



# A TREE FALL GAP

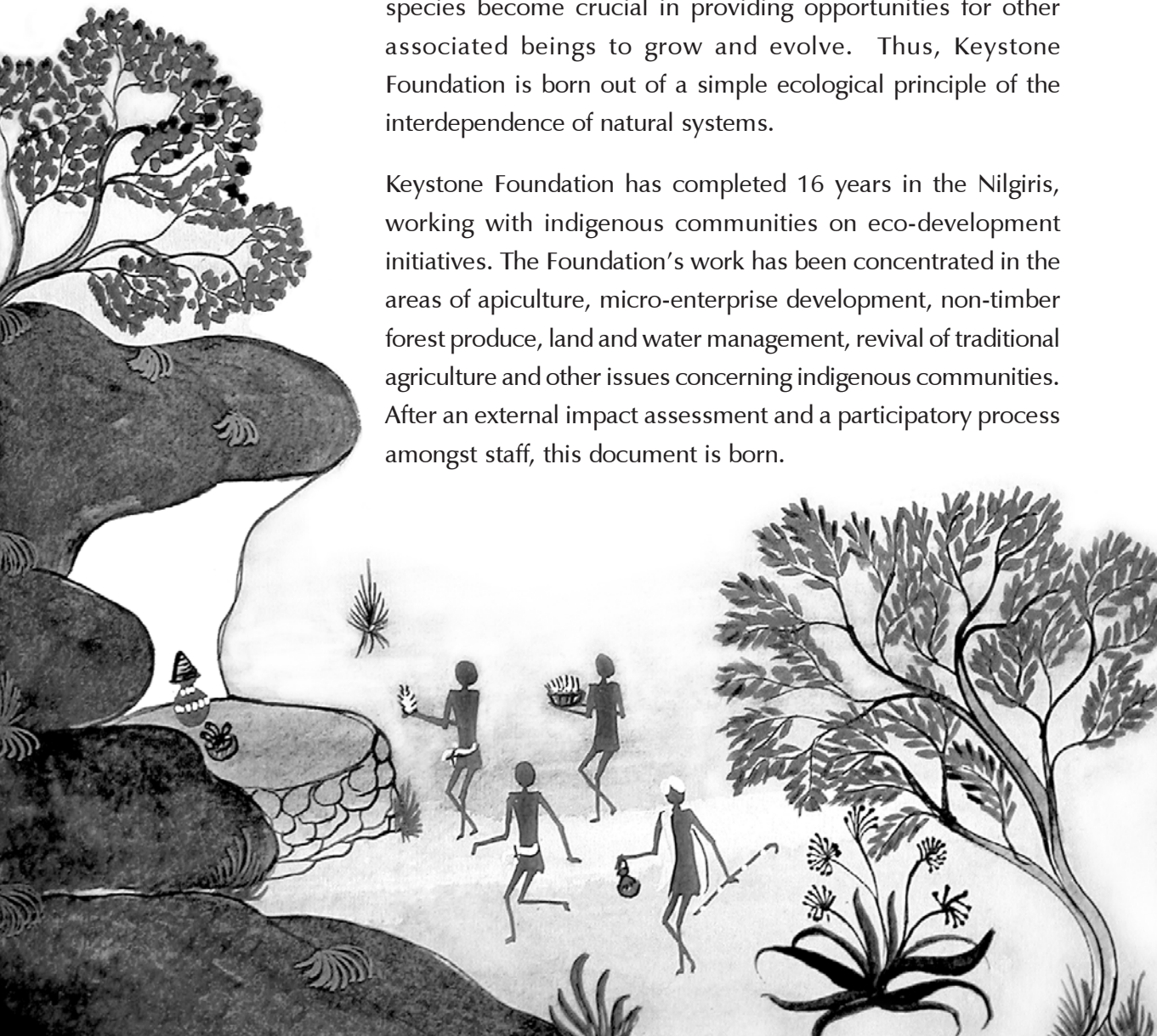
THE KEYSTONE DOCUMENT

2011 – 2020



The concept of “keystone” emerges from the nest-building behaviour of some birds in nature. These permanent nest structures serve as habitat for several life forms. Such “keystone” species become crucial in providing opportunities for other associated beings to grow and evolve. Thus, Keystone Foundation is born out of a simple ecological principle of the interdependence of natural systems.

Keystone Foundation has completed 16 years in the Nilgiris, working with indigenous communities on eco-development initiatives. The Foundation’s work has been concentrated in the areas of apiculture, micro-enterprise development, non-timber forest produce, land and water management, revival of traditional agriculture and other issues concerning indigenous communities. After an external impact assessment and a participatory process amongst staff, this document is born.



## MISSION

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“*Our Mission is to enhance the Quality of Life and the Environment*”

## GOAL

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To work on issues of Natural Resources and Rural Development, with Indigenous People in mountainous and adjoining regions, addressing the challenges of conservation, livelihoods and enterprise development, through appropriate-knowledge and action, technologies, socio-economic innovations and institutions.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

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Our work is expected to lead to the following outcomes for which the organization will directly be responsible and accountable:



1. Increasing conservation perspectives and ecologically sound principles in all aspects of our work.
2. Increasing the availability of viable natural resource-based sustainable livelihood options for indigenous people.
3. Village groups and institutions taking greater responsibility for managing programmes.
4. Sustaining traditional and cultural practices through opportunities provided within programmes.
5. Knowledge developed by research and action projects, being owned by stakeholders and put to practice.
6. Indigenous people being in a position to dialogue with decision-makers.
7. Influencing policy & decision making towards environmental governance.
8. Promoting organic & fair trade principles in market based interventions.



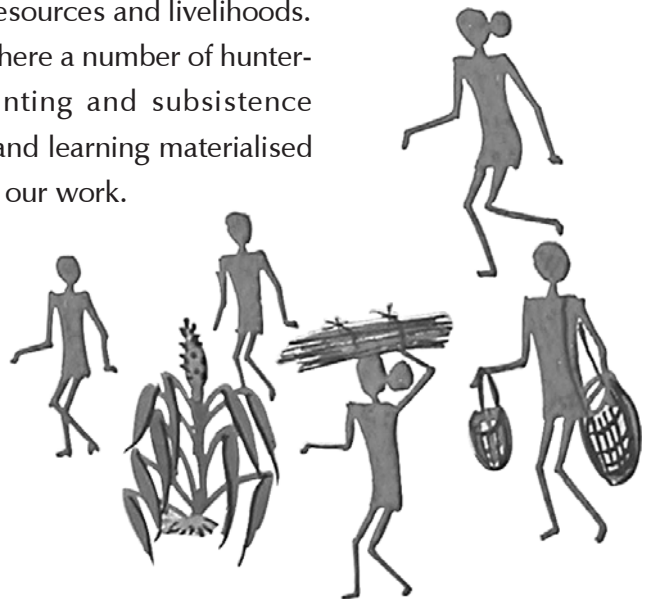
## ORIGINS

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The beginning was made when four core members of Keystone, set out on a state-wide survey of apiculture in Tamil Nadu, in 1994. Trudging miles of mountain paths and dusty roads with backpacks, this field survey gave us the precious opportunity to look at the situation of 11 indigenous communities across 15 hill ranges in Tamil Nadu.

The details of honey hunting techniques, forest vines used, associated traditions and rituals, social systems and economic dependence on such an activity, were a fascinating eye-opener. More importantly, they reflected on changes in land use, dwindling forest cover, introduction of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and other degradation, posing a growing challenge. Exploring and addressing adivasi issues of development and natural resources from a local perspective was the key to our discovering a different approach.

Our previous work in honey gathering with the Paliyan adivasi community in the Palni Hills during 1990-1993, suggested that this traditional activity could be an effective entry point to work with indigenous communities centred on natural resources and livelihoods. The survey brought us to the lower Nilgiris, where a number of hunter-gatherer communities practise honey hunting and subsistence agriculture. A potential area for future work and learning materialised and Nilgiris, as a region, was chosen to begin our work.



## PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

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- Adivasi communities
- Natural Resource Managers, Users & Researchers
- Children & Youth
- Consumers

## PRIMARY WORKPLACE

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Keystone's projects are primarily located in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve covering the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala & Karnataka. Work shall also be taken up through other partners and networks in other regions of the country. Keystone will be part of think tanks, inter-disciplinary groups and networks to contribute to innovation and policy.

- No of tribal hamlets - 89
- Population - 12000
- Number of Families - 4000







## TREE FALL GAP

Keystone believes in “small is effective/small is global” and hence, wishes to focus on the selected region, where it will contribute to and learn from partners working elsewhere.



- **Livelihoods:** Agriculture, micro-irrigation, soil & moisture conservation, apiculture and non timber forest produce (NTFP) & organic farm produce value addition through village based production units.
- **Conservation:** Sustainable harvesting of NTFPs, community based ecological monitoring, human-wildlife conflict, restoration, environment education and wetland conservation.
- **Enterprise:** Developing local markets with organic & fair trade principles; promoting products from producers across India; developing concepts of Participatory Guarantee Systems.
- **Culture & People:** Population, linking communities through information dissemination, emergency health & education support, documentation and promotion of indigenous knowledge & culture, emphasis on wild foods, medicinal plants and sacred groves; land rights.
- **Networks, Exchanges & Training:** Knowledge & capacity building for all stakeholders.
- **Appropriate Technologies:** Developing & disseminating village based technologies & products using renewable energy and low cost options.
- **Advocacy & Dialogue:** Engaging stakeholders and policy makers at local, state and national levels.



## KEY APPROACHES & PRINCIPLES

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The following principles will be adopted by all programmes in Keystone:

- Social & gender impacts; inter-disciplinary approaches; participatory planning, monitoring & evaluation
- Documentation & promotion of indigenous knowledge & culture
- Environmental sensitivity; institutional options for sustainability; enterprise orientation
- Advocacy & policy engagement with different role players
- Networking for enabling a global-local sharing
- Integrated and innovative design, approach, technology, process and delivery



# THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZATION FORMATION

## KEYSTONE – A GROUP FOR ECO-DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

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Keystone Foundation - the non profit Trust which is the parent organization started in Nov 19<sup>th</sup>, 1993. Over the years, the work has grown and diversified - starting from the Honey Hunters survey of 1994 in Tamil Nadu hill areas and basing ourselves in Kotagiri in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu to the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve covering 89 villages and more than 4000 families. In the last 16 years, Keystone has had 3 evaluations (John Kurien 1997, Janet Seeley & Bharat Krishnan 2003, Patricia Shanley 2008); one community evaluation of Keystones' 10 years (2004) and one impact assessment (Bharat Krishnan & Gouthami 2009-2010). Keystone has undergone an interesting metamorphosis and internalized a dynamic process of change. Not to be left in a "stable" state and left out of the winds of positive changes that are (constantly) blowing within communities, ecological systems, development paradigms and governance systems - we also have tinkered from time to time with our institution to best fit the challenges and changes of the times.



From 2008 onwards, all staff in the organization (50 persons) started to think of another new organization structure and model that would be relevant and contemporary with scope for growth and nourishment. Out of the 4 organization models suggested - the entire team selected one and then formulated themselves the flow of commands, team work, synergies and collaboration and of course, the challenges.

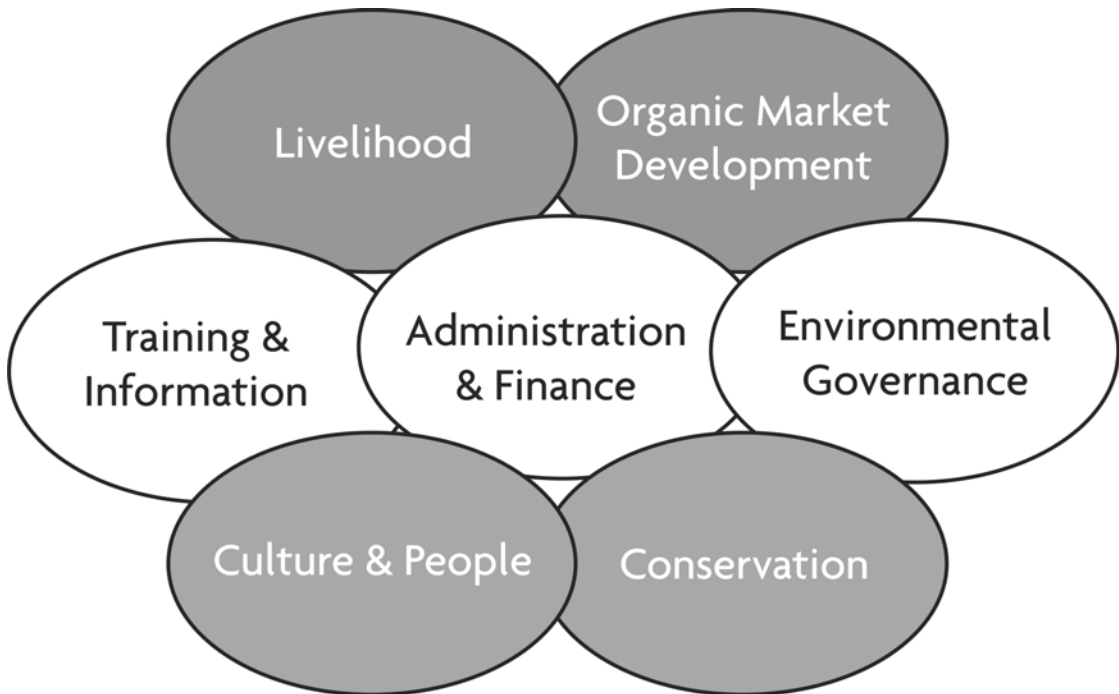


[www.keystone-foundation.org](http://www.keystone-foundation.org)

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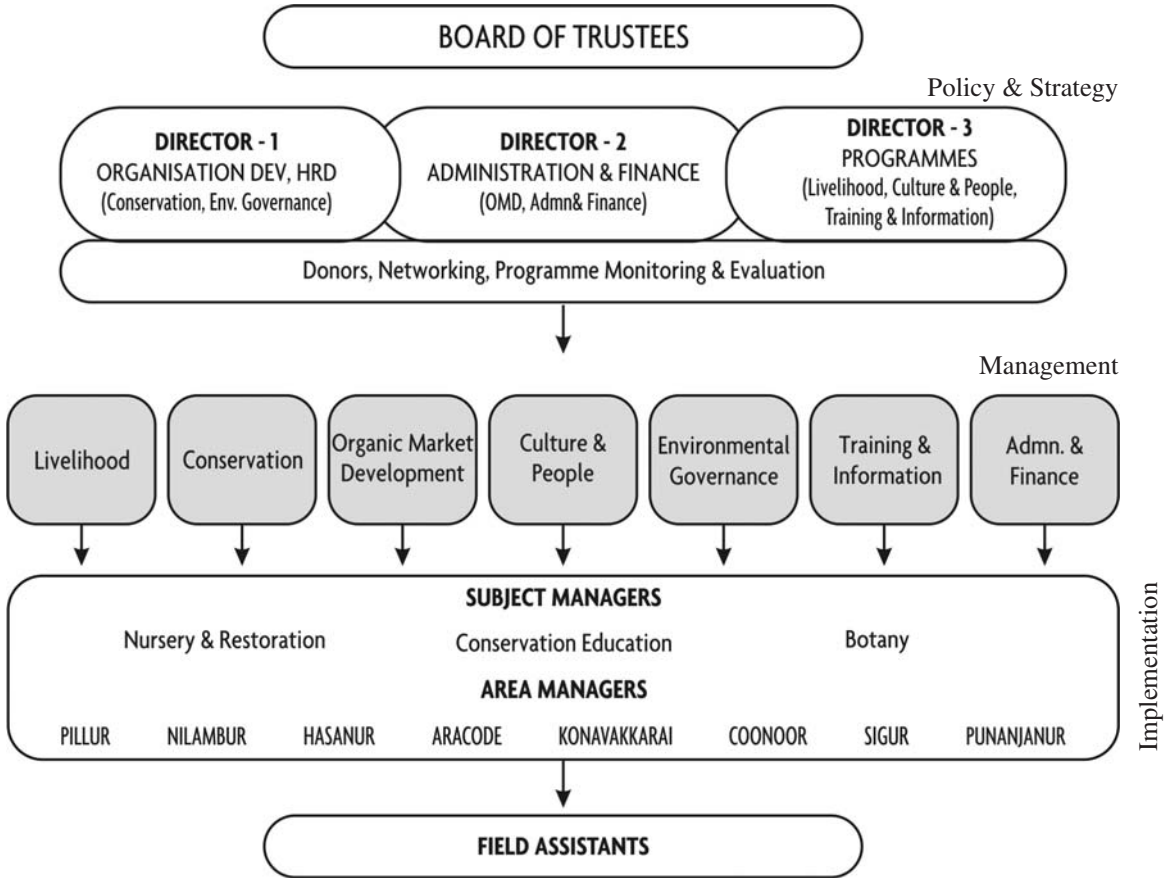
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The new organization model which has been in place since January 2009 is:



These 7 thematic groups will enable programmes and expertise to grow and develop on their own strengths. The 3 white ovals, namely Training & Information, Administration & Finance and Environmental Governance are over arching themes and will be enmeshed with all the programmes of Keystone. Culture and People is a relatively new programme area, which needs to be built up for the primary stakeholders, the adivasis and also form the basis of all development intervention in the future.

## KEYSTONE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



In 2010, the organisation has 50 staff and a challenge of filling vacancies at different levels, where gaps exist. The management team is strong and continuously building capabilities for programme strengthening. The staff is a mix of professionals from IRMA, School of Ecology & TISS as well as graduates & school dropouts. The team comprises 35 men and 15 women. There are 18 adivasis in the team of Keystone.

## LAST FOREST ENTERPRISE PRIVATE LIMITED

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**2** From September 2010, all business related activity of Keystone Foundation became a company where the profits will be shared with the employees and other supporters & consumers who are part of this enterprise.

Since the very beginning of Keystone in 1995, the enterprise has been an integral part of its sustainable development engine. From its initiation, it has been maintained as a different cost centre with its own staff and expenses. With less funding availability through grants and the new Direct Taxes Code applicability on charitable institutions, the Board of Trustees of Keystone Foundation passed a resolution in March 2010 to register a separate company called Last Forest Enterprises Private Limited (LFE). An umbilical cord exists between Keystone and Last Forest Enterprise and we wish to embark on the same principles of local markets, fair trade & organic produce. LFE runs 5 Green Shops (Mysore, Ooty, Coonoor & Kotagiri) and services various other wholesale and retail businesses. It works with close to 40 producer groups from over 14 states of India, handling a range of products like honey, bees wax (balms, lip balms, soaps & candles), coffee, tea, spices, millet, cereals, pulses, garments, woollens, pottery, bamboo, iron, bell metal, juices, jams, etc. It continues to engage with stakeholders on the principles of Participatory Guarantee Systems.



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## NILGIRI NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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The Nilgiri Natural History Society (NNHS) is a registered society that was established in 2010 and was launched during the Save Western Ghats meeting that was held in Kotagiri. The society seeks to promote ecological awareness amongst people. The opening lines of the vision statement read '... endeavours to redefine life and nature and humanity through an ecologically sound and responsible value system. Imagination and Inspiration are core to the society'. The society is open to membership for people from any region and walk of life. A 12 member Executive Council has been formed of senior people from Keystone who have decided to build the NNHS. The society has a newsletter and different activities related to conservation. The NNHS is registered in Ooty and the Bee Museum is its main office. The Bee Museum is a place for outreach, conservation education and knowledge and information about indigenous bees at Ooty. The place has been growing steadily with more schools, visitors coming in regularly throughout the year.



Membership can be availed at  
[www.nnhs.in](http://www.nnhs.in)

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## PRODUCER COMPANY (TO BE FORMED BY 2013)

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# 4

There are 5 production centres in the Nilgiris – established through projects of Keystone, which are value adding NTFPs and organic agriculture produce at the village. Each of these has a collective of gatherers and processors. They have their own bank accounts. They also sell in local markets and *haats* through their own chain of petty shops. This is the village enterprise which directly brings in the profits to the community - gatherer, worker or staff of that local enterprise. Currently the centres are yet to have a legal entity and most of their operations are managed by the staff of Keystone. Within the next 2 years we wish to create a producer company which will have a federation of all these and many more centres of value addition spread across the 3 states of TN, Kerala and Karnataka in the biosphere reserve. These production centres also act as multi-nodal training and capacity building centres.





## WHAT NEW LIES AHEAD.....

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### A perspective from the staff, April 2010

1. Engage with a larger set of people besides adivasis; this would spread knowledge and awareness; would help to improve overall environmental issues in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
2. Focus on applied research and inter disciplinary approach to issues, always applying them to field situations.
3. Expand into Karnataka and select areas to cover the whole of NBR; intensify work in the region.
4. Continue engagement & network with partners across the country and globally through more examples & programmes.
5. Information, Communication & Technology (ICT) to be used pro-actively for a range of stakeholders and participants both within working areas and with external partners.
6. Create a Field University / Field Learning Centre / Centre of Excellence; skill development centre for adivasis which addresses both traditional & modern skills and creates barefoot expertise.
7. Address issues of adivasi education by advocating changes in the syllabus at school level.
8. Constantly engage with communities on issues of self governance, culture, identity and social organisation; special concern for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) with small and dwindling populations.
9. Achieve 'good governance' in the voluntary sector with transparent and participatory processes.
10. Community access to government programmes and benefits needs constant monitoring and follow up; to ensure improved facilities for the community.

Many more detailed project ideas and area development focus plans have been made and will be used during implementation of programmes and research.



## OUR PARTNERS

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Besides the role of Keystone as a group in the local area, it links up, interacts closely and works with many other individuals and institutions working in the same field. Our sharing of experiences and efforts has been mutually beneficial for further learning and application. Some of these partners are:

### International

- a. Bees *for* Development, Monmouth, UK
- b. Overseas Development Group, School for Development Studies, University of East Anglia, UK
- c. Both Ends, The Netherlands
- d. People & Plants International, US & Australia
- e. University of Geneva, Switzerland
- f. Adopt-a-Business, UK
- g. Department of Botany, University of Hawaii, US
- h. Ernst & Young, UK

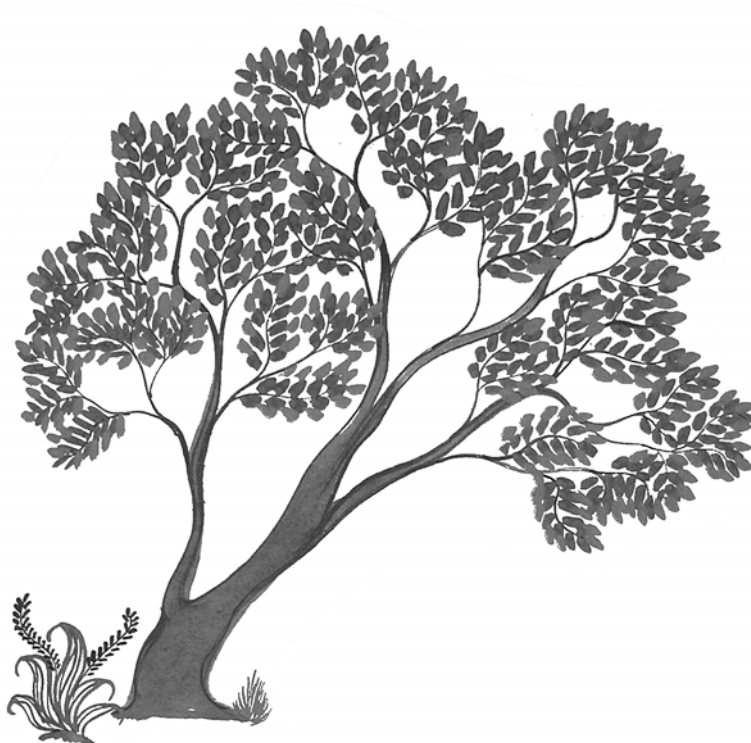
### Government

- a. Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. Of India
- b. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. Of India
- c. National Afforestation & Eco Development Board, Govt. Of India
- d. Forest Departments of Tamil Nadu, Kerala & Karnataka
- e. District Administrations of Nilgiris, Chamrajnagar and Nilambur



## Voluntary Organisations

- a. ATREE, Bangalore
- b. Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysore
- c. Inter-Cooperation, Hyderabad
- d. Solar Agni Systems, Pondicherry
- e. Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI), Goa
- f. Green Foundation, Bangalore
- g. Samaj Pragati Sahyag (SPS), Bagli
- h. Institute of Integrated Rural Development (IIRD), Aurangabad
- i. Academy of Development Sciences (ADS), Raigad
- j. Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG), Kumaon



## OUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

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### Keystone is a member of:

- NTFP Exchange Programme - South & South-East Asia
- IFOAM - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. Keystone is a member of the IFOAM PGS Committee
- APIMONDIA – Association of World Beekeepers Federations. Keystone is a Member of the Standing Committee of the Commission on Rural Development
- PGS Organic India Council
- Fair Trade Forum - India
- International Foundation for Fair Trade & Development (IFFAD)

Keystone members are part of the 'Shola Fellowship', a national network that meets annually to discuss issues relating to philosophy, environment and development.



### **Donor Partners (1993-2010):**

- The Swallows in Sweden, Lund
- AusAID, Govt. of Australia, New Delhi
- DFID India, Govt. of UK, New Delhi
- Swiss Development Cooperation - Intercooperation, Bangalore
- Hill Area Development Program, Govt. of T.N., Udthagamandalam
- Future Earth, Stockholm, Sweden
- The Ford Foundation, New Delhi
- Winrock International - India, New Delhi
- India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore
- The Netherlands Committee of IUCN, Amsterdam
- Small Industries Development Bank of India, Chennai
- Danish Beekeepers Federation, Denmark
- Both Ends, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- The Global Green Grant Fund, USA
- Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Mumbai
- IDRC, New Delhi
- The Cycads Society, USA
- Darwin Initiative, DEFRA, Govt. of UK
- Cordaid, The Netherlands
- C S Fund, USA
- Panta Rhea, USA
- Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Conservation International, USA
- Good Gifts, UK
- Tzedekah Trust, Mysore
- Bees *for* Development, UK
- Austroprojekt, Austria
- Siemenpuu Foundation, Finland
- International Tree Fund, USA
- The Nilgiri Adivasi Trust, UK
- Agrecol, Germany

## OUR RECOGNITIONS:

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- Featured in Outlook Business as one of 25 good businesses, in 2010
- Winner of the 1<sup>st</sup> Sitaram Rao Livelihoods India Case Study Competition in 2009 organized by Management Development Institute, Gurgaon and ACCESS Development Services
- Certificate of Merit for contribution & support given during the Regional Stage in India by the University of Gastronomic Sciences, Italy, in 2009
- Featured in Lonely Planet India, 2009
- Finalist in the World Challenge 2008, a global competition aimed at finding projects or small businesses from around the world that have shown enterprise and innovation at grassroots level, by BBC & Newsweek
- Special Invitation by the President of India for NGO consultation during Independence Day celebrations, in 2006
- Honoured in the field of Tribal Welfare by the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, in 2003
- Participant for the Guinness World Record for the most number of trees planted in a day, with the District Administration of the Nilgiris, in 2002
- Bronze prize for the film 'Honeyhunters of the Blue Mountains', awarded by Apimondia, in 2001
- Special Prize of the Jury, Man-Animal Relationships & Best Sound Awards at the 11<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival, in France, in 2001



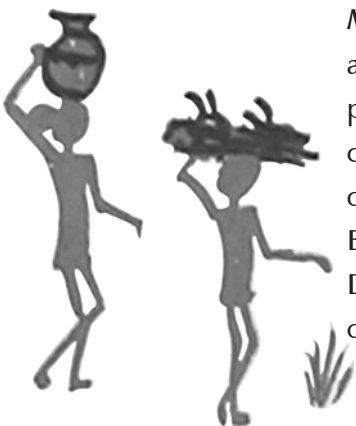
## PROFILE OF FOUNDERS

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*SNEHLATA NATH, MA, Economics:* A socio-economist, she has done projects in Delhi, Uttaranchal, Himachal, Odisha, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Bangladesh. At present she is working on local natural resource related problems with indigenous people, in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, which involves mainly land development, forest resources conservation, training and value addition of NTFPs. She is a keen participant in issues concerning tribal livelihood, identity and rights. She is Director, Programmes at Keystone. She is also the President of the Non Timber Forest Produce - Exchange Programme, based in Manila.

*PRATIM ROY, MS, Ecology:* Pratim has worked in different regions of Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Himachal, Madhya Pradesh, the Andamans & Nepal. He evaluates programmes and provides strategic and planning inputs in eco-development projects. In the Nilgiris, he works with NRM issues, mainly related to Apiculture and Water Resources. He liaisons and networks with Government, donors and other partners. He is Director - Donors, Networking & Organisational Development. Pratim has an energy-ecology background as well as a certificate in Advanced Studies in Environmental Diplomacy from the University of Geneva and UNEP.

*MATHEW JOHN, Rural Management, IRMA:* A background in administration & finance for rural development organisations and field projects. He has an active interest in enterprise development and organic certification for small growers. Mathew has varied experience in working on projects in Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal, Andhra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu & Bangladesh. He is Director - Administration, Finance & Enterprise Development. Mathew is on the Board of Fair Trade, India and a member of the Participatory Guarantee Systems Committee of IFOAM.





## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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1. **Somnath Sen** - Managing Trustee - Strategic Management & Development; Works with several grassroots organizations, corporates and Governments on water & sanitation and institution building.
2. **Shipra Gupta** - Trustee - Educationist; a human resource expert who has formidable administrative experience.
3. **Rev. Philip K Mulley** - Trustee - Culture & Anthropology; A theologian, historian and cultural anthropologist of the Nilgiris region. Intimate knowledge of the advasi people, their culture & traditions.
4. **Dr. John Kurien** - Trustee - Development & Community Institutions; Taught for several years at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum and worked with fisherfolk communities in India and abroad. Understanding of social issues and rural marketing.
5. **Dr. Suprava Patnaik** - Trustee - Forest Management; Has worked extensively on NTFP and ecological issues. Currently with UNESCO, Delhi.
6. **Anju Sharma** - Trustee - Climate Change; Worked with UNEP, Nairobi and Centre for Science & Environment, New Delhi. Currently working on climate change issues.
7. **Rita Banerji** - Trustee - Film maker; Works on environmental issues and produces films & conservation education material.
8. **Meena Gupta, IAS (Retd)** - Trustee - former Secretary, Environment & Forests and Tribal Affairs, Government of India.



## ABOUT KEYSTONE

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Keystone Foundation, is registered under the Indian Trust Act, 1882, (Registration No.1833 of year 1993). The working office is at:

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