Business Biodiversity Alliance, India:

Partnerships, Communities and SDGs

Workshop Report

Le Meridien, New Delhi, India. 20th September 2019

UN GLOBAL COMPACT

Network India

VNV Anvrsonv

VNV Advisory
Services

Keystone Foundation

01 Background

The Biodiversity Alliance was created through collaboration between The Centre of Excellence for Governance, Ethics and Transparency (CEGET), Keystone Foundation and VNV Advisory Services. The Alliance is being set up as a collaborative to support businesses to innovate and sustain programs which mitigate the impacts on the biodiversity in the country, while pursuing business goals. The Alliance will work towards achieving SDG 15 (Life on Land) by leveraging greater collective investments and partnerships to create seamless linkages between businesses and implementation partners.

02 Objectives

- To build output-based engagement platform for businesses and biodiversity stakeholders achieving SDG 15.
- To enable Corporate India in identifying vetted initiatives addressing biodiversity conservation while ensuring tangible outcomes by creating linkages to ensure tangible outcomes.
- To assess policy measures focusing on scalability and longevity of projects through business initiatives.
- To bring together the Indian businesses to cooperate on biodiversity conservation, simultaneously addressing SDG 17.

03 Discussions

Ms. Shabnam Siddiqui opened the proceedings of the evening by inviting all the participants to the first preparatory meeting of the Business Biodiversity Alliance (BBAI), India. Following a round of introductions by the participants present, Shabnam officially introduced the BBAI, giving a brief insight into the inception of the idea for such an Alliance and the rationale behind focussing specifically on the SDG 15. She then called upon all the gathered participants to make the event a participatory gathering and invited them to share their opinions and learnings during the event. Pratim Roy, the Founder and Director of Keystone Foundation, then introduced the Foundation's work in the Western Ghats and spoke briefly about some of the Alliances that Keystone has been a part of over the years. Sandeep Roy Choudhury, Founder and Director of VNV Advisory Services Private Limited then introduced us to some business-based alliances which exist, in India and globally. He delved into the rationale behind setting up BBAI despite the presence of some alliances in India – highlighting the action-oriented role that BBAI would be leading with, which is in stark contrast to the existing alliances. Joe Phelan from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development next shared the agenda of WBCSD and some of the work that is being done in India, he also expressed his support to the BBAI hoping that the day's discussions would identify pathways for collaboration.

This meeting had some special guests in the three senior forest department officials who had travelled to New Delhi to share their field experiences. Mr. Sujoy Banerjee, the Chief Conservator of Forests, Gonda UP; Mr. Sanjay Pathak, the Field Director from Dudhwa and Mr. R.N Saxena, Retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, MP shared their perspectives on the kind of biodiversity conservation-based activities that need to be funded in India. Their unique perspective allowed for the gathering to learn more about field anecdotes and the lack of long-term funding for livelihood activities for communities around protected areas in India.

The next session, moderated by Shabnam and Sandeep was an interactive exercise designed to gather inputs

from the business leaders gathered, specifically on the kind of initiatives that these companies had undertaken and the kind of challenges they often face in implementing conservation programs. The conversation revolved around how CSR programs are often the avenue that is taken up by the Corporates, another challenge was the limiting factor of initiating programs only in certain geographies chosen by the Corporates as opposed to designing programs in areas which have been clearly identified for social development. A key takeaway from the participants during this interaction was to superimpose a map of the backward districts identified in India with the geographies which get the most CSR funding, this could clearly showcase areas where Corporate funding is in actual need.

The workshopping session saw the participants identify three priority thematic areas, three geographies they would work in and, three particular challenges faced when working on conservation programs.
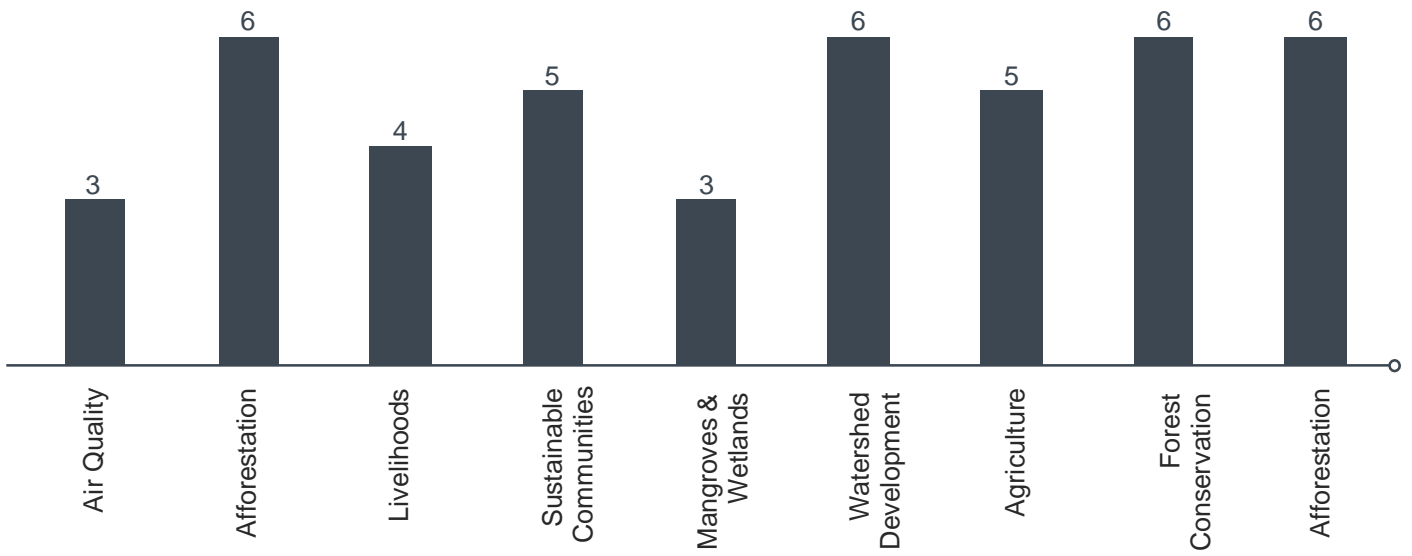
04 Challenges

1. Choosing right partners and periodically audit external agencies

2. Prioritize innovation in programs

3. Identify forest dependent communities as beneficiaries

4. Build on internal capacities and sessions for vendors

5. Absence of long term reliable funding

6. Design community led initiatives

7. Investing in programs to appease political interests

8. Corporate impunity for social and environmental impacts

9. Transparency in fund management

Thematic Areas Identified

Thematic Area	Value
Air Quality	3
Afforestation	6
Livelihoods	4
Sustainable Communities	5
Mangroves & Wetlands	3
Watershed Development	6
Agriculture	5
Forest Conservation	6
Afforestation	6

Geographies identified

Gujarat   Madhya Pradesh
Jharkand   Uttarakhand
Odisha   Uttar Pradesh
Chattisgarh   Tamil Nadu
Maharashtra   Karnataka

04 Conclusions

While this was the second preparatory meeting of the BBAI, the Alliance has decided to also organise three more such preparatory meetings in Bangalore, Mumbai and Kolkata. The rationale behind hosting multiple preparatory meetings is to bring many more businesses onboard to gather their perspectives to finalise the vision of the Alliance.

05 Annex 1: List of participants

Shabnam Siddiqui	CEGET
Somanth Singh	CEGET
Aryadev	CEGET
Sandeep Roy Choudhury	CEGET
Madhushree Narayan	VNV Advisory Services Pvt Ltd
Pratim Roy	VNV Advisory Services Pvt Ltd
Paul Wolvekemp	Keystone Foundation
Micheal Rice	BothEnds
Vivek Menon	BothEnds
Sahil Chomski	Wildlife Trust of India
Joe Phelan	Wildlife Trust of India
RC Gupta	WBSCD
Sanjay Pathak	BHEL
Sujoy Banerjee	Field Director, Dudhwa
RN Saxena	CCF, Gonda UP
Santosh Kumar Singh	Retired PCCF
Anindya Chowdhury	Adani Power
Aatish	Shell
Jyothi	Tetratech
Vivek Saxena	JSW
Abhishek Bharati	IUCN

Agenda

Round table Business Biodiversity Alliance, India: Partnerships, Communities and SDGs

Registrations begin at 2:30 pm
Tea served

Time	Topic	Detail
15:00 – 15:10	Introductions	Table round introductions
15:10 – 15.30	Business Biodiversity Alliance India: Introduction, Rationale	Shabnam Siddiqui, GCNI
	Biodiversity Conservation – case of the Western Ghats	Pratim Roy, Keystone Foundation Paul Wolvekamp, BothENDS
	Existing Alliances: Global and National, gaps and learnings	Sandeep Choudhury, VNV Advisory
	Business for Nature: Need and Update	Joe Phelan, WBCSD
15:30 – 16:00	Learning from the Corporates/ Challenges	Open discussion to identify challenges in funding biodiversity initiatives and key gaps in existing programs or alliances
		Facilitated by Shabnam and Sandeep
16:00 – 16:10		Tea Break
16:10 – 16:15	Introduction to next session	Sharing of ground level needs by 3 foresters: Ravindra Saxena (former Addl PCCF, MP); Sujoy Banerjee (CCF, UP); Sanjay Pathak, Director Dudhwa forest, UP
16:15 – 16:35	Workshopping: Sketch your priority	Exercise for Businesses to identify key areas (geographic & thematic) for BBAI to address
16:35 – 16:50	Discussions	Sharing of information based on the activity from previous exercise – identifying partnerships in the room
16:50 – 17:00		Way Forward