

ZERO IN

WITH THINKZERO

A World of Sustainability

ThinkZero

September 2026, Issue 8



Resilience: The People and Nature Issue

When the world changes,
what keeps us going?

People. Place. Memory. Nature. Trust.

This issue explores resilience,
and the work of restoring what matters.

In this Issue:

- Human Rights and Domestic Workers in the Gulf
- Restoring Land, Hope and Accountability in Mongolia
- Caring for Fragile Small-Island Landscapes in Nauru
- Resilience, Diplomacy and National Security in Venezuela



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A World of Sustainability

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OUR WRITER

Janine Dyer

ZERO IN
WITH THINKZERO

RESILIENCE: PEOPLE & NATURE



Dear reader,

This issue of Zero In began as a continuation of our Future of Sustainability series. I wanted to look more closely at resilience, not only in the technical sense, but in the human sense too.

What allows people, communities, organisations and countries to keep going when the ground shifts beneath them? What helps us rebuild after loss? What do we protect, restore or carry forward when the world we knew has changed?

Sometimes, resilience is simply the seemingly mundane, everyday work of getting up and getting through what should never have happened.

So why is that a sustainability issue? Because sustainability has never only been about the environment. Sustainability has always been about the conditions that allow life to continue with dignity.

The image I've chosen for this letter is of my son standing before a thicket of trees in New Zealand. When he was born, we planted a tree in his name. At first, it stood almost alone, and we could return to "his tree" easily. Ten years later, the landscape had changed. The tree was still there, but no longer obvious among everything that had grown around it. We had to find it again, with help and geolocation, and we had to form a new mental picture of the place.

That feels right for this issue: memory, change, and learning how to find our way again.

In this edition, we move through resilience from many angles.

We begin with people whose labour, suffering and courage are too often made invisible. We then turn to land: to Mongolia, restoration and the global call to restore land and hope; and to Naoero (Nauru), where regeneration asks what comes after extraction. We look at nature and business not as separate sustainability topics, but as parts of the same changing system.

We also explore resilience through disaster, diplomacy and the loss of home: what happens when the mental map of safety disappears, and what it takes for people and nations to find their way again.

This issue is about people and nature.
But more than that, it is about what connects them. The land and body remember. Communities remember.

And sustainability, at its best, helps us decide what we owe to the future without forgetting what has already been lost.

Thank you for reading.

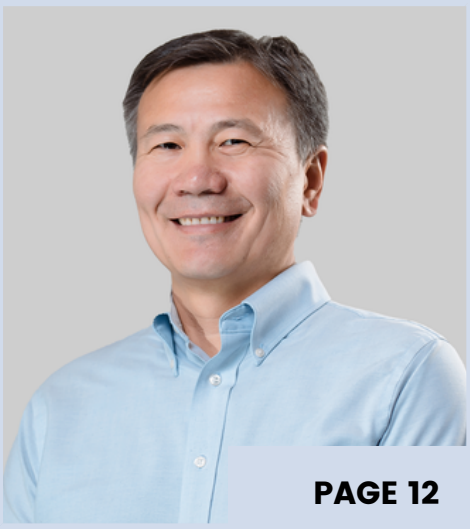
C.G.

Dr Cle-Anne Gabriel

Sustainability has always been about the conditions that allow LIFE to continue with DIGNITY.



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Voices of Resilience

This issue travels across many lands, communities and experiences.

We acknowledge the First Peoples and Indigenous peoples of the places represented throughout these pages, and the enduring relationships between people, lands, waters, knowledge and generations.

Resilience is not a new idea - it long predates sustainability as a profession.

These are some of the voices helping us explore what it means today.

ZERO IN ON EKATERINA



EVIDENCE, COURAGE, AND THE WORK OF CARE

Ekaterina Porras Sivolobova's work does not fit neatly into one category.

It is simultaneously human rights work, migrant worker advocacy, community support, data collection, and systems change.

And often, it is urgent.

As Founder and Director of Do Bold, Ekaterina has spent years working with migrant worker communities in the Gulf, particularly those facing exploitation, trafficking, forced labour, unlawful detention and barriers to justice.

Her work sits in a difficult space: close enough to crisis to understand what people are experiencing, but structured enough to turn those experiences into evidence that can challenge systems.

That combination is rare.

Do Bold's approach is not only to document harm after it happens. The organisation works directly with affected communities, providing practical support while gathering the data needed to make patterns visible.

Through projects such as Freedom for Our Sisters, Do Bold has helped organise migrant domestic workers into communities, supported women seeking to return home, documented trafficking and forced labour indicators, and used that evidence to advocate for change.

This is not easy work.

It requires trust from people who may have every reason to distrust institutions. It requires careful language, because words like trafficking, forced labour and unlawful detention carry legal and personal weight. It requires persistence across borders, bureaucracies, employers, recruitment offices, families, embassies and support networks.

Ekaterina's strength is that she seems to understand both sides of the equation.

The human side matters because each case is someone's life: a worker trying to escape abuse, a woman trying to return home, a family waiting for news, a person whose documents, wages, movement or safety may be controlled by others.

The systems side matters because individual rescue is never enough if the same patterns continue. If rules remain unclear, grievance mechanisms cannot be accessed, and employers or recruitment systems are not held accountable, the harm continues.

What makes Ekaterina's work so powerful is that she refuses to choose between compassion and rigour.

Do Bold's reports are detailed, careful and evidence-led. But they are also grounded in the lived experiences of workers whose lives are too often hidden from public view. The data matters because it gives weight to what women have been saying. The stories matter because they remind us that the data represents real people.

In this issue of Zero In, which explores people, nature and resilience, Ekaterina's work expands the meaning of resilience itself.

Resilience is often used to describe how communities withstand climate shocks, disasters or environmental change. But Do Bold's work reminds us that resilience also has a human rights dimension.

It is not enough to celebrate people for surviving harmful systems. We also have to ask why they were forced to survive them in the first place.

Ekaterina's work is a reminder that sustainability is not only about emissions, nature or disclosure. It is also about dignity, protection, justice and the systems that determine whose lives are valued.

THE WORK OF MAKING PEOPLE VISIBLE



Image by artist **Hawa Bangura**
for Do Bold's Mapping Her Journey report

Do Bold

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or visit dobold.org

There is a kind of sustainability work that rarely sits neatly inside the usual frameworks.

It may not appear in transition plans or nature-positive strategies. But it asks one of the most fundamental questions any sustainability practitioner can ask:

Who is being made invisible by the systems we depend on?

For Ekaterina Porras Sivolobova, Founder and Director of Do Bold, that question has led into some of the most difficult and consequential parts of the Gulf's labour migration system.

Do Bold is a not-for-profit organisation working with migrant worker communities in the Gulf. Its mission is centred on human rights, human dignity and decent work for all migrant workers. What makes the organisation distinctive is how it works: directly with affected communities, gathering evidence from real experiences, supporting workers in crisis, and using that evidence to push for remedy, justice and systems change.

This is not advocacy from a distance. It is advocacy from inside the work.

Behind Closed Doors

Many of the people Do Bold supports are migrant domestic workers: women who have travelled across borders to care for homes, children and families, only to find themselves isolated inside private households, beyond the protection of labour systems that were not designed with them in mind.

Their work may be essential, but their protection is often fragile.

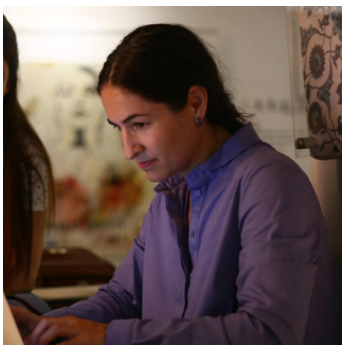
Domestic work happens inside homes, behind closed doors, in spaces where public oversight rarely reaches. That privacy can make the work vulnerable to abuse. It can also make the abuse difficult to see.

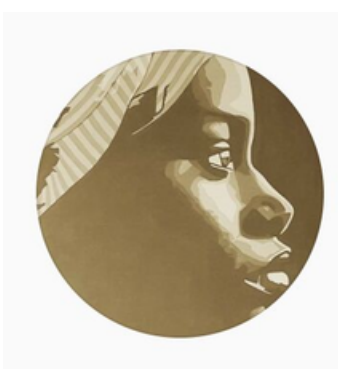
In the Gulf, migrant domestic workers can face layers of vulnerability at once: gender, race, immigration status, debt, language barriers, employer control, weak access to justice and, in some cases, sponsorship systems that tie a worker's legal status to an employer.

For some, leaving an abusive situation can create new risks. For others, the path home is blocked by fines, debts, missing documents or systems that treat their mobility as a problem to be managed rather than a right to be protected.

Do Bold's work begins where those systems fail.









Evidence Tied to Freedom

One of its most significant projects, Freedom for Our Sisters, focused on Sierra Leonean women domestic workers in Oman during the COVID-19 period. The project combined urgent repatriation support with data gathering and documentation.

Over 22 months, Do Bold organised a community of 656 Sierra Leonean women, held conversations with 390 women, received 621 survey entries and verified 469 of them.

The findings were stark.

Do Bold identified 468 of 469 women as victims of human trafficking, based on experiences consistent with the Palermo Protocol definition. Many also reported indicators of forced labour, including deceptive recruitment, long working hours, no days off, restriction of movement, wage theft, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

But numbers alone do not explain what this work means.

Behind each percentage is a person who left home because she needed work, because her family needed income, because migration was presented as opportunity. Behind each survey response is someone who had to decide whether it was safe to speak. Behind every repatriation effort is a chain of practical obstacles: documents, flights, fines, employers, recruitment offices, embassies, translators, family contact, and the fear that asking for help may create new risks.

That is what makes Do Bold's model important. It does not separate evidence from remedy. The data is not gathered simply to produce a report. It is gathered while people are being supported, while urgent cases are being identified, while women are trying to leave exploitation and return home safely.

In other words, the research is not abstract. It is tied to someone's freedom.

Resilience is Not Just Endurance

This is also why Ekaterina's work belongs in a sustainability magazine.

Too often, sustainability is narrowed to environmental management or corporate disclosure. Those things matter. But a genuinely sustainable world cannot be built on invisible labour, unprotected workers or systems that allow exploitation to continue because it is administratively convenient.

The future of sustainability has to include the people who clean homes, care for children, send remittances, build cities, service economies and move through migration systems that are essential to prosperity but often hostile to the people inside them.

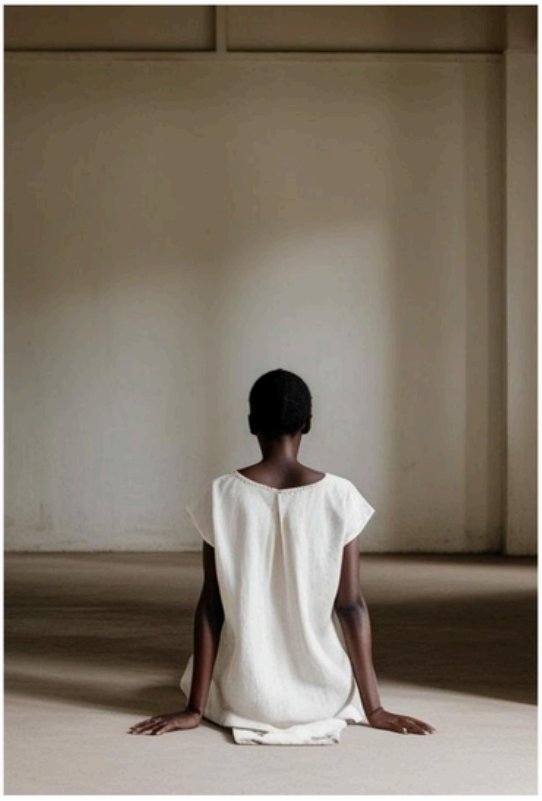
Human resilience is not only about communities recovering after floods, fires or earthquakes. It is also about workers surviving systems of control, finding pathways to justice, rebuilding their lives after exploitation and being recognised as rights-holders rather than labour inputs.

This is where Do Bold's work offers a deeper lesson.

Resilience cannot mean asking vulnerable people to endure more. It must also mean changing the systems that make endurance necessary.

When Systems Become Crises

Another Do Bold report, focused on unlawful detention of migrant workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, shows how technical systems can become human crises



Resilience cannot mean asking VULNERABLE PEOPLE to endure more. It must also mean CHANGING THE SYSTEMS that make endurance necessary.

Detention, deportation processes, unclear regulations, lack of due process and the cost of returning home can separate workers from families, deepen financial hardship, create psychological distress and prolong vulnerability.

Again, the pattern is familiar. An administrative system becomes a human crisis.

That is why language matters. Do Bold is careful with terms such as unlawful detention, de facto deprivation of liberty, human trafficking and forced labour. These are not slogans. They are attempts to name what is happening accurately enough that systems can no longer look away.

Care and Evidence

One of the most powerful aspects of Ekaterina's work is that it sits at the intersection of care and evidence. Do Bold's reports are detailed, careful and evidence-led. They document patterns, identify policy gaps, name legal and administrative barriers, and offer recommendations. But they are also grounded in the lived experiences of workers whose lives are too often hidden from public view.

The data matters because it gives weight to what women have been saying. The stories matter because they remind us that the data represents real people.

For sustainability practitioners, there is something important to learn here.

The future of sustainability will require more than better frameworks. It will require better ways of seeing.

Seeing the workers behind supply chains. Seeing the care work behind economies. Seeing the administrative rules that become human barriers. Seeing the women whose stories are too often treated as exceptions, when the data shows they are part of a wider pattern.

And seeing that resilience is not only ecological or infrastructural. It is also moral.

The Work is Bold

Do Bold takes its name seriously.

The work is bold because it confronts abuse where it is hidden. It is bold because it combines support with evidence, and because it insists that migrant workers deserve more than survival.

And it is bold because it asks the rest of us to widen the sustainability conversation until it is large enough to include the people who have been holding economies together from the margins.

By now, we know that the future of sustainability is not only about protecting the planet.

It is also about refusing to build that future on the suffering of people we have chosen not to see.



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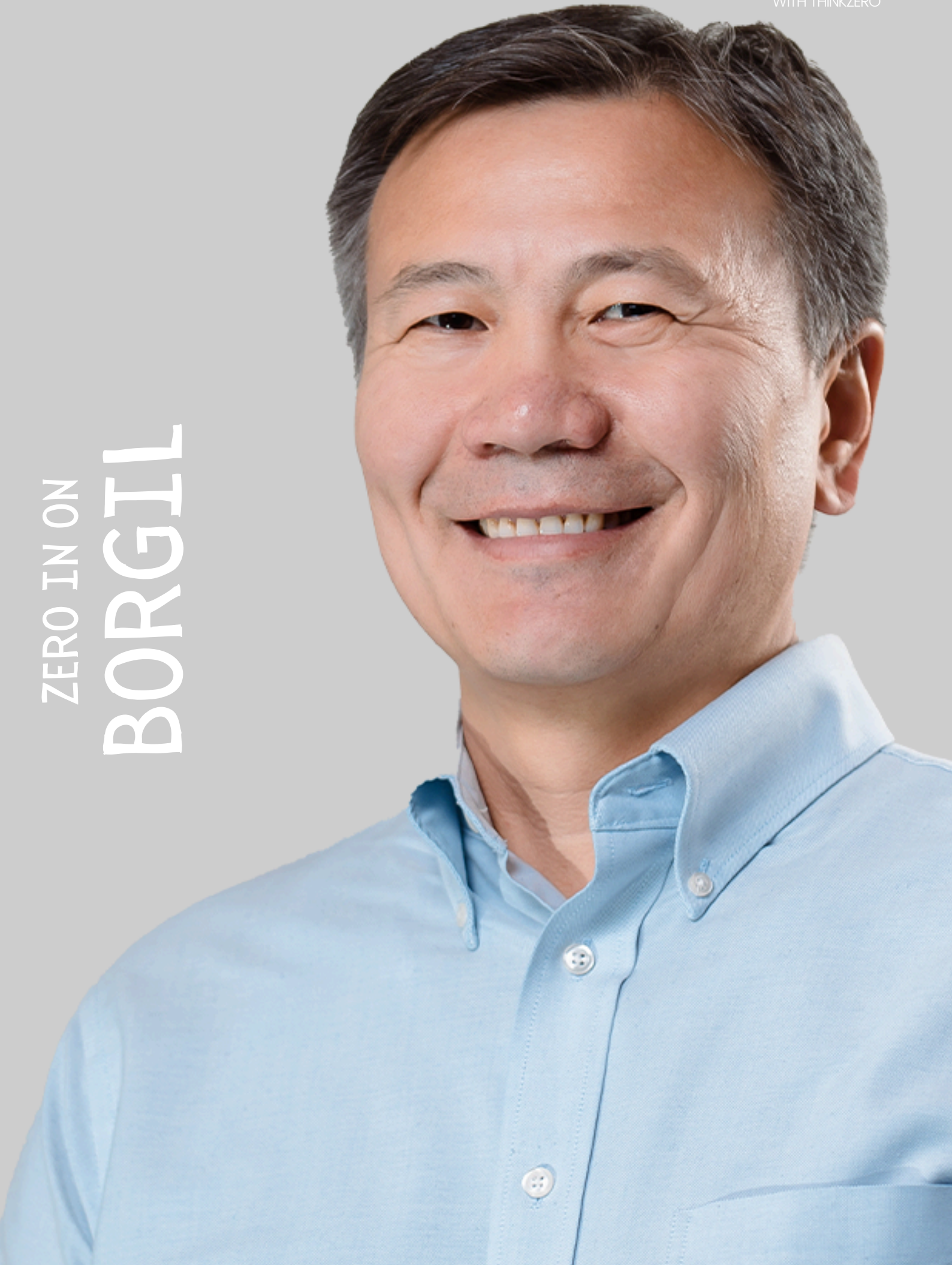
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ZERO IN ON BORGIL



AT WHAT COST IS DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVED?

In August 2026, Mongolia hosted UNCCD COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, bringing the world's attention to land degradation, drought resilience, restoration and the future of landscapes under pressure.

The theme was simple, but powerful: Restoring Land. Restoring Hope. For Mongolia, and for Borgil Surenkhuu, that theme carries particular weight.

Mongolia is a country often imagined through vast rangelands, pastoral livelihoods, open skies and deep relationships between people, animals and land. But it is also a country navigating the pressures of development, mining, urbanisation, climate change and land degradation.

Those pressures raise a question that sits at the heart of Borgil's work:

At what planetary cost is development achieved?

It is a deceptively simple question. For decades, the world has measured development through growth, income, education, health and national progress. These measures tell us something important about whether people are living longer, learning more and accessing the conditions for a better life.

But they do not always tell us what the planet has paid to make that progress possible. Land makes that question visible. When land is degraded, the damage is not only ecological. It affects livelihoods, food systems, water, biodiversity, culture, migration, community resilience and the future options available to the next generation.





COP17 was important because it did not frame land restoration as a narrow environmental issue. It placed land at the centre of development, resilience and human wellbeing.

Mongolia's own national initiatives, including the Billion Trees campaign, reflect that broader ambition: to connect land restoration with livelihoods and a more resilient future. But restoration is not only about planting trees. It is about what kind of development a country chooses, and how honestly it accounts for the pressures created along the way.

Mining often brings this tension into sharp focus. Minerals can support economies, employment, infrastructure and industrial development. But extraction can also leave behind degraded landscapes, unsafe working conditions, water and soil impacts, and communities carrying significant risks.

Indeed, it is a human challenge as well. For communities living close to extraction, land is never abstract. It represents livelihood, risk, inheritance and possibility. The challenge is how to make mining safer and more accountable, while also restoring landscapes and communities already affected.

This is where Borgil's work through the Green Resilience Institute enters the conversation. The Institute's flagship initiative, the Green Development Index (GDI), combines human development with environmental pressures, including land degradation. In simple terms, it asks countries to look not only at how well people live, but at the planetary cost of achieving that wellbeing.

The idea builds on earlier work by Mongolian scientist Dr Chuluun Togtokh, who proposed adding carbon emissions to the Human Development Index. Borgil's GDI extends that idea by bringing land degradation into the picture. For him, this is part of Mongolia's potential contribution to the global sustainability agenda: a way of helping countries see development, land and climate pressure in the same frame. It is still an emerging idea, but the question behind it is one every country needs to face.

If sustainability is serious about restoring both land and hope, it must also ask what kind of development is worth pursuing, what costs have been hidden, and how progress can be measured without forgetting nature.



ZERO IN ON GRACE

NAURU, REGENERATION, AND THE WORK OF WHAT COMES NEXT

More than a Cautionary Tale

For many people trained in sustainability and environmental studies, Nauru (now called Naoero) has long been taught as a cautionary tale. A small island. A rich phosphate resource, and a landscape reshaped by extraction. A country left to reckon with the consequences.

But Grace Muriuki is careful not to let Naoero be reduced to that story alone.

Spend time there, she says, and other stories begin to surface: community, striking landscapes, nature's resilience, and the difficult but hopeful work of regeneration.

The Work of Regeneration

Grace now works with the Pacific Community (SPC), where one of her major projects sits at the heart of Naoero's renewal. The Nauru Regeneration Project, a UNEP-GEF initiative, supports the country's efforts to restore degraded land, promote sustainable land management and conserve the biodiversity that remains.

It is work that carries some grief, but it also holds possibility.

Naoero's phosphate history is impossible to ignore. Mining transformed much of the island's interior, leaving behind a post-mining landscape that has become almost emblematic of what happens when short-term extraction overwhelms long-term ecological limits.

And yet, Grace's reflections from the island resist despair.

Evidence, Community and Place

In Anibare District, her work includes strengthening the evidence base and local capacity to support land-use decision-making. That includes working with stakeholders, particularly communities, preparing for consultations, and supporting the potential declaration of a protected area in remaining virgin land, following economic valuations and policy and legislative assessments.

The quiet architecture of regeneration is not simply one dramatic intervention, nor one perfect solution.

It is evidence, consultation, local capacity, partnerships and decision-making built carefully over time.



Building on What Remains

Grace's own image from Naoero captures the emotional weight of the work: standing beside the one remaining native tree, surrounded by regrowth and a landscape still carrying the memory of what was taken.

Whether read literally, symbolically, or both, the image says something powerful. Regeneration begins with what remains.

That is what makes Naoero's story so important for this issue of Zero In. The future of sustainability is not only about preventing damage. It is also about what we do after damage has already occurred.

How do we restore what can be restored? How do we protect what remains intact? How do communities participate in shaping land-use decisions? How do we build evidence without losing sight of memory, culture and place?



Beyond the Mining Story

For Grace, the work is not only technical - it is relational. It means spending time in landscapes and with communities, before consensus building around priorities and solutions. It means really seeing Naoero. There is still biodiversity worth protecting, and importantly, a community facing emerging threats in an already fragile landscape.

Through a UNEP-GEF funded project (Nauru Restoration Generation), Grace and colleagues are working with government and communities in Naoero on a journey towards restoration, and preservation of what remains.

What Comes Next

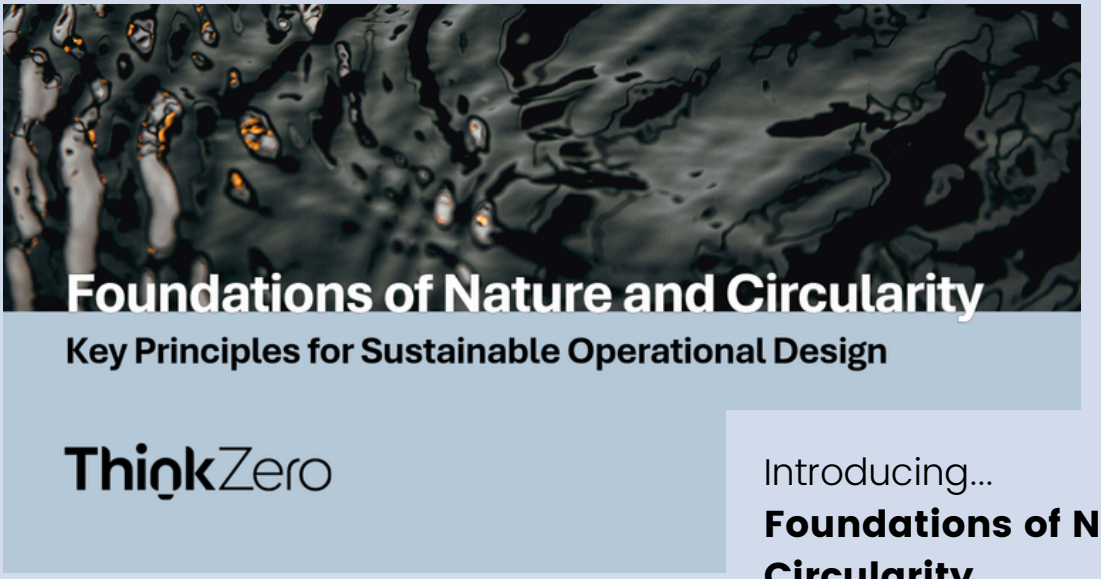
That work matters because Naoero asks a question the sustainability field cannot avoid:

What do we owe to places that have already paid the price of extraction?

The answer begins with staying long enough to understand the place beyond the cautionary tale. Naoero's restoration is about more than bringing damaged land back to life. It is about strengthening the systems that allow a small island to care for what remains and shape its future with resilience.

As global conversations on land restoration continue, Naoero offers a deeply human reminder: sustainability is not simply the recovery of what has been lost, but the capacity to protect, renew and pass on what remains.

Even in damaged landscapes, nature is not finished speaking.



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ZERO IN ON CAROLIN

NATURE IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL

For Carolin Leeshaa, the future of sustainability is not climate on one side, nature on another, and social equity somewhere else again. Those agendas are converging.

Nature is no longer a “nice to have” environmental topic. It is becoming a business imperative: part of the same risk, finance and boardroom conversation.

Forests, oceans, soils, water systems and biodiversity support the economy: absorbing carbon, protecting assets, sustaining supply chains and shaping resilience.

As Principal of The Social Investment Collective, former KPMG Global Nature Lead and founding Taskforce Member of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, Carolin has been close to nature’s shift into mainstream finance and governance.

Her message to organisations is practical: **You do not need to become an ecologist.**

But you do need to treat nature like any other material risk: with data, governance, accountability and a plan.

Nature Positive

Carolin is clear that “nature positive” cannot simply become another polished phrase in a sustainability report. To mean anything, it has to change decisions: a sourcing contract, site design, lending rule, procurement choice, or budget.

If nothing changes, the phrase is marketing, not practice.

Credible nature work begins with understanding where an organisation depends on nature, where it affects nature, and where the risks and opportunities are material.

A framework can guide the process, but it cannot tell you what is happening in a particular catchment, coastline, paddock, forest, port or community. That knowledge has to come from the ground: scientific data, Traditional Owners, land managers and people who know the place.

Making Nature Practical

This is why Carolin is partnering with ThinkZero on nature and circularity.

Circularity asks organisations to design, use and recover resources differently. Nature-based thinking asks them to understand the living systems around their assets, operations and supply chains.

Together, they move the conversation from awareness to decision-making. For Carolin, the opportunity is not simply better disclosure. It is better strategy.

Better data and technology will make nature more visible and measurable. But organisations that get this right will still rely on people who know the land.

Nature is becoming central because the risks are real, the opportunities are investable, and our systems keep reminding us we were never separate from nature in the first place.

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ZERO IN ON CLARE



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Growth Changes What a Business Needs

Growth brings opportunity. More clients, more people, more responsibility, and more decisions to make. But as a business grows, the way it operates needs to grow too.

For Clare McAlpine, Founder of New Leaf Business Solutions, this is where many businesses begin to feel the strain. Not because something has gone wrong, but because the business has outgrown the systems, roles and ways of working that supported it in an earlier stage.

What once lived comfortably in the owner's head starts to become harder to manage. Responsibilities expand. Decisions become more complex. Important knowledge sits with one or two people. The same questions come up repeatedly. The same problems keep reappearing.

It does not mean the business is broken. It may simply mean the foundations need to grow with it.

Resilience Starts Inside the Business

When people talk about resilience, they often think about external shocks: economic uncertainty, climate impacts, supply chain disruption, staffing shortages or changing customer expectations.

But Clare's work points to something more internal.

A resilient business is not only one that can respond to change outside the organisation. It is one that has enough clarity, structure and confidence inside the organisation to keep moving when conditions change.

That starts with practical foundations. Clear roles, clear responsibilities, good communication, and useful processes. People who understand how decisions are made, and enough structure to support the business without making it feel heavy.

For Clare, this is not about adding unnecessary policies or making a growing business feel corporate before it needs to be. It is about giving people the clarity and confidence to do their jobs well.

Not More Paperwork. Better Foundations.

One of the risks for growing businesses is assuming that every operational problem needs a new tool, app, spreadsheet or policy. Sometimes it does. But often, Clare sees a deeper issue underneath.





A payroll problem may actually be a people or process problem. A delivery issue may come back to unclear roles. An overwhelmed business owner may not need another system so much as a clearer way of organising responsibility across the business.

That is why New Leaf's work looks at the business as a whole. The people, the risks and responsibilities, how work is delivered, how the business operates, and how all of it can keep improving.

Clare describes this through five foundations: **People, Protect, Deliver, Operate and Optimise.**

Together, they provide a way to step back and ask: what does this business actually need now?

Not what did it need when it started. Not what worked when it was smaller. But what does it need for the version of the business it is becoming?

The Confidence to Keep Moving

When the right structure is in place, the business is not only easier to run; people are better equipped to make decisions.

They know what they own, they understand how their work connects to others, and they can respond to change without everything needing to flow back through the business owner.

That is where operational resilience becomes real - it is the everyday capability of a business to keep functioning, adapting and improving.

For small and growing businesses, that can be the difference between simply getting busier and actually becoming stronger.

Lessons from the Boat

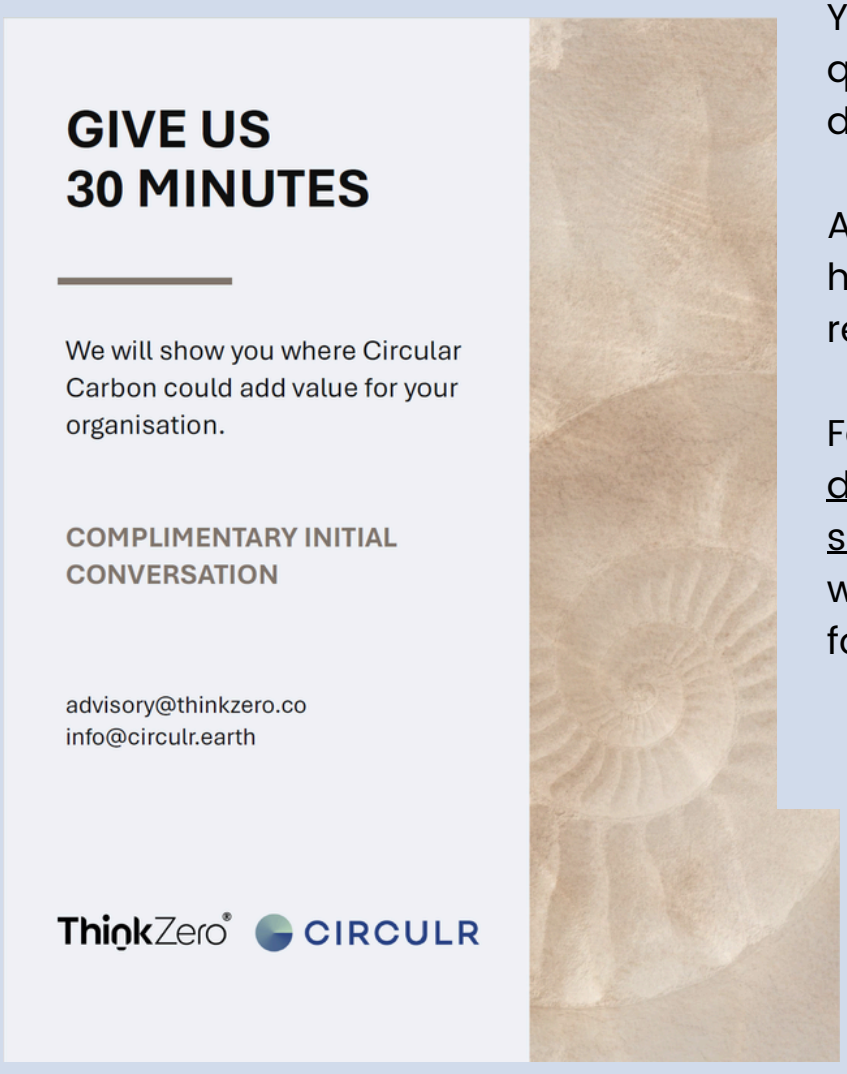
Outside work, Clare is also part of the Mackay Surf Life Saving Club, where she has taken up surf boat rowing. It is a fitting image for the kind of resilience she helps build in businesses.

A crew cannot move well if everyone is guessing their role. It needs rhythm, trust, timing, communication and shared effort. It needs people who know what they are responsible for, but also understand how their part fits into the movement of the whole.

Business resilience is not so different. When conditions change, strong businesses do not rely on one person holding everything together. They rely on people, systems and ways of working that can move together under pressure.

That is the kind of resilience Clare is helping businesses build, but from the inside out.





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ZERO IN ON ALDON



RESILIENCE BEYOND INFRASTRUCTURE

A Career Built around Uncertainty

Aldon Jasper's work sits at an unusual intersection:

Defence and Diplomacy.
Climate risk and Disaster response.
National security and Sustainability.

It is not a combination you come across every day, but it is exactly the kind of perspective the sustainability field increasingly needs.

Aldon currently serves as a Defence Attaché in Venezuela, where his work involves representing Trinidad and Tobago's defence interests, monitoring the security environment, and supporting informed decision-making during periods of uncertainty.

From Disaster Response to Diplomacy

Aldon's understanding of resilience has been shaped by his 25 years of experience in the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, with work taking him across the Caribbean, Central America, South America and beyond.

He spent more than 14 months working with the United States Coast Guard out of Miami, travelling across more than 20 countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean, including in contexts involving disaster response.

In 2005, he was part of the response to hurricane damage in Grenada. In 2017, following Hurricane Maria, he was the captain of the first vessel from Trinidad and Tobago to arrive in Dominica to provide assistance.

The port was devastated. Workers had gone home to deal with their own losses. But the country needed the port to function so relief could arrive.

In that moment, Aldon's ship helped coordinate with incoming vessels, including international partners, so assistance could move into the country.

That experience stayed with him, because disasters are not only about damage. They are about whether systems can keep working when people are under pressure.

A Plan is Only as Good as the Last Disaster it Encounters

For Aldon, resilience is not simply the ability to "bounce back". It is the ability to understand risk before crisis, and coordinate across systems when the moment arrives. Having a plan matters, but only if it has been tested. As he puts it: "A plan is only as good as the last disaster it encounters."

That is where Aldon's defence and disaster response experience becomes especially relevant. Long-term planning matters. But when crisis arrives, resilience depends on practical readiness: clear roles, reliable communication, strong partnerships and people who know what to do under pressure.

The Human Side of Security

What makes Aldon's perspective especially compelling is that he does not reduce resilience to infrastructure. He believes resilience also lives in people. It lives in families, communities, memory, trust and belonging. It lives in whether people know who to turn to, and whether they believe the systems around them will act when crisis comes.

In Venezuela, where Aldon is currently based, he has observed the importance of deep social and intergenerational connections in public spaces that feel lived in and familiar.

Those things can seem ordinary. But in crisis, ordinary ties become part of the resilience system. When people are grieving, displaced or afraid, it is often community that holds them together long enough to keep moving.

That is part of what Aldon sees now, in Venezuela: a country facing uncertainty, but also people who continue to adapt, support one another and find ways forward.

WHEN HOME DISAPPEARS

The Places that Tell Us We Are Safe

We all carry maps inside us. Not formal maps, with borders and coordinates. Something more intimate.

The route to school. The street where our grandmother lived. The beach we knew as children. The hill that told us we were close to home. The market, the church, the river, the coastline, the corner shop.

These places do more than locate us. They anchor us.

Naval Captain Aldon Jasper describes this as part of our personal security: the sense that we know where we are, that the world around us is familiar, and that the landscape can still be read.

When that landscape changes suddenly, through earthquake, flood, landslide, storm surge, fire or collapse, people lose more than infrastructure.

They can lose the map that told them how to feel safe.

From Personal Security to National Security

This is where the idea becomes powerful. A destroyed road is a logistics problem. A collapsed building is an engineering problem. A flooded neighbourhood is an emergency management problem.

But for the people who live there, it is also something deeper.

It is the place where memory lived.



2017 photo:
Aldon Jasper is a Naval Captain, who is being awarded the **Humanitarian Medal for Disaster Relief** for his response in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Dominica.

When the landscape changes, people lose reference points. Parents can no longer point to the beach they visited as children if that beach has disappeared. Communities can no longer pass down the same stories if the places that held those stories have been erased. Families may still remember, but the land no longer confirms the memory.

That is not just environmental loss - it is identity loss.

And when many people experience that at once, personal insecurity begins to scale. Individual disorientation becomes communal grief. Communal grief becomes social vulnerability. Social vulnerability becomes a governance challenge.

And under the pressure of repeated shocks, governance challenges can become national insecurity.

This is why resilience cannot be reduced to "rebuilding better" in a narrow infrastructure sense. Rebuilding is not only about replacing what collapsed.

It is about restoring the conditions that allow people to trust the ground beneath them again - both literally and politically.

When the State Itself Feels Unstable

Natural disasters do not arrive in neutral conditions. They land on top of whatever was already there: economic stress, fragile institutions, public distrust, limited resources, weak infrastructure, or uncertain international support.

This is where resilience meets sovereignty.

For Aldon, disaster preparedness is tied to a country's ability to govern, coordinate, communicate and protect its people under pressure.

Can it warn people? Can it protect essential services? Can it distribute aid fairly, and keep public trust? And, can it make decisions without becoming wholly dependent on others?

When those answers become uncertain, disaster recovery becomes more than recovery. It becomes a test of statehood.

The Problem with Survival Mode

One of Aldon's sharpest observations is this: "When a country is in survival mode, sustainable development is not a high priority."

It is a sentence that should make sustainability practitioners pause.

A country managing debt, crime, energy shortages, unemployment, public distrust or basic service failures may understand climate risk and still lack the money, bandwidth or political space to prepare properly.

The same is true for households. A person trying to keep a roof over their head may not experience climate change as the most urgent threat, even if climate change is worsening the risks around them.

This is not a failure of awareness. It is a failure of capacity.

Scan the QR to connect with Aldon on LinkedIn

Trust is Disaster Infrastructure

Trust may be the most underrated form of disaster infrastructure. People are more likely to follow warnings, accept assistance and share accurate information when they trust the authorities and organisations involved.

That trust cannot be improvised after the ground starts shaking or the water starts rising. It has to be built in ordinary time - before the disaster, before the evacuation, before the appeal for calm, and before the international assistance arrives.

Trust is not soft. It is operational.



What Disasters Reveal

At this very moment, around the world disasters are being watched in real time - earthquakes, floods, mudslides, storms, volcanic eruptions, heatwaves, fires, and infrastructure failures.

The images travel quickly: collapsed buildings, families searching through debris, communities cut off, landscapes rearranged.

But if we only see the event, we miss the system.

A disaster is not only the moment something breaks. It is the moment underlying conditions become visible. Poor planning and weak enforcement become visible. Distrust, inequality, and environmental degradation become visible.

And the mental map of home begins to fracture. People are not only asking, “Where will we sleep tonight?” They may also be asking: Where are we now? Who is responsible for us? Can we trust what we are being told? Will help come, and will this place still be ours?

Those are security and sovereignty questions. And they are sustainability questions too.

Rebuilding the Map

The sustainability field is comfortable with long horizons - nature-positive futures and transition pathways. Scenario analyses and adaptation plans. But disasters collapse the future into the present, and ask whether our systems can act now.

That does not mean sustainability should become militarised or fear-driven. But it does mean sustainability needs more operational discipline: tested systems, reliable communication, protection of essential services and coordination before crisis.

These days, ‘greener’ is not enough. Safer, trusted, prepared, sovereign, and dignified - these things matter too.

Human beings are resilient - Aldon believes that deeply. But human resilience should not be used as an excuse for weak systems.

Because when the mental map of home disappears, sustainability cannot only ask how to rebuild infrastructure. It has to ask how people find their way back to safety.

LOOKING AHEAD

Working on Governance and Disclosures in a hard-to-abate sector?

Navigating questions about Circularity and Nature?

Three Ways to Engage:

1. Book us for a one-hour IFRS/ASRS S2 Skills and Capabilities session with your Board and Executive Team.
2. Book us in to talk to your Board and executives about Nature and Circularity.
3. Book a FREE 30-minute conversation about Circular Carbon - email advisory@thinkzero.co

WHEN YOU'RE READY:

Explore ThinkZero's case studies here at thinkzero.co/case-studies

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A World of Sustainability



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