THE RURAL FUTURES FELLOWSHIP

Transformation through youth leadership

In Partnership with

BALIPARA FOUNDATION
Assam • India

3rd March 2023
Nizoram Mili is a resident of Baligaon Miri Green Village, Assam.

A farmer, with 8 members in his family, Mili’s income was coming from farming was not enough for their sustenance.

“We did not have a huge family income and we were scared that I would have to withdraw my child from school and engage him somewhere so that we have some money at home” expressed Nizoram.
**THE CHALLENGES**

*Nizoram’s situation was not unique. Most people in such villages face similar challenges in providing for their families and many more.*

- **9.5% forest cover lost since 2000** i.e. an area greater than the entirety of Bhutan and Sikkim together.
- **80% or 197 million people** employed in highly nature dependent industries (e.g. agriculture, forestry, energy production, food & beverages, tourism).
- **80% are smallholder farmers.** 40-50% of the region faces poverty intensity over a 40% threshold.
- **Poor rural incomes** force communities to turn to forest exploitation to augment their incomes, to access universal basic assets like healthcare & education.
- **Low incomes and degraded habitats** result in communities’ reduced capacities to adapt to climate change and its associated challenges.

Most of these people live in the region’s valleys, at high risk because of deforestation and climate risks. Forests play a key role in regulating the hydrogeology of the region – river flows, groundwater & aquifer regeneration, flooding & soil erosion prevention – without which life in the valleys would be impossible.
THE PREDICAMENT

Shrinking Incomes

Deforestation

Ecological Degradation

A Vicious Cycle
Long-term ecological degradation has contributed to declining incomes & yields in a primarily agricultural region, forcing people to exploit forests to augment incomes & access basic assets – spurring further ecological degradation.
A RURAL DEAL FOR PEOPLE & NATURE

The Rural Futures model for creating incomes linked to forest restoration among rural and forest-fringe communities, paving the way for socioeconomic mobility linked to natural capital regeneration.

A natural capital based system to deliver universal basic assets (education, healthcare, water, energy, food security, transformative living spaces) to rural & forest-fringe communities.

- **Payment for Restoration**
- **Sustainable Businesses**
- **Maintenance**
- **Agroforestry**
- **Scientific Natural Asset Management**
THE STORY OF NIZORAM MILI

Success Story: RuFu® In Baligaon
Natural Capital incomes help access education

Nizoram says the RuFu programme came in as a ray of hope as not only because it provided him and his wife with an additional income but also it aimed to restore the area’s natural habitat.

“Our village is called a green village for a reason, it is because we the Mishing community are extremely passionate about nature and we like to live in harmony with it. Balipara Foundation has helped us in maintaining that.”

Nizoram gets involved in plantation work during the season (April-Aug) along with his wife and during this time he also has engaged daily wage labourers for his field where he cultivates paddy and Colocasia. His children are attending school and he says that he wants them to become economically independent and work for the development of the village.
Be a part of the change!
You too can be an enabler in improving the lives of the nation’s backbone!

RURAL FUTURES FELLOWSHIP
The RUFU Fellowship

An 18 months of immersive and residential training programme with young adults being introduced to the philosophy, practice and science of rewilding, sustainable agriculture and community-led conservation practices.

20 Fellows
Drawn from rural, indigenous & urban youth from across the Eastern Himalayas, with a focus on ensuring gender diversity & affirmative action for youth from lower socioeconomic status groups. 12 fellows receive grants for rewilding 100 hectares of land each after the fellowship.

18 months across 6 semesters
With 1 year of immersive residential experience that give fellows hands-on insights into the practical realities of managing large-scale rewilding and regenerative agricultural programmes co-created with local & indigenous communities in the Eastern Himalayas.

Next-gen Environment Leaders
Building a network of leaders and strong peer-to-peer community to tackle environmental challenges and define their leadership & entrepreneurial goals.
BUILDING SKILLS

Administrative
Key skills in managing and running organizations & large-scale projects

Technical
The A-Z of rewilding, regenerative agriculture and working with rural & indigenous communities

Big Ideas
The principles of rewilding and using systems thinking to analyze the interdependence between people, economy and ecology

Managerial
The essentials of ensuring impactful outcomes & reconciling stakeholder needs to deliver work on the ground

Leadership & Entrepreneurship
Defining your leadership goals, qualities & values, embedding them in practice & building your own team

Communications
Using storytelling tools to generate awareness, tell impactful stories & generate resources to facilitate change
WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

(21 – 35 YEARS)

- Potential Leaders / Visionaries
- Passionate about Community Upliftment
- Understands the importance of Environment
- Social Entrepreneurs / Intrapreneurs
- Aspirational and creatively driven
THE RUFU FELLOWSHIP JOURNEY

Technical Transformational Journey

Landscape Immersion
Understanding ecosystems, landscape & people

Indigenous Knowledge & Research
Holistic thinking on data, knowledge, impact & communities

Journey towards Rewilding
Launching rewilding work in a new community

Systems Immersion
Initiating live action projects

Launch Entrepreneurial Journey
Building partnerships and capacities for launching own rewilding journey

Entrepreneurial Establishment
Pitching for rewilding 100 hectare grant

Personal Transformational Journey

Building Self-Consciousness
Cultivating self-awareness & redefining value systems

Social Interdependencies
Connecting with communities & social construction of landscapes

Decoding Systemic Change
Thinking around systemic challenges & impediments

Analyzing Ecosystems
Interconnectedness with self, society & system

Decoding Entrepreneurial Mindset
Building adaptability to change & discovering leadership style

Entrepreneurial Setup
Building your core team and organization

REWILDING GRANT FOR 100 Ha
**AFTER THE FELLOWSHIP FELLOWS GO ON TO**

**Rewild forests**
Fellows will be able to pitch for 12 rewilding grants that support 100 hectares of restoration and will receive continued mentorship from the Balipara Foundation as they embark on their rewilding journey.

**Start their own sustainable businesses**
Through their entrepreneurial journey, fellows may decide to take the skills and experiences they have gained to start their own sustainable businesses – whether in sustainable supply chains for commodities like tea or coffee, or regenerative fashion, mindful tourism, nature-based solutions & more.

**Create policy from the grassroots**
Using their training in qualitative & quantitative research skills, in systems-thinking and analysis and working with communities to create policies that put ecology at the heart of economy and people at the heart of conservation.

**Bridge resource gaps through storytelling**
Equipped with storytelling and fundraising skills, fellows go on to draw attention to critical stories of communities on the frontlines of the climate and biodiversity crisis, stories of grassroots-led transformation and raise resources to scale and enable local solutions to complex ecological problems.

**Balipara Foundation**
Assam • India

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WHAT THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERS

01 Completion Certificate
Every Fellow will be provided with Fellowship Certificate on completion.

02 Travel Expenses & Insurance
The Fellowship will cover all the Field Expenses along with Accident Insurances for the fellows.

03 Stipend
Every Fellow will get a fixed Stipend of INR 20,000 per month.

04 Exposure
Beyond limit exposure to the grassroots of rural life and beauty of Eastern Himalayan Region.

05 End Goal: Rewilding Grant
12 out of 20 Fellows will be getting Rewilding Grant to restore 100 hectares of land each.
APPLICATION PROCESS

OPEN REGISTRATION

PROJECT SUBMISSION

PANEL SCREENING

APPLICATION FORM FILL UP

FIRST ROUND OF INTERVIEWS

FINAL SELECTION
**TOPIC:** Imagine you have 10 hectares of land, ready for optimum utilization. How would you use this land to uplift the socio-economic conditions of your community/area in keeping with environment and sustainability?

**Mode of Submission**

- **Video**
  - A short 1 Minute Video Presentation Introducing us to your topic and the solution

- **Slides**
  - Powerpoint Presentation on the topic explaining your project in details. Format will be provided.

- **Drawing**
  - A4 sized drawing depicting your vision which covers all the points mentioned in the format.
SELECTION CRITERIA

The Fellows we look for are

21 to 35 Years

01 ASPIRATIONAL
Aspirational & Driven towards Green Economics

02 ENTREPRENEURS
Entrepreneurial skills with passion towards agronomics and its future

03 AWARE
Environmentally aware, concerned about climate change impacts

04 LEADERS
Leadership skills with the zest of driving a community towards socio-economic development

05 CREATIVE
Innovative, creative & Technologically Driven
HOW TO APPLY

Scan

Fill the Application

Submit
The Balipara Foundation was established in 2007 and has been rewilding forests in the Eastern Himalaya since 2016. The organization achieves this through its Rural Futures model for rewilding forests and agricultural lands, while creating incomes that allow communities to pursue their wellbeing aspirations. Over the years, the Balipara Foundation has built strong networks with both local governments and forest departments, as well as with national and international businesses keen on furthering the cause of sustainability and emissions reduction nationally and globally.

As of 2022, the Balipara Foundation manages over 7000 hectares of restored forest land, with over 7 million trees, and positively impacting over 16,000 people through direct implementation and capacity building for managing and monitoring restored forest lands. The organisation is a member of the Circular Bioeconomy Alliance of King Charles III’s (formerly HRH the Prince of Wales) Sustainable Markets Initiative, with its Rural Futures model being adopted as a living lab experiment in building a circular bioeconomy in the Eastern Himalayan region, through community-led reforestation and agroforestry for sustainable businesses, including the launch of sustainable fashion landscapes through the SMI’s Sustainable Fashion taskforce.

i-Behind The Ink Foundation is a not-for-profit organization working on Mental Health and Wellbeing. With focus to engage on preventive care and awareness, working towards good mental health for all; we believe that prevention is better than cure. Our projects involves rigorous research and practical solutions to identify what’s most helpful; public information that empowers beneficiaries to look after their mental health and influencing work to move policies in the right direction.

With backed experience and knowledge of working with over 1000 youth, the organization specializes in designing and customizing solutions to create impact on ground. We believe, in order to to protect our future we need to engage youth today. We prioritize projects involving Youth Development and holistic wellbeing by creating meaningful engagements through fellowship programs.

Our past work on Fellowship development includes design & development for the Gandhi Fellowship.