



**SAVE THE WESTERN GHATS
CONCLAVE 2012
'PRACTITIONERS'
CONCLAVE'**

WESTERN GHATS AND THE URBAN

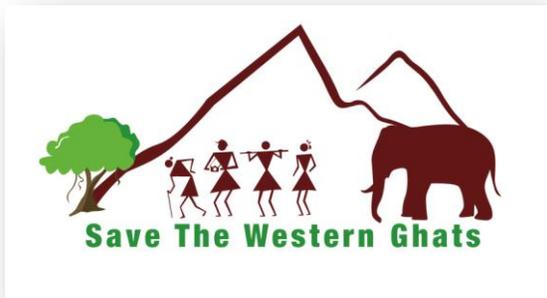
SLOT- 3:30PM TO 5:30 PM DAY 2

FORMAT- PANEL DISCUSSION

This session centers on the relationship of the Western Ghats with three aspects of Urbanity. Firstly, the panel shall explore the nature of Urbanization in the Western Ghats and the role it plays in the wider ecology of this area. While Urbanization seems to be an irreversible process, the nature of Urbanization can certainly be moderated so as to facilitate and encourage the conservation of the pristine mountain range. Secondly, the panel shall also discuss the urban growth poles in the Western Ghats and how they are dependent on it for their sustenance. While doing so it shall also bring to focus the presence or lack of a symbiotic relationship between these growth poles and the cause of conservation of the mountains which they draw heavily from. Thirdly, the panel shall draw our attention to the way ahead and discuss about the scope offered by urban centers in helping conservation efforts and how urban identities, urban amenities and urbanization as a process itself can facilitate conservation

Scroll down for the *Session Brief*.

SESSION BRIEF



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Urbanization poses a threat to Western Ghats in multiple ways. Urbanization, apart from plantations, is one of the key reasons for infringement of forest-lands, as well as large-scale drawal of resources (source) and disposal of wastes (sink) without commensurate environmental values being upheld. This infringement is responsible for loss of forests, loss of biodiversity and disruption of ecosystem services. In addition to these, harm is also caused by second order impacts of urbanization. These include increased footprints through increased throughputs of energy, water, and materials. The increase in footprints could be due to nature of city that by definition requires certain minimum infrastructure, or it could be due to increase in personal consumption. Data shows that the urbanization, specially in some parts of Western Ghats, is one of the fastest in the country.

However, urban areas in Western Ghats are also providing livelihoods to many people, and the districts that fall under Western Ghats are experiencing rapid economic development too. Recent discussions with people in WG show that it is becoming increasingly difficult to earn a "living off the land". In such cases, it is obvious that people in villages would need to substantiate their earning from non-agricultural pursuits.

Apart from livelihoods, urban areas serve as critical nodes in today's connected society. These are not only nodes of information and administration, but also of crucial material like food, medicines etc. Urban areas, thus, serve critical functions and cannot be wished away.

Yet, there is urban and there is urban. While urban is here to stay, nature of urbanization is very much a choice. There is choice between large primate centers vs. more distributed network of towns, between energy, water and material efficient cities vs. parasitic, sprawling cities, choice between inclusive cities and private cities like Lavasa and Amby Valley.



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The key questions which will be put forward in the session are:

- a) What have been the key features of urbanization in the Western Ghats? What are the likely future trends?
- b) What are the threats that the urban processes pose to conservation of the Western Ghats? How can these be mitigated?
- c) What are the opportunities that urban processes present for furthering conservation and livelihoods in the Western Ghats region? How can these opportunities be harnessed?