



# Saving the Boilam Tree from Extinction in Bangladesh

Community Partnerships to Strengthen Sustainable Development (Compass) Program



## About Boilam

*Boilam (Anisoptera scaphula)* is one of the tallest tree species in Bangladesh, ranging 30-45 meters in height. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 2017 listed *Boilam* as a critically endangered tree globally. Only 40-45 mature trees persist, scattered in pockets of forests in Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tract, and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. This species faces severe threats including habitat loss, absence of mother trees for seed production, insufficient natural regeneration, impacts of climate change, and the added pressure from population growth and human activities, including from displaced Rohingya refugees.

## Why saving Boilam?

- Tallest tree in Bangladesh
- Critically endangered
- Only 40-45 mature trees remaining



## Joint Efforts to Safeguarding Boilam in Bangladesh

To safeguard this iconic tree species, USAID's Compass program, implemented by the USDA Forest Service, supported a team of researchers led by Professor Md. Aktar Hossain to establish the country's first Boilam Germplasm Center at the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences of Chittagong University (IFESCU). The center is devoted to conserving the genetic traits of

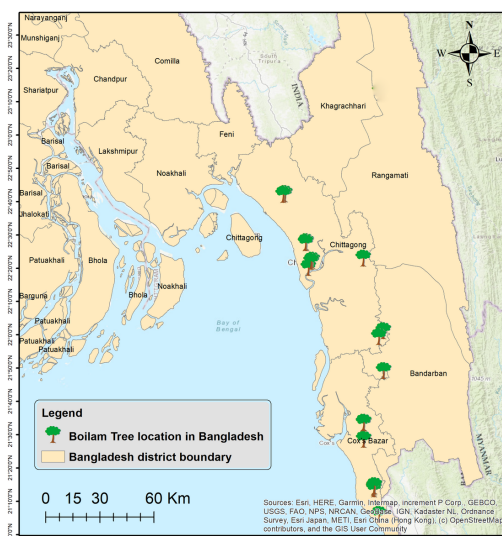


endangered and invaluable species in Bangladesh. The center is an essential piece of the journey to restore this endangered tree species in its natural habitats.



## Expanding Boilam Genetic Base in Bangladesh

The research team produced over 4000 seedlings at a nursery in 2022 by collecting seeds from Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, and Chittagong Hill Tracts. Then the researchers planted 1140 seedlings in the germplasm center, and an additional 1275 seedlings in Boilam conservation plots. To further safeguard seedling populations, and promote a healthy genetics base, the team sent many seedlings to different partners and locations in 2022 and 2023. Specifically, 1200 seedlings were distributed to Araynnak Foundation, Torupolli, Chittagong University (CU) Economics Society, CU Botanical Garden, Chattogram Cantonment Public College, Korean EPZ Botanical Garden and other conservation agencies and NGOs. Additionally, 1500 seedlings were received by the Forest Department (Coastal Afforestation Division, Chittagong, Sylhet Forest Division, Wildlife and Nature Conservation Division), Tea Research Institute, Rashidpur Tea Estate Hobigonj, and Bangladesh Rural Development Training Institute Sylhet received 1500 seedlings. This initiative from the Compass program and its partners will create a broad genetic base of the Boilam tree to greatly improve its chance for survival with the hopes to save it from extinction in Bangladesh.



Boilam Tree distribution map

*The establishment of the endangered Boilam germplasm center in the Chittagong University Campus certainly will save the iconic tree species from extinction and create an opportunity for researchers in Bangladesh-Dr Rafiqul Haider, Director, Bangladesh Forest Research Institute (BFRI), Bangladesh.*



## Conserving for the Future

Boilam is a special tree to Bangladesh and plays an important role in its forest ecosystems. The Germplasm Center will help save this national treasure from extinction by facilitating more propagation of Boilam seeds and seedlings, and then distributing them to the Forest Department, universities, NGOs and other institutions. Students were engaged in the project at every stage, from seedling production to planting. The research team has created public awareness about the tree among partners and the public through TV broadcasts and newspaper reports. The experience and knowledge gained from this project are foundational for restoring and conserving other threatened and endangered tree species in the country.

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