# MOBILISING PARTNERSHIPS AND PHILANTHROPY TO BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES IN ASIA PACIFIC

## ROUNDTABLE INSIGHTS REPORT

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**About WWF and Emirates Nature-WWF**

As the world's leading conservation organisation, WWF works in more than 100 countries to develop and deliver innovative solutions that protect communities, wildlife, and nature. WWF's AP30 refers to the internal coalition of 30 Asia Pacific WWF offices that share ambitions to exponentially increase the region's conservation impact, influence and income. The vision of AP30 is "A sustainable Asia Pacific for a sustainable world."

Emirates Nature–WWF is a non-profit organisation that is part of the global WWF network. Based in the United Arab Emirates, Emirates Nature-WWF works to drive positive environmental change locally and globally.

**About AVPN**

AVPN is Asia's leading social investment network, founded in 2011 to build an ecosystem that channels financial, human, and intellectual capital towards positive impact. With over 600 members across the private, public, and people sectors, AVPN promotes cross-sector collaboration and supports funders in using a continuum of capital – from grants to equity – to drive deeper impact. AVPN is committed to strengthening the effectiveness of social investment and accelerating sustainable development across Asia.

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# OVERVIEW & SUMMARY

**Climate change is exposing Asia to extreme weather events which threaten its economies, ecosystems and societies.** Harnessing nature for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation has proven a cost-effective way to reduce the negative impact of climate events, strengthen livelihoods, and build long-term resilience.

Yet **nature-focused resilience approaches remain severely underfunded.** Asia-based philanthropy, especially given that Asia has the largest number of billionaires, has a timely opportunity to play a pivotal role. A new generation of strategic donors will be increasingly important in a shifting donor landscape and in strengthening resilience.

**The insights captured in this report were gathered from a roundtable consisting of 100 leaders in philanthropy, investment, policy and conservation**, from across Asia Pacific and convened by AVPN and WWF.

The session served as a platform to launch WWF's **Building Climate Resilient Communities (BCRC) programme,** a collaborative effort between 30 WWF Asia Pacific offices and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), working to implement Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) to reduce disaster risks and address climate change impacts across the region.

The roundtable discussion that followed focused on linking barriers, opportunities and pathways to advancing community resilience to the impacts of climate change and disasters and the role of philanthropy.

Participant insights highlighted the:

- **Role of nature** in climate adaptation and sustainable livelihoods, and how NbS can unlock long-term benefits for people and planet
- **Barriers** that persist in advancing the role of nature for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable livelihoods
- **Opportunities** to strengthen the role of nature for long-term benefits to people and planet
- **Role of philanthropy** in advancing the nexus of climate, nature and people

# INTRODUCTION

**This report consolidates the key insights of the participants from the discussion and offers actionable solutions on how philanthropy, in collaboration with governments and communities, can place nature at the centre of Asia Pacific's response to climate and disaster risks.**

The report also highlights examples of nature-driven programmes, such as WWF's BCRC programme which brings together actors in humanitarian and disaster relief and conservation and climate change. The programme aims to mainstream the nexus of Nature-based Solutions, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation, working across sectors and combining expertise to strengthen climate and disaster resilience in Asia-Pacific. The programme showcases the impact that can be achieved when barriers are overcome and opportunities to use nature to achieve lasting benefits for people and the planet are seized.

**All quotes throughout the report are taken from the discussion and anonymised,** while the text summarises concepts and opportunities highlighted by the participants during the roundtable.


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**Asia is currently warming nearly twice as fast as the global average, driving a rise in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, floods and typhoons[1].** Economies, ecosystems and societies across Asia and the Pacific region are highly vulnerable to the impacts of these events[2].

Between 1996 and 2015, six of the ten most affected countries by climate-related impacts were in Asia[3]. By 2050, these impacts are also projected to lead to an average of

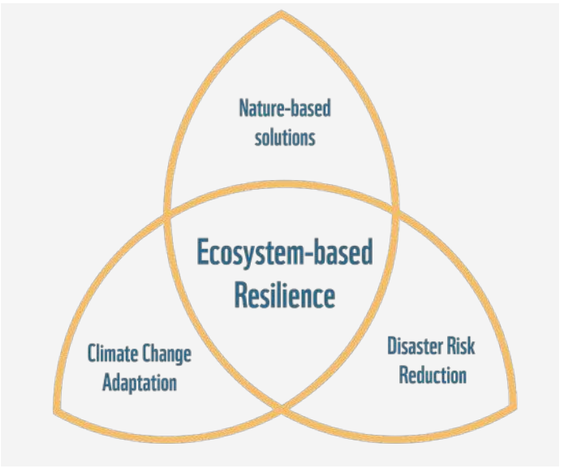
**75 million internal climate migrants across the Asia Pacific region[4].**

Even if countries meet the ambition set in the Paris Agreement, and limit warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the region will still be significantly affected by the impact of climate change. Current global warming has already increased by 1.3°C, making Asia vulnerable to current and projected impacts of climate change.

### ASIA'S CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

- Asia is warming **2× faster** than global average
- Six of the ten most affected countries by climate-related impacts
- Already **+1.3°C global warming** above pre-industrial levels

**Adapting to climate change requires a rapid, scaled-up, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder push via policies, investment and actions** that deliver increased resilience to people, communities and nature. **One cost-effective opportunity is using nature to address challenges in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)[5] and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA)[6].** This approach can provide protection as well as economic resilience to people and communities on the forefront of climate impacts and hazards[7].




- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causes of disasters[15].
- Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) refers to adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities[16].
- A hazard is a process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. Examples of climate-related hazards are extreme temperature, extreme precipitation, drought, wildfire, wind threats, river flooding and coastal flooding[17].

For example, mangroves have the potential to reduce annual flooding for more than 18 million people globally[8] by averting flood damage and protecting coastal infrastructure, with projected avoided costs of up to US$57 billion each year across China, India, Mexico, US and Viet Nam[9].

As such, Nature-based Solutions (NbS), defined as *actions to address societal challenges through the protection, sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems, benefiting both biodiversity and human well-being*[5], provide critical investment opportunities and could save developing countries US$104 billion in damages by 2030[7]. NbS have the potential to deliver up to one-third[6] of global climate change mitigation needs, while also reducing the intensity of weather-related hazards by 26%[7].

While these approaches have proven to be effective in building resilience, financing remains a challenge, with significant gaps in finance for nature, disaster preparedness and climate adaptation.

### NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS (NBS)

*Actions to address societal challenges through the protection, sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems benefiting both biodiversity and human well-being.*

- Could save developing countries **US$104 billion** in damages by 2030[7].
- Potential to deliver up to one-third of global climate change mitigation needs[6].
- Can reduce the intensity of weather-related hazards by 26%[7].
- Can reduce wave heights by ~35–71%, buffering storm impacts[7].

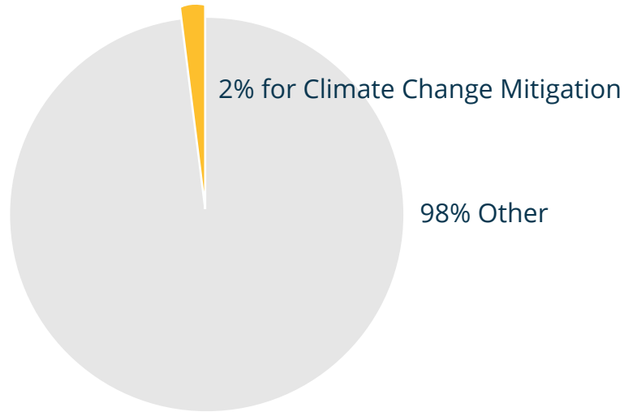
**An estimated US$5.9 trillion in climate finance is required by 2050 for developing countries to achieve their climate goals [10].**

However, in 2023, US$1.9 trillion (only a small portion of the $5.9 trillion estimate) flowed toward climate finance globally, while adaptation-related nature projects received only about 46 billion of total climate finance flows[11].

Given the scale of the climate, disaster preparedness and nature funding gap, closing it will require contributions from a variety of sources. Philanthropy is one such source that could help narrow the gap. Yet, to date it is estimated that **only 2% of philanthropic giving has supported climate change mitigation, while reliable data on philanthropic support for broader climate resilience, including climate adaptation, remains limited[12].**

With Asia now home to the world's largest number of billionaires – and a new generation of donors who recognise the urgency of addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing disasters – **strategic and sustainable giving through regional philanthropy is poised to play a critical role in climate action [13][14].**

### PHILANTHROPY ALLOCATION




This is a timely opportunity to channel growing wealth into approaches that place nature at the centre of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

**Aligning philanthropic capital with these priorities can help build long-term resilience across the Asia Pacific region where the need is urgent and the potential for impact is high.**

The BCRC programme is one such approach. It shows how philanthropic capital can be aligned with these priorities, demonstrating the potential of strategic giving to advance adaptation and disaster resilience in Asia Pacific.

To advance the discourse on these financing gaps and opportunities for greater impact, AVPN, Emirates Nature-WWF and 30 WWF offices in Asia Pacific (AP30), convened experts to explore the critical role of philanthropic organisations in advancing the integration of climate, nature and humanitarian efforts and how to ensure the long-term sustainability of such initiatives.

They also discussed the strategic alignment of community resilience, nature, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. The collective experience of participants in funding and implementing diverse social and environmental impact programmes across the region also provided a unique opportunity to gather insights on the potential to finance and deliver climate and disaster resilience in Asia Pacific.

# THE ROLE OF NATURE IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

The roundtable opened with a focus on the role of nature and NbS in climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable livelihoods. Many pointed to the Building Resilient Communities Programme, as an example of how collaboration between major NGOs can create stronger, more synergised impacts, supporting communities not just with food and water security, but also with healthier ecosystems and improved livelihoods.

Contributors stressed that **NbS are not only about the protection and restoration of nature and carbon sequestration, but they also fundamentally provide environmental, societal and economic benefits linked to the access to food, water, income and safety.** This integrated framing is central to BCRC, which demonstrates how NbS connect environmental benefits with community needs. One participant remarked:

> *"The imperative of Nature-based Solutions is not just about conservation, what matters is basic rights, access to basic amenities, and income."*

Participants shared first-hand experience from programmes across Asia Pacific that deliver long-term benefits for the well-being and resilience of people on the ground.

In the Philippines, **community-led mangrove restoration** was described as one of the clearest demonstrations of NbS in action, **providing sustainable protection against typhoons, prosperity through fisheries and improved food security as well as new eco-tourism opportunities.** As one participant put it:

> *"You can make a sea barrier from concrete which becomes weaker over time... but if you make a sea barrier out of mangroves... each year, it just becomes stronger and stronger."*

Another example brought forward was the unknown and **untapped potential of DNA assets** that nature provides.

Current research on specific flora is already leading to **medical breakthroughs and there are countless further opportunities that lie undiscovered within communities and their unique ecosystems –** from medicinal plants already contributing to cures for diseases, to many more benefits still waiting to be discovered.

> *"They [the communities] are sitting on DNA assets [...] herbs, medicines, things that we need for the future."*

Further examples included wetland and watershed restoration as critical drivers of resilience in the Mekong region.

> *"Restoring wetlands doesn't just bring back ecosystems, it secures water, reduces flood risks and sustains livelihoods"*

**Restored wetlands improve soil health, stabilise slopes and recharge aquifers, strengthening agricultural productivity and ensuring reliable water supplies.** They filter water naturally, reduce disease risks, and support surrounding fisheries and birdlife. Other participants highlighted **afforestation and community forestry** programmes that have **reduced landslides and erosion while generating income through timber and non-timber products.**

Additional experiences came from **climate-smart agriculture, reef rehabilitation and sustainable aquaculture.** For example, farmers adopting agroforestry and drought-resistant crops reported **higher yields and greater preparedness for climate shocks.** Others highlighted how mud crab farming in a locally-led mangrove restoration project had enabled families to reinvest in education healthcare, and housing.

**Across the board, speakers stressed that nature underpins resilience, security and prosperity.** The shared challenge, many concluded, is about ensuring that using nature and NbS are recognised as a solution, adequately funded and scaled to meet the urgency of today's climate and disaster risks. The BCRC Programme was highlighted as a pathway to address this challenge by helping scale NbS across Asia Pacific and aligning them with sustainable financing models.

## EXAMPLES OF CO-BENEFITS OF BCRC PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS

**1 Ecosystem Restoration and Sustainable Income**

Coastal restoration through mangrove rehabilitation helps protect freshwater by reducing saltwater intrusion caused by extreme weather events. Linking these efforts with public–private partnerships, such as eco-tourism, provides sustainable financing, ecosystem protection, and resilient livelihoods.

© WWF

**2 Restored Landscapes Protect from Hazards and Support Livelihoods**

Farming sea cucumbers and sea grapes in restored coral reefs and mangroves supports livelihoods while also reducing wave heights, buffering storm impacts, and limiting saltwater intrusion.

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**3 Disaster Preparedness Measures**

Community-led disaster risk planning that includes the implementation of NbS endorsed by the community, combined with vulnerability mapping and early warning systems, enhances safety during extreme weather events.

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# BARRIERS TO ADVANCING NATURE'S ROLE IN RESILIENCE AND LIVELIHOODS

A variety of insights came through the discussion that covered a **multitude of persistent barriers to funding nature, climate adaptation and disaster risk resilience projects.** These barriers span financial, political, institutional, knowledge and capacity, and communication challenges that persist at different levels across countries and organisations in Asia Pacific.

## 1. FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Participants highlighted the continuing reality of nature-focused resilience being constrained by short-term donor cycles. **One-to-three-year funding windows, which may be driven by political pressures and/or strategic priorities, remain a major obstacle.**

> *"Philanthropy often seeks results it can share in the near-term, even though many nature-based benefits emerge over decades."*

This bias channels investment into conventional infrastructure that is ribbon-ready, while sidelining nature-driven approaches that are slower, more complex or perceived as uncertain.

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Participants also pointed to broader challenges: the competition across multiple urgent themes requiring financing; traditional donors and family philanthropy carrying inherited ways of working and the diversity of philanthropic approaches, some of which demand more locally grounded models that are culturally or religiously aligned.

Even when funds exist, they are often underutilised.

> *"It's not that the money isn't there, it's that the projects aren't ready for it."*

Compliance burdens, weak monitoring systems and technical capacity gaps, often due to **donor-specific bureaucratic processes that may make sense in the donor countries but are complex and misaligned with local realities**, make it difficult for local actors to access or manage available resources.  As one participant summarised:

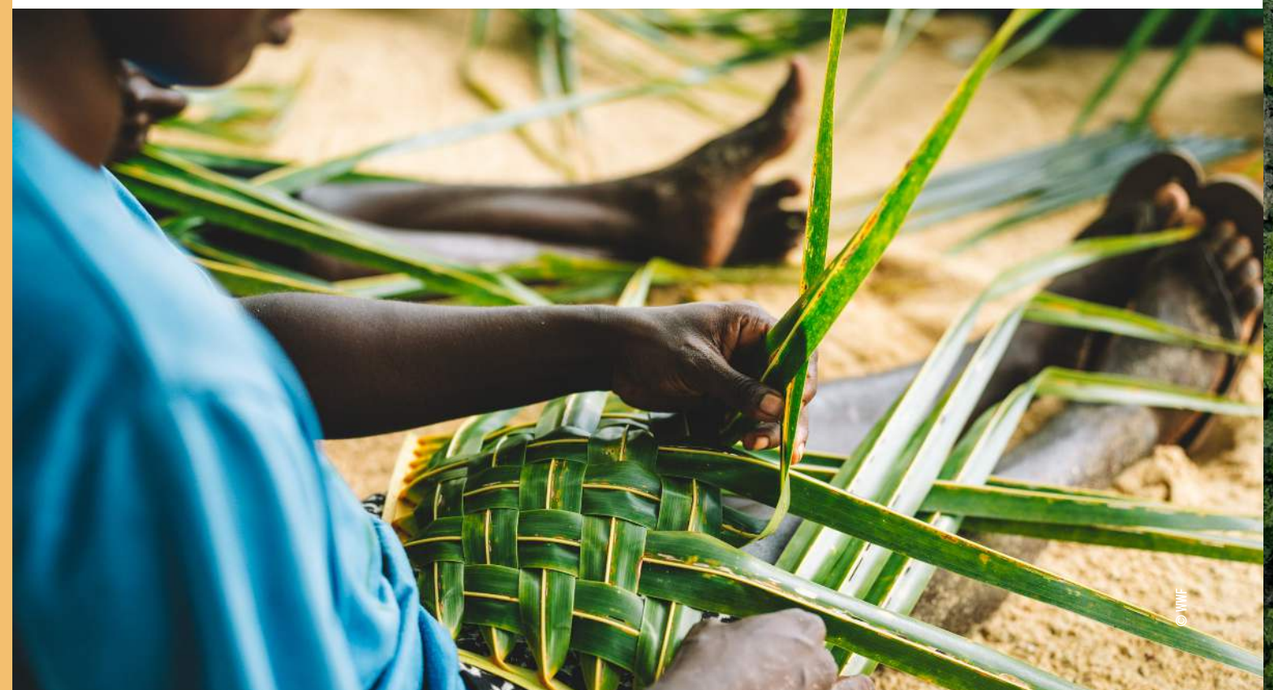
> *"There's a lot of goodwill, but when it comes time to absorb the funds and deliver, there's a gap."*

Meanwhile bankable NbS projects remain scarce, complex to design, costly to prepare, and high in transaction costs and risk – making many donors reluctant to support them. The BCRC programme aims to address these issues by trialing, developing and scaling more NbS for adaptation projects across the Asia Pacific region, working toward a pathway of financial sustainability and a vision of bankability.

A deeper barrier lies in valuation, as discussed by experts:

> *"If it can't be measured, it doesn't make it into the budget."*

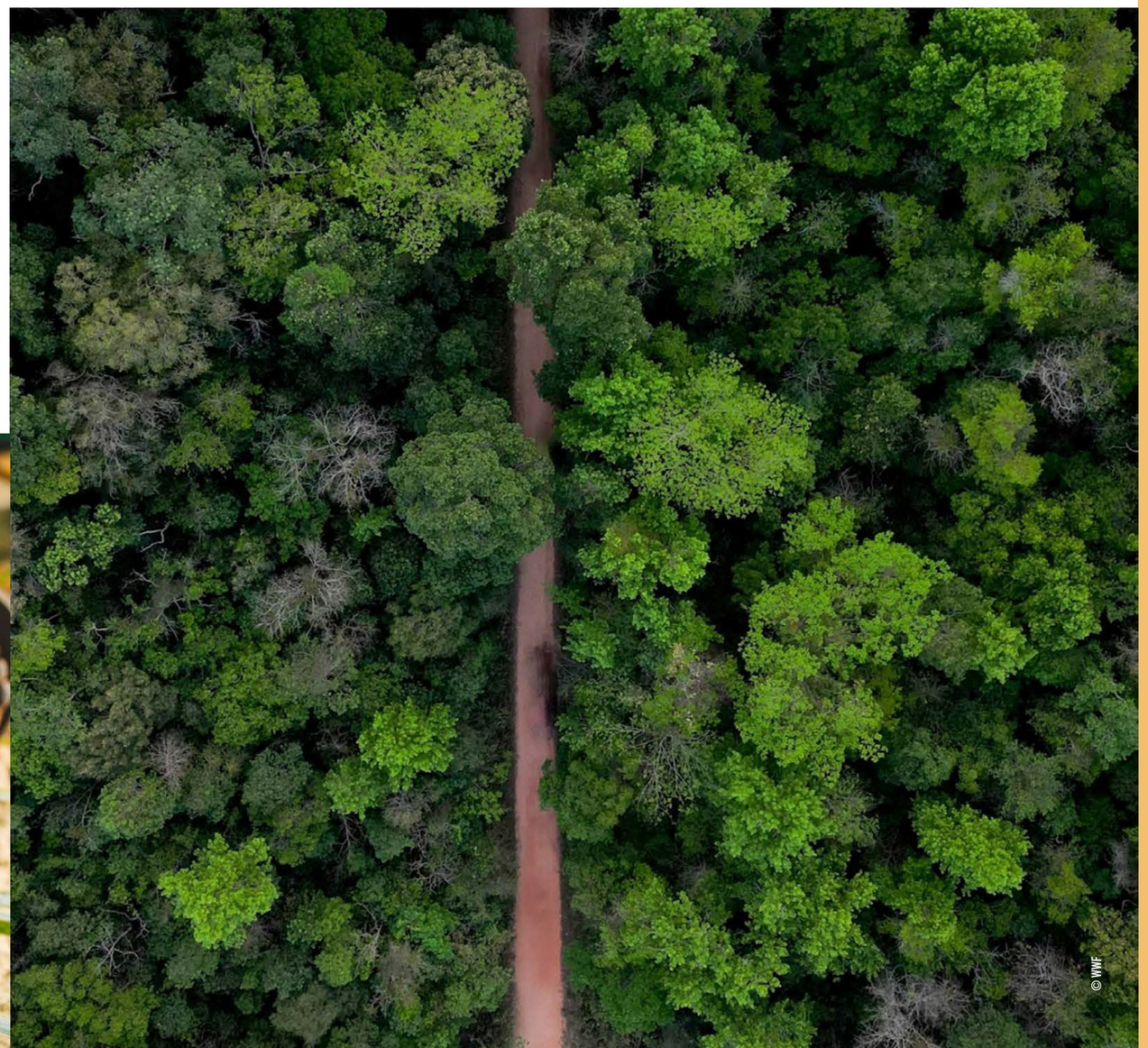
**Unless ecosystems generate clear profit or revenue, they are often treated as costs, not assets.** This reinforces the perception that NbS lack financial returns, even when they provide critical avoided losses as well as societal benefits as described above. In addition, pre-defined frameworks, such as reliance on economic growth as proxies for success, do not consider the entire value of NbS. They further marginalise nature-based approaches unless paired with community-led models and alternative indicators of resilience and well-being.




## 2. INSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE BARRIERS

**Fragmentation and siloed approaches add to the problem by slowing action and limiting collaboration.** Land, water, agriculture, finance and infrastructure are often managed separately, while experts in climate, conservation and disaster risk reduction work in parallel forums that duplicate rather than align. Sectoral efforts like food security rarely link with conservation, missing opportunities to build resilience.

> *"Very rarely do we work as one on a solution for a community or a country. It cannot be Organisation 1 that is building bridges and roads, but independently of Organisation 2 working in a community on education, and then someone else comes to work on housing. I see that disconnect all the time."*



## 3. COMMUNICATION AND NARRATIVE BARRIERS

**Narratives around nature-focused resilience remain fragmented, overly technical and often disconnected from the priorities of those who shape policy and direct funding.**

While biodiversity, carbon or GDP growth may motivate some stakeholders, the outcomes that consistently resonate are societal ones. As one roundtable voice put it:

> *"We are still failing to connect the dots between people, planet and policy."*

Another participant elaborated by saying:

> *"We keep leading with carbon or conservation, but what motivates people is safety, income and dignity."*

**Successes are too often buried in technical reports or framed in language that speaks only to specialists.**

This renders the transformative reality and potential of nature invisible to the wider political and philanthropic community.

> *"When an approach protects biodiversity, reduces disaster risk, and creates jobs all at once, we should be shouting that from the rooftops, but instead, we bury it in footnotes."*

## 4. COMMUNITY AND CAPACITY BARRIERS

**Local actors are often excluded from the design, delivery and governance of resilience initiatives,** despite being closest to the risks and holding critical contextual knowledge. This exclusion undermines ownership, cultural legitimacy and sustainability, raising issues of community justice and the principle that those most affected should have a decisive role in shaping solutions. In addition, **governments and their local agencies sometimes lack the knowledge and tools to integrate nature into decision making, for example in disaster risk reduction or landscape planning.** This not only constrains the use of nature based approaches, but also limits the support governments can provide to communities in embedding these approaches into their own planning and practice.

Where communities are not co-investors, interventions risk becoming externally driven projects with short shelf lives rather than embedded, locally-managed systems.

> *"If communities are not co-investors in the solution, then it's not a solution, it's a project."*

The mismatch between donor expectations and community realities further constrains impact.

Some communities are prepared but overlooked because they lack formal structures or the rapid visibility donors favour. Others lack cohesion or willingness to lead resilience efforts.

> *"Not all communities are equipped to act collectively, and not all want to."*

# OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN NATURE'S ROLE FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

**Integrating nature into national infrastructure, climate adaptation planning and budgeting frameworks is essential for transitioning from isolated projects** where nature and NbS are used for adaptation and disaster risk reduction **to a more mainstream and systemic practice.** Effective development also recognises that environmental health and human well-being are interdependent. As one participant put it:

> *"I'm now seeing that the reason for the problem is cyclones, forests, hills and floods. So, it's actually not an education or a health problem, it's a natural issue. So, forget about rescue and relief. Even basic education and health services are linked to natural resources."*

## 1. RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF NATURE

This shift towards recognizing the importance of nature and Nature-based Solutions (NbS), and the link between environmental health and human well-being, can be supported in many ways, including by **valuing nature and integrating it into cost-benefit analyses, investment decisions, and national accounting systems.**

> *"I think that if you were faced with any policy decision or investment decision in a budgetary process for central government decision-making, if you started properly accounting for the value of nature to people, it would inspire a completely different set of decisions that you would be making. And Nature-based Solutions are at the heart of that, because they're fiscally expedient, they're good for nature, they're good for people, they're good for climate – the best possible things we can be doing."*

The valuation of nature for economic integration needs to be done with caution.

> *"Over-monetizing also risks losing intrinsic value [of nature]."*

However, when done thoughtfully and in balance with other values, economic valuation can offer important opportunities for scaling the role of nature for sustainable livelihoods by making their benefits more visible in policy and investment decisions.

One way to measure the value of nature is by establishing standardized and comprehensive impact measurement metrics. **Developing assessment frameworks that capture the full spectrum of ecosystem services, economic benefits and social outcomes, including avoided societal costs,** is critical for demonstrating value to diverse stakeholders and informing policy. Robust, transparent monitoring systems with standardized metrics can track these benefits over time.

> *"We're investing in infrastructure that we can't even fully account for. Imagine if we could show that a hectare of mangroves delivers more protection over 30 years than a seawall."*

## 2. BUILDING POWERFUL NARRATIVES

Adaptation of a narrative and storytelling around nature-focused solutions is a crucial component of catalyzing this change. By explaining the benefits of using nature and NbS for community well-being, and **by translating technical solutions into human stories, communities and policymakers alike can better connect with the tangible value of nature-based approaches.**

> *"Scientists can talk about Nature-based Solutions, but if you have a community living in the mangroves who can say, 'Now I can feed my family due to the mud crab farming, because we conserved the mangroves', that's powerful."*

Some participants emphasised that the occurrence of **climate shocks and global crises** such as COVID, can also serve as a strategic entry point **to include nature in public discourse and policy making** and to advocate for systemic policy shifts.

> *"We must use moments of crisis, like the bushfires, to shift narratives and mobilise support for systemic change."*

## 3. ADOPTING A PEOPLE-CENTRIC APPROACH AND SUPPORTING EXCHANGE MECHANISMS

At the heart of many nature-focused solutions for disaster resilience and climate change mitigation are communities. Often, these communities are the source of valuable solutions that they have applied locally for generations. Such solutions can be shared and scaled and thus should be prioritised by funding sources. When done correctly, lasting impact is almost guaranteed, as **local communities move from passive beneficiaries to active co-designers and stewards of interventions and resilience.** At other times, particularly when new ways of using nature are introduced, such as through South–South knowledge sharing, **capacity building and socio-economic measures should accompany introduced methods.** Although not always the primary goal, economic measures are effective in supporting and reinforcing the impact and implementation of the solution.

One participant shared a project using mangroves to buffer storms, boost fisheries income and support local economies. Alongside this, they introduced group savings and loan schemes.

> *"After the last two typhoons [and before the full storm-buffering capacity of the mangroves had materialised], project staff called community members to ask if they needed help, to which the communities replied: 'No, we were able to give our own relief packs from our group savings."*

Such examples demonstrate that the long-term success of community-led resilience efforts depends not only on local action, but also on the continuous exchange of experience and expertise. Knowledge platforms and regional exchange mechanisms can accelerate the adoption of approaches. These platforms can document successful governance models alongside technical approaches, while exchanges help share best practices and lessons learned.

> *"We should leverage existing local knowledge and initiatives, not just funding."*

Meanwhile, regional coalitions that align nature with climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction frameworks can create institutional mechanisms for sustained cross-sector collaboration rather than one-off projects. **Supporting regional networks allows for the exchange of context-specific solutions while addressing transboundary environmental challenges.**

## 4. BREAKING SILOES AND FINANCING FLEXIBLY

Translating this shared knowledge into real-world impact, also means uniting efforts to break traditional sectoral silos and establishing sustainable financing. **Effective implementation depends on dismantling silos and creating spaces where technical experts, policymakers, practitioners and community leaders can align objectives and pool expertise across multiple areas.** This is particularly important in times where:

> *"Budget cuts are forcing us to rethink funding models."*

As one participant described it:

> *"When I started my career, we all worked very much in silos: conservation, humanitarian, development, private sector. We work closer together now, but not enough. We have to take into account what the community wants, not by sector, but in a broader picture, and bring the different voices to one table."*

Designing suitable financing models such as patient capital mechanisms, including multi-year grants and risk-sharing instruments, are valuable for supporting the experimental phase of nature-based projects. **Flexible funding mechanisms like first-loss guarantees and pay-for-success models help bridge the gap between pilot projects and bankable initiatives,** while building the evidence base for larger investments and sustaining impact.

> *"Resilience is not built in a day. Conservation takes time… sometimes you lose money in the first years, but that's the only way to manage resources sustainably."*

## CASE STUDY - RECHARGE PAKISTAN

Recharge Pakistan is one of the on-the-ground examples that shows the impact that nature-driven projects can achieve when barriers are overcome and opportunities to scale community-led, NbS are realised, providing long-term climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction benefits to people and planet It also represents a strong example of multi-sector collaboration, combining government leadership with the technical expertise and resources of international donors, NGOs and the private sector.

Recharge Pakistan builds climate resilience through Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) and green infrastructure for integrated food management aiming to benefit approximately 8 million people across the Indus Basin with long-term goals of strengthening climate resilience, water and food security, and sustainable livelihoods.

The project uses NbS – restoring wetlands and forests, rehabilitating water channels, and promoting climate-smart, community-led practices – to reduce flood and drought risks. Beyond flood control, Recharge Pakistan also aims to reduce erosion and landslide risks, support groundwater recharge, and improve water flows during dry seasons, delivering wide-ranging benefits for local communities and ecosystems.

The initiative emphasizes meaningful community engagement, grounding interventions in scientific evidence and studies, as well as in local knowledge and priorities. By integrating environmental, social, and economic dimensions, Recharge Pakistan takes a long-term view, building not just infrastructure, but institutional and community capacity to adapt to a changing climate.

### RECHARGE PAKISTAN PROGRAMME DETAILS

GREEN CLIMATE FUND

WWF

THE Coca-Cola FOUNDATION

- 7-YEAR INITIATIVE
- ECOSYSTEM-BASED ADAPTATION (EBA)
- DIRECT BENEFICIARIES: 687K
  INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES: 7M
- US$72.8 MILLION
- INTEGRATED FLOOD MANAGEMENT
- INDUS BASIN, PAKISTAN

> *"When we were doing the feasibility studies of the interventions, we brought the community and provincial governments on board. If they don't own it, they will say this is not our project. The design is such that the interventions will be done by the provincial governments with the ownership of the community."*

# PHILANTHROPY'S ROLE IN ADVANCING THE NEXUS OF CLIMATE, NATURE AND PEOPLE

A critical role of philanthropic organisations is ensuring long term sustainability to reduce humanitarian need and ensure the long-term sustainability of initiatives.

## 1. BE THE COHESIVE FORCE TO BUILD THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Philanthropic organisations are often equipped with wide-reaching, high-level contacts. As such, **philanthropic organisations can use their convening power** to assemble diverse stakeholders. By leveraging these connections to foster exchanges across actors – from government agencies to grassroots organisations – philanthropic organisations can help break down silos, foster multi-sector collaborations and co-create solutions that transcend sectoral boundaries.

In addition, **philanthropic organisations can provide funding for research and integration** that may be perceived as less impact-oriented, with slower and less visible impacts, yet may ultimately be even more transformative given the potential, and if incorporated into policy considerations. One participant highlighted how:

> *"In terms of the impact that we can provide, both within our own country and then regionally and then for the world, the biggest contribution we can make is by helping governments to shift the levers of policy to drive better outcomes."*

## 2. BE THE SUPPORTER TO SHAPE POLICY

**By providing strategic support across the full policy cycle from research and pilot demonstrations to implementation, philanthropic organisations can help transition successful models from projects to standard practice and showcase the benefits of nature-focused approaches to decision-makers.** This also requires sustained engagement with diverse partners to align conservation objectives with broader development priorities, as well as capacity building to integrate NbS across sectors.

To support the alignment of conservation with broader development priorities, NGOs – particularly those that may lack the knowledge, resources or capacity beyond project implementation – receive financial support to allow them the time to experiment, build expertise in complementary areas, and share ground-level experiences and perspectives, enabling them to convey to decision-makers the impact they seek to achieve.

> *"[Philanthropic organisations] would curate a capacity building session with them [the NGO's] to support their growth, as well as help them put [...] recommendations forward. The output of this effort is documents, recommendations, white papers. That output goes into decision-making."*

## 3. BE THE PATIENT FUNDER TO SUPPORT PIONEERS

Another key theme was the transformation of philanthropic organisations from donors to system-builders, achieved by changing how they provide financial support. Philanthropic organisations can play a pivotal role in **providing patient capital or endowments, absorbing early-stage risks and pioneering innovative financial instruments** that move beyond conventional grant cycles and are tailored to environmental challenges and the long-term, complex nature of their solutions.

> *"Philanthropies can be like venture capital... they can have an experimental, entrepreneurial view."*

Their ability to **support early-stage initiatives and unproven approaches with catalytic capital** helps incubate innovative models with high risk and high reward, integrating traditional ecological knowledge with modern science.

> *"Philanthropy should not be seen simply as a funding source (...) it plays a pivotal role in de-risking innovation."*

## 4. BE THE KEY TO UNLOCK MORE CAPITAL

Meanwhile, supporting **flexible funding mechanisms such as blended finance instruments** – which combine charitable funding with private investment – and adapting traditional giving mechanisms to support the people, climate and environment nexus at scale is essential. **Financing must evolve beyond fragmented grants and reactive philanthropy.**

> *"Does a disaster have to happen and then philanthropy? Or [...] can they move in at the mitigation stage rather than wait for something to happen and then mobilise?"*

More strategic approaches rooted in trust-based capital, shared measurement and long-term commitment can bridge the gap between innovation and scale, unlocking durable impact for nature and communities alike. This includes exploring innovative instruments like environmental impact bonds, payment-for-ecosystem-services models and other mechanisms that create sustainable financing streams.

# THE BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME

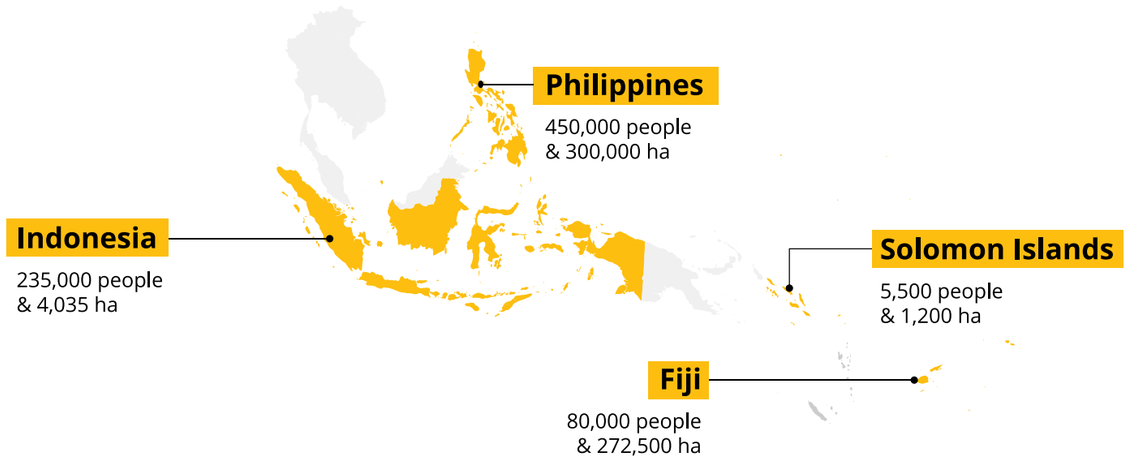
## A POWERFUL EXAMPLE OF OVERCOMING BARRIERS AND SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES TO HARNESS NATURE FOR LASTING BENEFITS TO PEOPLE AND PLANET

The Building Climate Resilient Communities (BCRC) programme is a **joint initiative of WWF and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).** By bringing together the world's largest conservation and humanitarian organisations, the programme breaks silos by working across sectors, combining expertise to advance climate and disaster resilience in Asia Pacific. The programme is open to further collaboration with diverse partners to build multi-sectoral alliances for resilience.

**The BCRC programme aims to support projects across at least 16 Asia Pacific countries, mainstreaming NbS in delivering disaster and climate resilience.** It is locally-led, working directly with communities, regional networks and national societies, such as the IFRC national societies and community networks on the ground.

**In its first phase, the programme aims to strengthen the resilience of more than 770,000 people in four pilot countries:**

IFRC Implementing nature-based solutions to protect people and nature | WWF




By restoring and enhancing ecosystems that sustain traditional stewardship practices - such as seagrape farming – and shield vulnerable communities from climate change hazards, like storm buffering through mangroves or coral reef restoration, the programme improves livelihoods and well-being while supporting climate change adaptation.

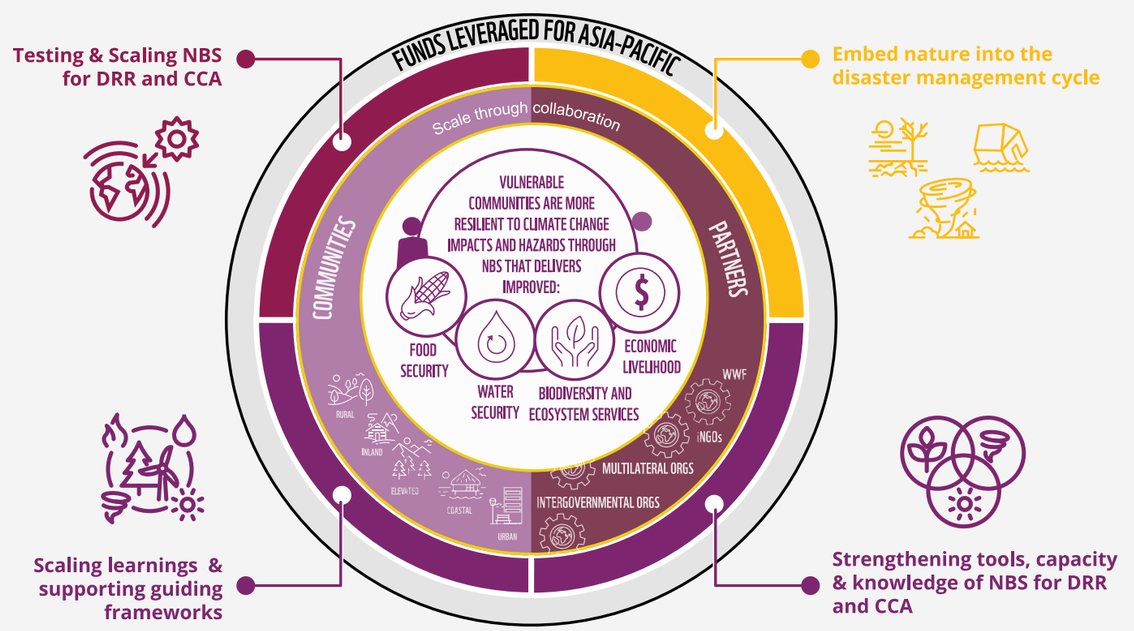
Combined with **research, and socio-ecological and climate vulnerability assessments**, the programme delivers **culturally-grounded solutions** that meet local needs and build long-term resilience.

BCRC views nature as both an asset and an intrinsic value. A cornerstone is the systemic **integration of disaster risk reduction measures and early warning systems into national frameworks, policies and infrastructure planning.**

The programme builds enabling environments by developing tools, supporting research, integrating nature into policy, scaling best practices and strengthening stakeholder capacity across communities and countries.

**The programme aims to leverage US$100 million in flexible funding by 2030 and sustain its impact by developing financial models** and strategies for project continuity and long-term sustainability.

## THE BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME



# ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPIC ENGAGEMENT AND BROADER ACTION

## FINANCING & FUNDING

1. **Commit to Long-Term, Flexible Financing:** Provide multi-year patient capital that matches ecological and community timelines, incorporate adaptive reviews and prioritise learning over rigid project end dates and strict metrics.

2. **De-Risk and Scale Innovative Models:** Use catalytic capital and first-loss guarantees to attract co-investment in promising Nature-based Solutions pilots, and support early-stage initiatives.

3. **Expand Flexible Funding Mechanisms** such as blended finance to combine philanthropic and private capital to fund people-climate-nature solutions.

## POLICY & RESEARCH

4. **Invest in Policy Research and Integration:** Provide targeted support for policy-focused research, technical studies and NbS integration efforts that, while less visible, can shift key government levers and help embed successful models into policy and practice.

5. **Build Enabling Environments** by supporting the full policy cycle, enhancing capacity at all levels, and creating tools, to mainstream nature across sectors.

6. **Enable Impact Measurement and Local Influence:** Use funding for impact measurement, evidence and analysis, while equipping NGOs and communities with resources, expertise and policy exposure to shape decisions and drive systemic and policy change.

## COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIPS

7. **Invest in Models that support Traditional Stewardship Practices** while introducing innovative techniques to create sustainable livelihood opportunities tied to ecosystem restoration. Approaches must remain culturally grounded, respecting local knowledge and values while integrating scientific advancements.

8. **Value Nature in Decision-Making:** Consider balanced valuation methods that systematically integrate a consideration of nature's benefits into cost-benefit analyses, investment decisions and natural capital accounts, while safeguarding the intrinsic value of nature.

9. **Invest in narrative change around nature-focused solutions** by supporting storytelling that translates technical evidence into compelling, human-centered stories, helping policymakers and communities connect with the tangible value of NbS.

## PARTNERSHIPS & KNOWLEDGE SHARING

10. **Foster Cross-sector Partnerships** by using philanthropic convening powers to unite different stakeholders to help break down silos, foster multi-sector collaborations and alliances.

11. **Support Knowledge Platforms and Regional Exchanges** and sustain them over time to enable dialogue, best-practice sharing and co-created solutions that overcome borders and transnational environmental challenges.

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