to local farmers. Bio-input are also prepared and sold here.

Social entitlements

~100 individual were able to obtain social entitlements.



SATHYAMANGALAM



The Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve is located in the Erode District of Tamilnadu. Commonly known as the gateway to the Western Ghats - this region is an important ecosystem and wildlife corridor. This is the second Tiger Reserve in which Keystone works (besides Sigur). Our field ecology centre that was set up in 2016 has been the base for Keystone activities in and around Sathyamangalam and Hasanur region.

Though we've been working in the region for more than a decade - establishing a field centre helped pave the way to strengthen research projects, field ecology, and community-based conservation (Irulas and Soligas) in the region. Progressively, the scope for other initiatives such as livelihoods, governance, and health and wellness was developed.

However, despite the assortment of initiatives, plans that were made for the year had changed as the pandemic unfurled. Here too, indigenous communities located in the buffer and core areas of the reserve were facing the crunch. As demands for food provisions were raised, we extended our relief support to outlying field areas besides those located in the Nilgiris District. Essentials such as Dhal, rice, Oil etc were sent to 1045 families across three panchayats (Germalam and Hasanur, Thalamalai).

After many years, livelihood initiatives were reintroduced in the region. Farmers from 12 villages were identified and were a part of our millet revival efforts that were undertaken in other areas as well. Similar kits containing - finger, little, and foxtail millets along with spinach and mustard were distributed. Though most of them were already farming, they were more inclined to cash crops. But the pandemic brought a shift that made them welcome millet farming which has been a part of their traditional practice.

Simultaneously, nurseries were set up in four villages (Kanagarai, Geddesal, Uppatti and Araepalayam). Coffee saplings are mainly being grown by our community volunteers. After millets are harvested, the plan is to distribute the coffee saplings to one in three farmers. Volunteers who are managing the nursery will receive an incentive based on the number of saplings they grow. This way we aim to ensure that these farmers are growing crops that benefit their natural habitat, rather than growing crops that require pesticides that can have adverse effects on natural resources.

While farmers were busy tilling and leveling their fields - barefoot ecologists, who are usually the busiest community volunteers, pulled up some extra work of formulating conservation education activities over the phone with our staff and began engaging children in their respective villages, besides weekly monitoring work. Our staff sent pen drives that had documentaries and films on the environment and ecology through the relief vehicles that made trips to the villages.



In other respects, forest rights meetings were held as restrictions were eased during the end of the year. Several trainings took place for village leaders, as it was important to ensure that they had a good understanding of the various clauses – as they are at the forefront of making decisions and dealing with government officials. We also emphasized the Right to Information Act (RTI) as the main challenges raised by the people were unanswered claims. Furthermore, Forest Right Committees (FRC) from seven villages also underwent trainings during the year.

The collection of NTFPs also picked up towards the end of the year. Largely, bamboo rice collection was an important source of income for families in the last year. Most importantly several organizations working in the region have come together to address challenges pertaining to the region. Hopefully, this collective effort can strengthen community-based conservation and foster collaborations with the ever striving Forest Department.



Livelihoods support

505

farmers (*Sholathur, Badripadigai, Nagalur, Uganium, Kenathudhodi, Kanagarai, Geddesal, Guliyada, Shokidhodi, Uppatti, Kalugoosi and Pudukad*) received seed support.

Millets harvested

~20

tons of millets -(foxtail, little and finger millets) were harvested last year.

Community managed nursery

4

nurseries ((*Kanagarai, Geddesal, Uppatti & Aerapalyam*) is managed and maintained by community volunteers. Coffee saplings are grown in these nurseries.

Governance

1

FRA meeting to discuss CFRs took place in which 25 Gram Sabha leaders and members partook in.

Conservation education

15

conservation education sessions took place in the last year.



SIGUR

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION

For the indigenous communities in Sigur wage-based employment has been their primary source of income. These avenues to earn had plummeted last year during the lockdown. Like elsewhere, communities were inclined to go back to cultivating their land. Community members from 12 villages showed interest to grow millets in their land. With disrupted supply chains during the initial stages of the lockdown, farming was seen as a way forward for earning income and food security.

Commonly, traditional agriculture crops such as millets were scarcely practiced in the region for many years now. Vegetable cash crops that could be harvested in a short time were usually preferred over millets as they were much profitable. As we began identifying farmers to provide support during March 2020, communities were gradually changing their approach.

Here too, farmers owning or leasing out a minimum of one acre were given organic millet seeds (finger millet, foxtail and little millet) along with mustard, pumpkin and spinach seeds. Additionally, each of them received around ~2300 rupees for clearing their land, besides fencing support.

To prevent their crops from being relished by the elephants in the region, many of them with neighbouring farmlands fenced their lands

collectively, thus making it easier for them to monitor wild animals approaching their farms.

With possession of IFRs that were obtained previously, people were able to avail of direct benefit schemes from the District Horticulture Department. Pipelines, sprinklers, and bee boxes were given to the farmers in the region. Our field staff, during the past year, conducted several trainings on producing bio-inputs that were put to use in their own farms and kitchen gardens. All of this backing helped them increase their yields.

Through personal anecdotes, many of them conveyed that they now have finger millet stored in their houses that can easily get them through another lockdown. Though foxtail and little millet gave lesser yield comparatively, it fetched them sufficient income when it was sold locally. Community Health Workers have been constantly engaging with the community on health-related matters.

For more than a year now, they have been identifying and facilitating social entitlements for individuals and families who haven't obtained them. Simultaneously, they have been closely monitoring the nutritional intake of families through household interviews since January 2021.

Other interventions at the community level were up-keeping of nurseries which were set up to nurture native plant saplings, cash crops such as coffee, pepper and vegetable saplings that have been distributed to households with kitchen gardens. Forest Department has urged the community to grow saplings like tamarind, lemons, etc as they are willing to buy them from these community-led nurseries in bulk.

Apart from the above interventions, schools being closed for a long period gave us the scope

to organize village elders programmes across three villages in the region. Children had the opportunity to actively engage with the elders who taught them local species names, folk stories and traditional practices pertaining to their culture. The elders were glad to see the children discuss with their friends what they have learned during these sessions.

In the coming year, we envisage communities will continue to utilize their lands for traditional agriculture that guarantees food security while ensuring adequate nutritional intake which is essential during these times.

Livelihoods support

215 farmers (*Anaihatty, Sirur, Chockaneli, valathotam, chemmanatham, boothanatham, Achakarai, thakul, thopalingy, Kovilpatti, Kurumbarpadi, Kurumbarpalam*) received seed and fencing support.

Nutritional support

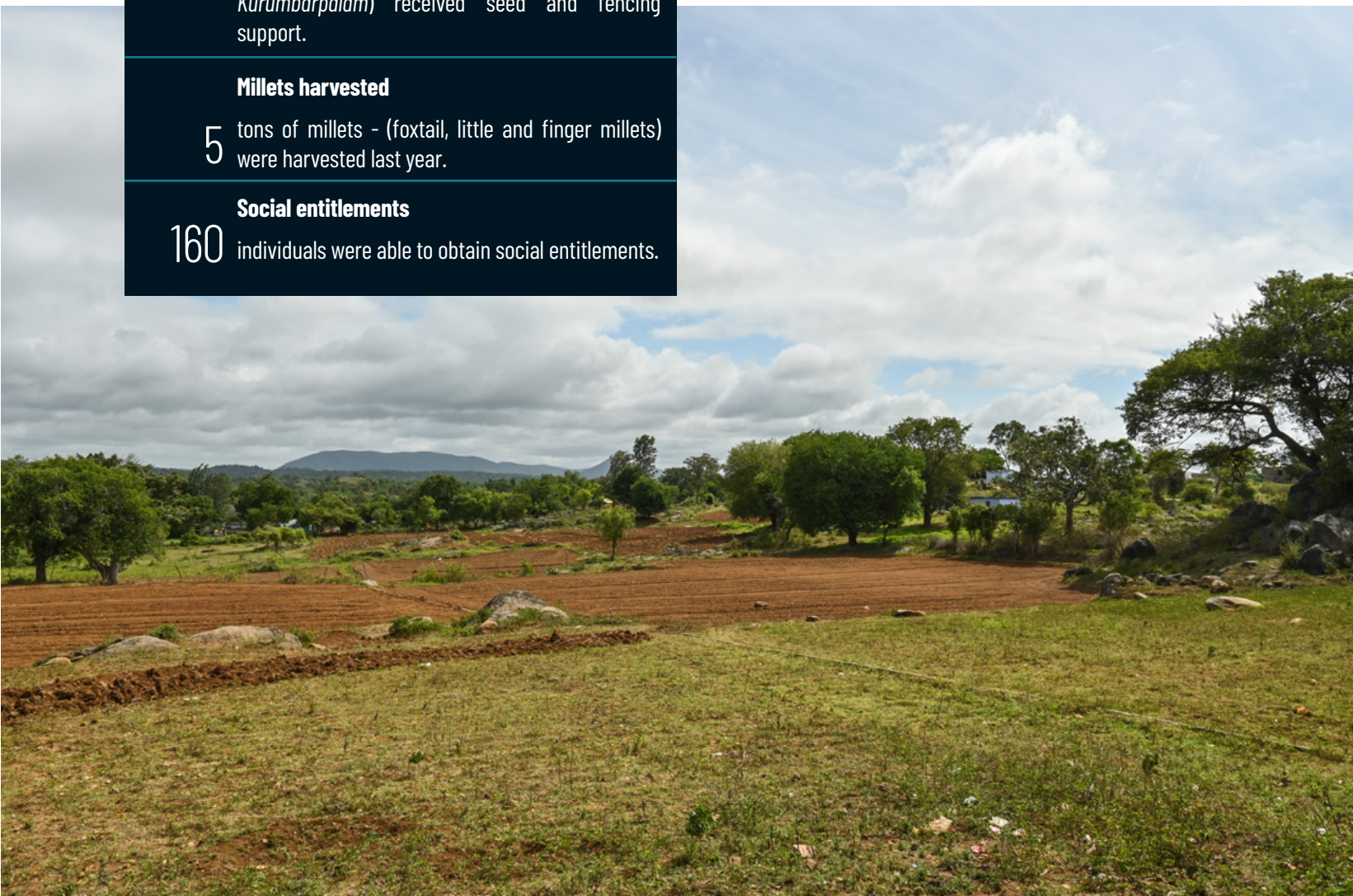
90 farmers (*Anaihatty, Sirur, Chockaneli, valathotam, chemmanatham, boothanatham, Achakarai, thakul, thopalingy, Kovilpatti, Kurumbarpadi, Kurumbarpalam*) received seed and fencing support.

Millets harvested

5 tons of millets - (foxtail, little and finger millets) were harvested last year.

Social entitlements

160 individuals were able to obtain social entitlements.



WAYANAD

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION

Wayanad was one among the many Districts in Kerala that was severely affected by the unabated rain-causing floods that disrupted people's lives and livelihoods. Since 2018, our efforts were directed towards (chronologically) - providing aid, identifying distressed areas, restoring and improving the conditions on the ground and employing select interventions that provide long-term stabilization for communities to build upon.

In 2020, our primary interventions aimed to address two main post-disaster issues – reviving livelihoods (mainly farming) by restoring agricultural lands through monetary aid for irrigation & seed support and developing alternative livelihood avenues. While the former intervention intended to provide support to communities with land, the latter intended to give assistance to landless families.

Farmers belonging to three panchayats received agrorelated support. Small scale farmers that owned or leased land less than two acres were prioritized as they were the ones with minimum or no means to revive their agricultural lands. Banana or paddies were largely grown by these farmers, while vegetables were grown depending on the season and demand in the market.

Some of the salient aspects that had to be redressed in order to revive farming in the region were debris

removal and refurbishing damaged underground water collection structures that were necessary for irrigating the water intense crops they grew. An estimated cost per acre was reckoned for debris removal, fifty percent of that value was given as contributions to all farmers. Contaminated drinking water source in the aftermath of floods was also simultaneously addressed in two areas – Chanthankuli and Saravani.

On the alternative livelihoods front, several communitybased initiatives for varied operations were established in 2020. Firstly, community-managed seed banks (for paddy & tuber) were set up with the intention to save and supply seeds to farmers in the district. Secondly, community-based enterprises - Boomika and Thalir were exclusively formed as a livelihood option for two women self-help groups. Lastly, community-managed nurseries were established which has been a source for saplings used in the restoration efforts carried across our working areas in Wayanad.

These community initiatives were established to supplement the livelihood interventions at the other end and vice versa. Seed banks become a hub for farmers to contribute and obtain seeds of the crops, including tuber. Community-based enterprises give farmers the option to sell the surplus produce

which fetches additional income, while the women group value-added the produce to generate income for themselves. The nurseries mostly grew riverine plants that helped restore the highlands and river banks which will help reduce potential flood levels in the future, ultimately preventing water sources from being contaminated.

Local government agencies have been backing our staff while implementing all these initiatives which enabled us to work as per plan. Edvaka, Thavinal and Thirunelly panchayaths, local Police Departments and Forest Departments have been immensely forthcoming in facilitating our interventions.

Livelihoods support

1500 farmers from three panchayaths received agorelated support for growing paddy and vegetable farm. Additionally, each farmers received 9000 rupees each for debris removal.

Irrigation support

180 among the 1500 farmers received support for irrigation.

Eco-restoration

16 kilometers of riverbanks has been restored across three chosen sites - *Kamana, Panavally and Valada*.

Seed banks

2 (one tuber and one paddy seed bank) were setup along with five local farmer groups.

Water security plan

4 settlements received storage and pipeline for drinking water out of which - three are tribal settlements and one is a non-tribal settlement. (*Poolakkal area, edavaka panchyath, panavaly, thirunelly*).



FINANCE 2020 - 21

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET AS ON 31.03.2021

S.NO	PARTICULARS	2019-20 Amount INR (Lakhs)	2020-21 Amount INR (Lakhs)
1	LIABILITIES		
	Capital Fund	581.60	544.94
	Endowment Funds	195.68	197.99
	Current Liabilities	45.85	41.12
	TOTAL	823.13	784.05
2	ASSETS		
	Fixed Assets	371.54	377.08
	Investments	14.05	14.05
	Current Assets	437.55	392.92
	TOTAL	823.13	784.05

CONSOLIDATED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31.03.2021

S.NO	PARTICULARS	2019-20 Amount INR (Lakhs)	2020-21 Amount INR (Lakhs)
1	INCOME		
	Donations		
	-Foreign Institutional Donors	657.52	576.40
	-Indian Institutional Donors	351.04	402.49
	-Others	31.36	29.41
	Other Income	16.79	14.26
		1,056.72	1,022.56
2	EXPENDITURE		
	Village Development Projects	1,107.98	1,010.58
	Depreciation	31.73	32.70
		1,139.71	1,043.27
3	Surplus (Deficit)	- 82.99	- 20.71

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31.03.2021

S.NO	PARTICULARS	2019-20 Amount INR (Lakhs)	2020-21 Amount INR (Lakhs)
1	RECEIPTS		
	Opening Balance		
	-Cash and Bank	317.23	298.75
	Donations		
	-Foreign Institutional Donors	657.52	576.40
	-Indian Institutional Donors	351.04	402.49
	-Others	31.36	29.41
	Other Income	16.79	14.26
	Increase in Liabilities	8.41	--
	Endowment Fund receipts	2.39	2.31
	Investments Redeemed	15.13	--
	Deposits Matured/Pre-Closed	17.59	--
	Advances Received	12.51	41.13
	Other Receipts	--	4.92
	TOTAL	1,429.98	1,369.66
2	PAYMENTS		
	Village Development Projects	1,107.98	1,010.58
	Purchase of Fixed Assets	23.26	38.15
	Liabilities Paid	--	9.84
	Deposits made	--	22.54
	Other Payments	--	15.95
	Closing Balance	--	--
	-Cash and Bank	298.75	272.61
	TOTAL	1,429.98	1,369.66

INFORMATION BASED ON NORMS OF CREDIBILITY ALLIANCE (2020-21)

1. DISCLOSURE OF STAFF BASED ON SALARY LEVELS

Slab of Gross Salary plus benefits paid to staff (INR per Month)	No of Female Staff	No of Male Staff	Total Staff
Less than 5,000	0	0	0
5,000 to 10,000	0	0	0
10,000 to 25,000	16	11	27
25,000 to 50,000	10	8	18
50,000 to 1,00,000	4	5	9
Greater than 1,00,000	0	0	0
	30	24	54

2. PAYMENT MADE TO CONSULTANTS

TOTAL ANNUAL PAYMENT MADE TO CONSULTANTS (in INR)	Number of Consultants
Less than 5,000	0
5,000 to 10,000	2
10,000 to 25,000	5
25,000 to 50,000	5
50,000 to 1,00,000	2
Greater than 1,00,000	17
	31

3. STAFF REMUNERATION (GROSS + BENEFITS)

Head of Organisation (including Honararium)	1,116,360
Highest paid full time regular staff	1,116,360
Lowest Paid full time regular staff	163,080

4. TOTAL COST OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL BY TRUSTEES/STAFF/VOLUNTEERS ON BEHALF OF THE ORGANISATION

AMOUNT IN INR '000

NO	NAME OF STAFF	DESIGNATION	DESTINATION	PURPOSE OF TRAVEL	COST INCURRED	SPONSORED
There were no international travels for the year 2020-21 due to Covid.						

5. THE TOTAL COST OF NATIONAL TRAVEL BY BOARD MEMBERS/STAFF/VOLUNTEERS ON BEHALF OF ORGANISATION FOR 2020 - 21

RS. 69,729

6. PROFILE OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES

NO	NAME	AGE	SEX	LOCATION	OCCUPATION	POSITION	Remuneration & Reimbursement
1	Somant Sen	54	Male	New Delhi	Consultant	Managing Trustee	-
2	Suprava Patnaik	57	Female	Bhopal	Professor	Trustee	-
3	Shipra Gupta	83	Female	Puducherry	Educationist	Trustee	-
4	Rita Banerji	49	Female	New Delhi	Film Maker	Trustee	-
5	Meena Gupta	70	Female	Kolkata	Retd. Secy to GOI	Trustee	-
6	Rev. P. K. Mulley	71	Male	Kotagiri	Anthropologist	Trustee	-
7	Anju Sharma	47	Female	U K	Consultant	Trustee	-
8	John Kurien	67	Male	Tiruvananthapuram	Consultant	Trustee	-

*Our Trustees are not related by way of blood or otherwise to anybody in the Organisation.

MEET THE TEAM

FOUNDER DIRECTOR'S



MATHEW
Last Forest &
Keystone Foundation
- both close to his heart



PRATIM
Dream on



SNEH
Networking forte

DIRECTORS



ANITA
Building teams



JYOTSNA
Championing wellbeing & rights

BIODIVERSITY



ARADKUTTAN
Restoring the Nilgiris



ASISH
Quiet and incisive



BEEMAN
Gaur observer



BHAVYA
Women in conservation



CHANDRASEKAR
Animal whisperer



JUSTIN
Beekeeping forever



KAVERI
Tending plants



MAHADESHA
Leadership with ground
knowledge



NATASHA
Rescue and rehab wildlife



NAYANTARA
Wildlife storyteller



SHINY
Planting our earth



SHARADA
Caring for nature



SIVRAJ
Community &
land issues

COMMUNITY WELLBEING



ABIRAMI
Livelihoods researcher



AGALYA
NFLC graduate & young mother



BAGAVANIDHI
Politically charged



BIJISHNA
Careful and observant



BLESSY
Creative communication



CHANDRAN
Matured upcoming leader



FASEELA
Empowering women



GOKUL
Nilgiris water ambassador



KANNAN
Water, wetlands & music



KAVYA
Exploring sanitation solutions



LAKSHMI
Health & action



LALITHA
Land rights champion



MONISHA
Analytical and communicative



NANDHINI
Program, outreach through innovations



PAVITRA
Healing the community



PRAVEENA
Social studies applied to slums



P CHANDRAN
Local leadership



RAJATH
Data searcher



RAJENDRAN
Nuanced and perceptive



RAMACHANDRAN
Advocate for justice



RAFI
Steering fieldwork in Nilambur



SANEESH
Folk music



SUNIL
Bees & land rights



SURYA
Doctor with a purpose



THANVISH
Organic farming



VIGNESH
Engineering solutions



VINITHA
Building the sanitation hub

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT; NETWORKS



AMSAVENI
Smiling through accounts



EASWARAN
Money man



HARI
Teampayer



JEFFERY
Excel with numbers



NARAYAN
Night guardian



PRAKASH
Left with balance



ROHAN
Reviving traditional food practices



RAJESH
Ethical hacker



RITWICK
Keen analytical writer



SABITHA
Food manager



SARASASMEETA
Woman of action



SUJITHRA
Silent & steady



SUMIN
Keeper of grants



WILFRED
IT multitasker

PEOPLE & NATURE CENTRE



ABHISHEK
Healing through music



FAISAL
Co-creating knowledge
collectives



JEYANTHI
Voice of the people



MANICKAM
Giving the space
to the unheard



RANJINI
Storytelling through archives



 **Keystone**

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