

Annual Report

2023-24



Sankala Foundation

Voice for a Sustainable Planet



“

The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children. So we have to handover to them at least as it was handed over to us.

- Mahatma Gandhi

”



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Voice for a Sustainable Planet

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Photographs: Masood Sarwer, Yamini Rajora, Radha Datta, Pramod Yadav

Design: Arif Khan

Contact: admin@sankala.org

Website: Sankala.org

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Ranikhet's serene settlements, site for our research on livelihoods in Uttarakhand

Executive Summary

The second year of Sankala Foundation has been marked by expanded activities and meaningful contributions, some significant milestones, and a commitment to its mission. The Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability (SCCS) under the Foundation has been dedicated to conducting research, scientific studies, and developing ideas and policy frameworks for knowledge-based advocacy. The Centre's efforts are focused on contributing innovative and scientific solutions to emerging global challenges such as climate change, poverty, resource depletion and environmental degradation, while promoting renewability and sustainability. Through partnerships with various partners and other stakeholders, the Centre has worked to advance public policy and best practices for a green transformation.

This year, key initiatives intertwined efforts in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), public health, sustainable development, livelihood, and the application of technology. A major highlight was the art exhibition 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre,' organised in partnership with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India. The exhibition was inaugurated by Smt. Droupadi Murmu, Hon'ble President of India, in the presence of Shri Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State, and senior officials of the MoEF&CC. The exhibition was attended by diplomats, civil servants, conservationists, art lovers, members of tribal communities, artists, businesspeople, academicians, UN representatives and number of women and children. The

exhibition celebrated the enduring bond between tribal communities and tigers. This event highlighted the importance of preserving cultural and natural heritage and promoting environmental conservation, fostering greater awareness and appreciation among the public.

Significant progress was also made in the WASH programme. This year, the Foundation carried out studies on planning, implementation and management of Jal Jeevan Mission – a flagship programme of the Government of India to ensure clean tap water to every home and public institutions in rural India. Notably, the use of technology like insulated pipes now ensures clean tap water supply in every home in sub-zero temperatures in Ladakh and other Himalayan states/ UTs, resolving a long-standing problem. The use of solar energy has solved water supply problem in forested, hilly and remote areas eliminating vulnerabilities of local communities' especially tribal people. Such humongous efforts have led to over 14 crore households in rural areas gain access to clean tap water.

In the public health domain, the Foundation conducted a study on digital healthcare initiative in Kolar, Karnataka, examining how the Digital Nerve Centre (DiNC) model has improved access to primary healthcare for all. The potential of digital health technologies has been explored as a pathway toward achieving universal health coverage, especially in rural, remote, forested, hill and border areas. This initiative also holds the promise to make primary healthcare affordable, ensure quality and reduce the crowding of hospitals as well as improve the efficiency of the sector. The Foundation remains committed to supporting the government's vision of affordable,

accessible, and equitable quality healthcare services to all.

Livelihood and watershed initiatives in Uttarakhand were also a focus of Sankala. Despite Himalayan glaciers being the perennial source of water to Indo-Gangetic plains, in certain areas of Uttarakhand, water scarcity is affecting socio-economic development. In fact, in many villages, lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities and water scarcity are leading to migration. Efforts to empower local communities, particularly in the Central Himalayas, through skill development, entrepreneurship, and alternative income-generating activities were studied in detail, alongside sustainable water management practices aimed at improving livelihoods.

The establishment of the Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage is set to be a hub for promoting the preservation of India's vast cultural and natural heritage, grounded in India's conservation ethos. This Centre started working to promote the rich traditions of various communities, and ecosystems that define the nation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought an urgency to focus on sustainable urban space management. The Foundation also aims to address contemporary challenges in urban spaces by developing innovative concepts for space utilisation, mobility solutions, green spaces, recreation, nature education and sustainable water resource management. In response to growing environmental and infrastructural pressures, these efforts will

focus on creating sustainable, liveable urban environments.

To support these expanded activities, the Foundation will continue its institutional growth by bringing on domain experts and advisors, while expanding its office space to accommodate this development. This will enable the Foundation to scale its efforts and ensure the highest levels of expertise in addressing complex global challenges.

Charting a new course, the Foundation has promoted various initiatives through research studies, publications, policy recommendations, conferences, seminars, symposiums, etc. These are based on critical topics such as sustainability, conservation, and social equity, helping to shape national discourse and drive positive policy change. The Foundation's model of work has been on enhancing transparency and accountability, ensuring that the impacts of its work are measurable, and its processes open to scrutiny.

Such forward-looking plans reflect the Foundation's continued commitment to innovation, collaboration, and advocacy as it strives to create a sustainable and equitable future for all. As the Foundation reflects on these achievements, it remains mindful of the challenges ahead. The path forward is complex, but with continued collaboration and commitment, positive change is within reach. With this, gratitude is extended to all partners, supporters, and communities for their continued trust and cooperation.

About Sankala Foundation

The Sankala Foundation is a non-profit organisation, registered in 2022 under Section (8) of the Companies Act, 2013 of India. Our primary focus is on strengthening the knowledge base and promoting dialogue among various stakeholders to foster initiatives that contribute to the sustainability of Planet Earth. We are particularly committed to mitigating the effects of climate change and environmental disasters, with a special emphasis on protecting vulnerable communities.

To achieve our goals, the Foundation actively engages in research and promotes knowledge-based advocacy. We strive to contribute to developing sustainable policies and practices, and foster partnerships with both governments at different levels and non-government organisations, the scientific community, private sector and domain experts that share similar objectives at the local, national, and international levels.

The Sankala Foundation aims to create a collaborative environment where various

stakeholders can forge partnerships and work together to achieve common goals and address the pressing challenges of climate change and sustainability. Our ultimate objective is to make a positive and lasting impact on the well-being of our planet and the communities that depend on it.

'Sankala', a Hindi word that embodies the concept of 'the coming together of all elemental units as one,' is the guiding force behind our foundation. It provides us with a solid foundation for harnessing the synergy of ideas, energy, and knowledge in our efforts to contribute to a climate and disaster resilient, and sustainable planet.

By embracing the concept of Sankalan, we recognise the power of collaboration and the interrelation of various elements and stakeholders. We believe that by uniting diverse resources, perspectives, and efforts, one can create a more harmonious and transformative impact to address the emerging challenges.

Mission and Vision of the Foundation



Vision: It envisions a green and sustainable planet by contributing to the building of a climate resilient world and poverty-free society.



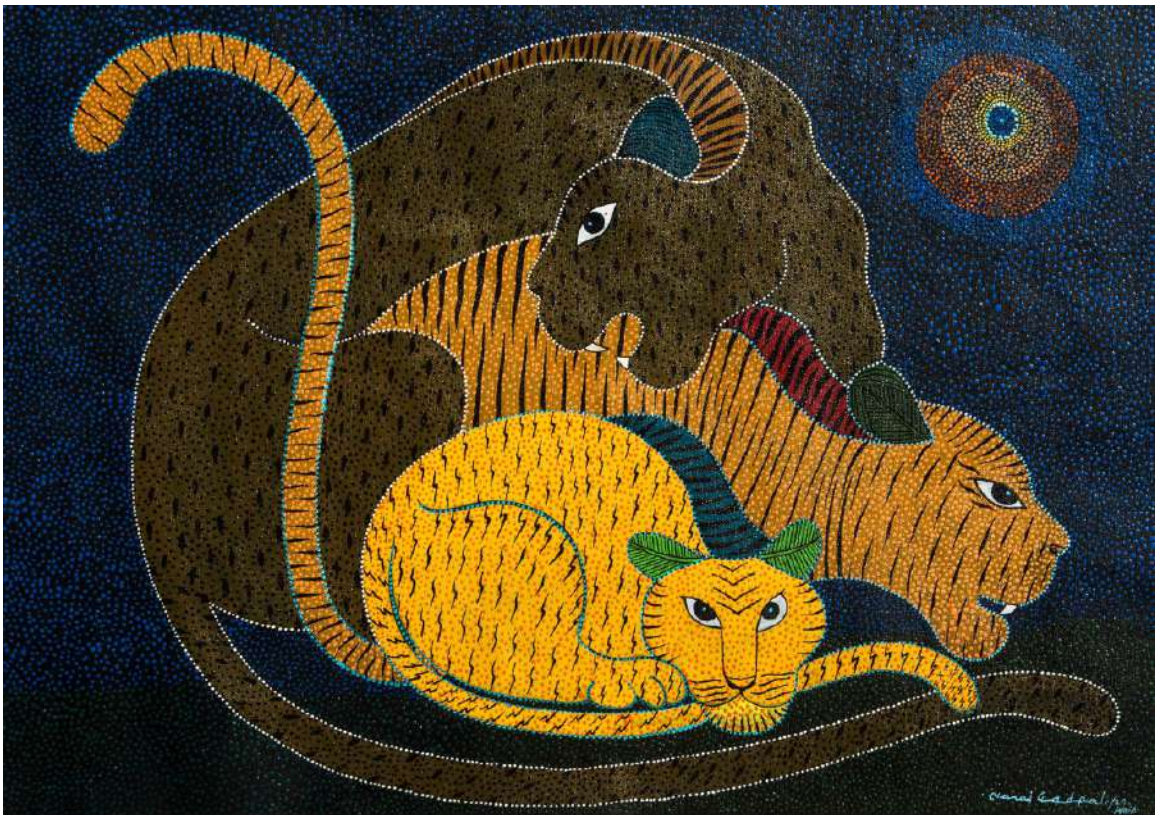
Mission: It is dedicated to carrying out research, scientific studies, and developing ideas and policy frameworks for knowledge-based advocacy. The Centre is committed to designing and providing innovative and scientific solutions to emerging challenges related to climate change, poverty, and resource depletion, and promoting renewability and sustainability. By nurturing partnerships with different stakeholders, the Centre aims to promote public policies and best practices for a green transformation on planet Earth.

Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability

The Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability (SCCS), established and managed by the Sankala Foundation, is dedicated to advancing education, research, training, outreach, advice, and advocacy in the field of climate and sustainability. The Centre is committed to collaborating with the government and non-governmental organisations, scientific communities, private sector and domain experts that share similar goals. At the heart of the Centre's ethos is a resolve to contribute towards improving the quality of life of people, especially disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

The Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability (SCCS), established and man-

aged by the Sankala Foundation, is dedicated to advancing education, research, training, outreach, advice, and advocacy in the field of climate and sustainability. The Centre is committed to collaborate with the government and its parastatal organisations at all levels, non-governmental organisations, scientific communities, and domain experts that share similar goals. To bring synergy, these collaborations extend to the local, national, and international levels. At the heart of the Centre's ethos is a resolve to contribute meaningfully towards improving the quality of life, especially of disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Through evidence-based policy prescriptions and sustainable resource management, we aim to design and support programmes that help eradicate poverty and build inclusive societies.



Baghdev (Tiger God): Tribal artist Manoj Gadpal's artwork from Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh

Advisory Board



Prof. K. VijayRaghavan

Prof. K. VijayRaghavan, a renowned molecular biologist, chairs the advisory board of Sankala Foundation. He served as the Secretary of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, from January 2013 to January 2018, where his knowledge and guidance were instrumental in shaping the nation's biotechnological landscape of the country. His dedication to science and technology and his achievements earned him the prestigious position of Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India where he served from 2018 to 2022.



Prof. Ashutosh Sharma

Prof. Ashutosh Sharma is a visionary academician with exceptional interdisciplinary contributions in the fields of nano-sciences, nanotechnology, nanocomposites, soft matter, micro/nano-mechanics, colloid and interfacial engineering etc. He has served as the Institute Chair Professor and INAE Visvesvaraya Chair Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. Currently, he is the President of Indian National Science Academy (INSA), New Delhi.



Dr. C. N. Pandey

A professor at IIT Gandhinagar, Dr. C. N. Pandey is a distinguished public servant from the Indian Forest Service. Dr. C. N. Pandey served as the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Chief of the State Forest Department in Gujarat, and made an indelible mark on the state's efforts to preserve and protect its rich biodiversity.



Dr. Leena Srivastava

Dr. Leena Srivastava is currently a member of SDG-7 Technical Advisory Group of the United Nations. She is also the Coordinating Lead Author of the 3rd Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report. She has also served as the Vice Chancellor of TERI School of Advanced Studies, New Delhi. She was also the Deputy Director General for Science of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), in Vienna, Austria.



Dr. Ashok Malik

With over 30 years of diverse experience in government, media, and thought leadership, Dr. Ashok Malik is known for his knowledge of India's policy landscape and complex interplay between business and politics. He has also served as Policy Advisor/Additional Secretary in India's Ministry of External Affairs from 2019 to 2022.

Areas of Work



Public Health

The Sankala Foundation focuses on providing solutions for emerging health challenges, affordable and accessible healthcare services, capacity building and leadership development of healthcare professionals, and preventive healthcare, all while leveraging technology. India presents an ideal and dynamic environment for digitising healthcare delivery, given its large population, growing reliance on smartphones and its widespread internet service. The Foundation's work in public health involves identifying innovative, sustainable, practical, and replicable solutions that can address issues of accessibility, affordability, and quality that plague India's healthcare system.



Sustainable Development

Sankala Foundation envisions a holistic approach to sustainable development, encompassing various key domains. Our initiatives include community engagement through education, workshops, and awareness campaigns to promote informed decisions. Our initiatives on policies include economic empowerment and livelihoods that merge with ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation to nurture a balanced planet. We champion innovation and technology for solutions in livelihood generation, skilling, and resource management.



Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH)

The Sankala Foundation understands that the journey towards comprehensive access to safe piped drinking water, improved sanitation, and effective hygiene practices is about a future where the promise of health and dignity is woven into the very fabric of Indian society. The Foundation concentrates on promoting sustainable water management, water governance, reducing groundwater depletion, restoration of water bodies, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, environmental sanitation, and improving water quality and hygiene.



Wildlife Conservation

Protecting the biodiversity of tiger reserves is a critical aspect of the Foundation's efforts. We focus on researching conservation efforts for wildlife, heritage sites, water bodies, and waterfalls within tiger reserves. The other focus is on enhancing livelihood opportunities for marginalised communities living in and around the tiger reserves.



Sustainable Livelihood Practices

Efforts to create livelihood opportunities are directed at empowering local and tribal communities through skill development and eco-friendly

practices. Collaboration with various stakeholders is facilitated to generate employment opportunities that align with environmental conservation and sustainable development principles. These initiatives aim to build economic resilience while protecting natural resources and fostering long-term sustainability.



Urban Infrastructure

A focus on improving urban infrastructure is maintained, with key challenges in urban space, mobility, and resource management being addressed. Policy recommendations are developed, and urban planning initiatives are implemented to enhance the quality of life in urban areas. The use of smart solutions and sustainable practices is promoted to create more livable, environmentally responsible urban spaces.



Promotion of Art and Heritage

The preservation of cultural traditions and heritage is a central aim of the Foundation. Efforts are made to organise exhibitions, curate visual art books, and collaborate with tribal artists to showcase India's rich cultural and artistic heritage. Initiatives are undertaken to preserve both tangible and intangible heritage, fostering an appreciation of the nation's diverse cultural landscape. In this year, Sankala team organised many roundtable discussions and meetings with experts working in this

area to identify the challenges and opportunities and design a framework for impactful advocacy and research in coming year.



Education, Communication and Outreach

The importance of education and awareness in fostering sustainable development and conservation efforts is recognised by the Foundation. Workshops, training sessions, and outreach programmes are organised to engage communities, especially youth, in critical issues such as climate change, sustainability, and public health. These initiatives aim to inspire informed decision-making and active participation in efforts to build a more sustainable and resilient future. The Foundation is identifying experts and practitioners with experience to further our outreach.



Air and Environment

The Foundation attempts to address the environmental challenges faced by millions through the promotion of cleaner air through policy advocacy, public awareness campaigns, and innovative pollution reduction solutions. Currently, the environmental efforts are focused on ecosystem restoration, biodiversity conservation, and the promotion of green practices, contributing to a cleaner, healthier environment for present and future generations.

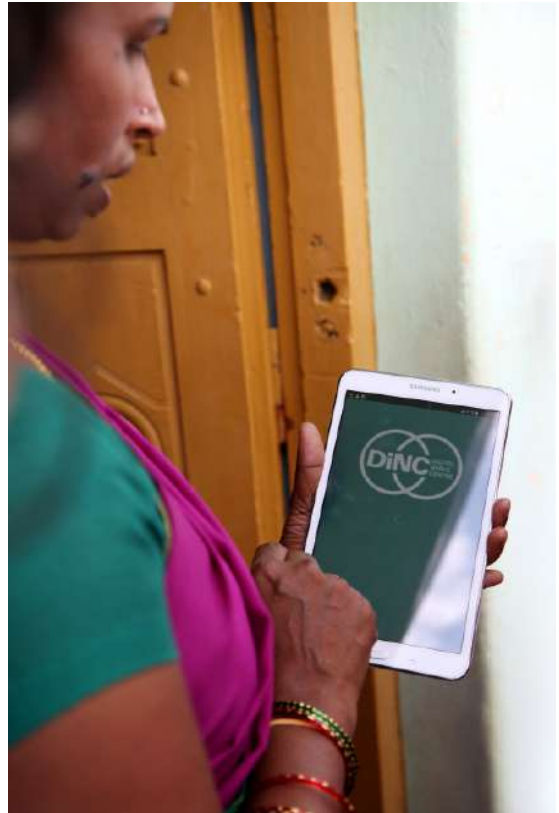
Research Activities Undertaken in FY 2023-24

This year, the Sankala Foundation actively engaged in various fields such as Sustainable Development, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Public Health, Wildlife Conservation, and Heritage Preservation. Our work includes extensive field activities like field survey, data collection, community engagement, and programme implementation. The insights and findings from these efforts have been meticulously captured in numerous reports and books. These publications are valuable resources for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, providing detailed accounts of methodologies, outcomes, and best practices.

Study on Public Health: Digital Solutions for Universal Health Coverage

Motivated to tackle the issues in India's healthcare services, the Sankala Foundation studied the role of digital technologies in steering progress in primary healthcare and ensuring universal health coverage (UHC). The team set out to study the Digital Nerve Centre (DiNC) initiative, currently being piloted in the Kolar district of Karnataka, by the Tata Medical and Diagnostics, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka.

The team researched the key features of the initiative, and its digital and physical infrastructure, and reviewed its impact on accessibility and care experience. The early visits during November 2023 involved interaction with the technical staff from Tata Medical and Diagnostics to gain a complete understanding of the initiative's features, operations, and



ASHA worker using a tab to collect data in Kolar, Karnataka



The Sankala team getting acquainted with the functions of Digital Nerve Centre, Kolar, Karnataka

implementation mechanism. In the second phase, our field research team, fluent in Kannada, conducted in-depth interviews with various stakeholders. The team carried out 52 interviews, which included healthcare seekers and providers, frontline workers (ANMs and ASHAs), members of the Tata MD team, as well as district programme officers, to explore their perspectives on the DiNC's impact.

The field visits and participant interviews helped the study team gain an understanding of how the DiNC augments Kolar's primary healthcare system using digital tools and mitigates some of the challenges faced by citizens in accessing healthcare.

Study on Socio-economic Development for Himalayan Communities

Promoting Sustainable Livelihood Practices for the Forest Communities

Uttarakhand, with its ecologically rich biodiversity, is home to approximately 10.1 million people, 69.4% of whom are rural and rely heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods. In February-March 2024, the Sankala Foundation team conducted extensive fieldwork in the Kumaon and Garhwal regions of Uttarakhand to explore sustainable livelihood practices.

The fieldwork involved visits to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across the state to assess various livelihood initiatives implemented under the Uttarakhand Forest Resources Management Project (UFRMP). A core team of four members from Sankala Foundation, supported by 11 field assistants, conducted large-scale surveys and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises. Data was collected



Women harness mushroom cultivation for economic empowerment in Uttarakhand

from 1,079 rural households within 166 SHGs across 95 Village Panchayats.

A key focus of the study was understanding the role of women in mushroom cultivation as a means of economic empowerment. The team examined various value chain components—such as input supply, production, processing, packaging, and marketing—and assessed the impact of skill development programmes on women's empowerment through SHGs.

The study also looked at economic alternatives, such as basket weaving in Gairsain block, Chamoli District. It was found that communities engaged in diverse value chains were less dependent on forests for their livelihoods, a crucial step toward sustainable resource use in the region.



Key water source in the Mallagrah Watershed project in Ranikhet, Almora District, Uttarakhand



Water source in Devprayag, Uttarakhand

Study on Promoting Micro-Watershed Management in High Altitudes

The Sankala Foundation also examined micro-watershed management efforts under the UFRMP-JICA initiative, which aims to secure water resources and enhance community income through soil and water conservation measures. The team visited nine micro-watershed sites to evaluate water management practices and their impact on the livelihoods of local communities.

The study found that the UFRMP-JICA micro-watershed model has been successful in addressing key issues such as water scarcity, soil erosion, and agricultural productivity. Perennial water sources were being consistently revived and redirected for irrigation and drinking water purposes. This holistic approach to local water resource management has proven effective in ensuring water security

and improving the economic well-being of the communities involved.

These initiatives underscore Sankala Foundation's commitment to fostering sustainable livelihoods and improving resource management in Uttarakhand, contributing to long-term ecological and economic resilience.

Study on Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) Initiatives

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) - Har Ghar Jal: Clean Tap Water to Every Rural Home in India

India's ambitious drive to provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) to every rural household continues to tackle the challenges of water scarcity and unequal water distribution. Launched in 2019, the Jal Jeevan



Empowered by Jal Jeevan Mission: A beneficiary in Jammu and Kashmir

Mission (JJM) aims to provide tap water connections to all rural households by 2024, ensuring access to safe drinking water and improving public health by reducing waterborne diseases. The initiative is designed to promote sustainability by incorporating community engagement, technological advancements, and best practices in water resource management.

The Sankala Foundation carried out the field study of the transformative impact of JJM in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The Foundation interviewed present and past officials, civil society members, UN agencies, sector partners, Pani Samiti members, and academic institutions involved in conceptualising, planning and implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission. The sheer scale of the programme and its planning and implementation during COVID-19 has been a huge learning. The study report includes in-depth case studies from various regions across India, covering remote areas such as Arunachal Pradesh, drought-prone regions like Bundelkhand, and long-deprived areas such as Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir. These studies highlight how communities, empowered by JJM, have benefited from clean and safe tap water for the first time.

Technological innovations, such as the use of data analytics, real-time monitoring using sensor based Internet of Things (IoT) devices and various tools which are reflected on JJM dashboard, have played a key role in making clean tap water accessible to millions of rural households. The study report outlines these technological advancements and their role in ensuring system and source sustainability, offering critical insights for policymakers and stakeholders in India and beyond, especially within the Global South.

By capturing successful strategies and lessons learned, this publication underscores India's pioneering efforts in drinking water management, showcasing the importance of community involvement and policy innovation in addressing global water challenges.

Wildlife and Heritage Initiatives

Tribal Livelihoods and Tiger Preservation

India's tiger reserves are home to nearly 70% of the world's tiger population. Tribal communities residing in and around these reserves embody a deep connection to the land, highlighting the interconnectedness of all living and non-living forms. In India, wildlife conservation is intrinsically tied to the culture, customs, and traditions of these communities, where the protection of tigers is often an integral part of their way of life.

To emphasise this relationship, the Sankala Foundation launched its wildlife vertical with a threefold purpose: wildlife conservation, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of marginalised communities. This initiative promotes understanding and cooperation, aiming to create a balanced coexistence that protects both the tiger population and the cultural heritage of tribal communities.

One key initiative under this vertical is the art exhibition 'Silent Conversation': From Margins to the Centre. The outcome of this art exhibition is a visual art book 'Tiger & Tribes: A Silent Conversation'. It showcases the art of tribal communities living near 29 tiger reserves across India. Featuring over 100 paintings, the book captures the unique perspectives of these tribes on tigers, portraying the deep cultural

and spiritual bonds they share. For example, in the Sundarbans, Bono Devi, the local goddess, is often depicted alongside the revered Bengal tiger. The book also highlights how tigers are symbols of reverence in many tribal cultures.

Through this project, the Sankala Foundation not only celebrates tribal art but also explores alternative, sustainable livelihood options for these communities, aiming to reduce their dependence on forest resources.

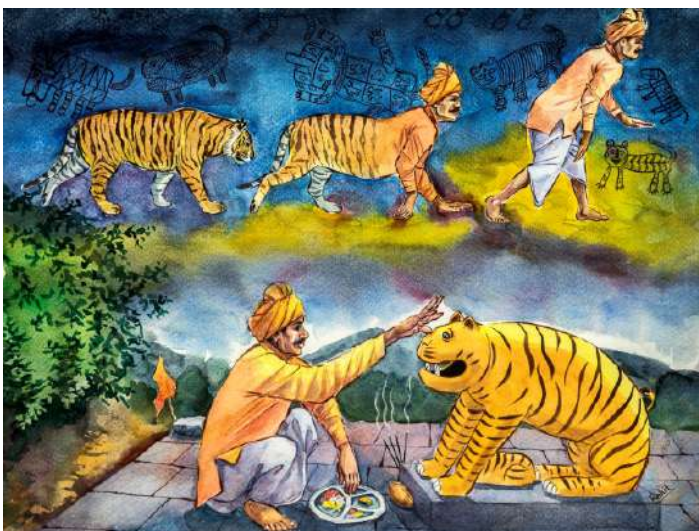
Hidden Heritage in Tiger Reserves

India's tiger reserves, while renowned for their biodiversity, are also rich in cultural and natural heritage. In addition to their vibrant ecosystems, these protected areas often house significant heritage structures, which form part of the broader forest landscape. Recognising the importance of preserving this dual heritage, the Sankala Foundation, in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority, undertook a research study aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (target 11.4) to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

The Foundation has initiated work on a visual book detailing the historical sites and cultural centres located within tiger reserves across India. This book will serve as a visual tribute to the architectural and historical significance of these areas, highlighting both their natural beauty and cultural narratives.

As part of this project, the Sankala Foundation team conducted field surveys in eight tiger reserves, including Amrabad, Nagarjuna-Srisailam, Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Sanjay-Dubri, Mukundra Hills, Ranthambore, and Sariska, located in the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Additionally, the team studied the cultural significance of the heritage buildings within the reserves by studying the heritage buildings within them, thus bridging the ecological and historical relevance of these protected areas.

This initiative seeks to deepen the understanding of the shared history and heritage that exists within India's tiger reserves while fostering the conservation of both wildlife and cultural legacies.



Reverence for the tiger depicted in a painting from Pench Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh



A portrait of co-existence by a tribal artist from Similipal, Odisha

Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre

Exploration of tribal art and conservation through 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre'

An art exhibition titled 'Silent Conversation: From the Margins to the Centre' marked a significant event in November 2023. This first exhibition held from 3rd to 5th November 2023, in a planned series celebrated the connection between tiger conservation, the empowerment of tribal communities, and the rich artistic heritage of India. Organised by the Sankala Foundation and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), the exhibition coincided with the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger. The inauguration ceremony held great importance, graced by the presence of India's President, Smt. Droupadi Murmu. The inaugu-

ral ceremony was attended by Shri Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State, Smt. Leena Nandan, Secretary, MoEF&CC, Shri Bharat Lal, Secretary General, NHRC, India, Shri C. P. Goyal, DG (Forest) & Special Secretary, MoEF&CC, Shri S. P. Yadav, ADG (PT & E)/ Member Secretary, NTCA and other senior officials from the Government.

The exhibition showcased the exceptional talent of 43 artists from 12 different Indian states. These artists represented diverse art styles, including Gond, Bhil, Patachitra, and Warli. Silent Conversation showcased the symbiotic relationship between the tribals and tigers and cultivated a market for tribal art forms, fostering sustainable livelihoods for the marginalised. A key aspect of the exhibition was the direct transfer of sales proceeds to the



Tribal artists with the President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan



Team Sankala and NTCA meticulously filter through the collection of paintings

artists' bank accounts. This transparent approach ensured a fair income and encouraged tribal communities to explore income sources beyond traditional means, potentially reducing their dependence on forest resources. The artists were also taken to the Rashtrapati Bhavan to meet the Hon'ble President of India. The exhibition also featured paintings by school children. Organised in collaboration with the National Museum of Natural History, a nationwide competition invited students from grades 9 to 12 to create artwork on the theme of India's national animal, the tiger, and its habitat. These student creations found a place of honour alongside the established artists' works, adding a fresh perspective to the exhibition.

Months before the event, a workshop-cum-webinar was held to apprise officials from India's 54 tiger reserves about the exhibition and their roles in its success. The webinar was conducted under the chairmanship of Dr. S. P. Yadav, then Additional Director-General of Forests (Project Tiger) and Member-Secretary (National Tiger Conservation Authority). The discussion was led by Dr. Yadav and Ms. Akrita

Reyar, Consultant, Event Curation, Sankala Foundation who conveyed the significance of the exhibition and the responsibilities of the Field Directors in making the event a success. The workshop also included a presentation by Dr. Alka Pande, the curator of the exhibition who emphasised to the directors and the reserve officials the importance of preserving the original condition and quality of the artworks. The workshop also included training on handling and transporting the artwork to ensure its quality remained intact. This meticulous planning paid off. Upon receiving the artworks from the tiger reserves, it was clear that the packaging ensured their safe arrival, maintaining the quality of the pieces. The true measure of the exhibition's success lies in the numbers. Out of the 134 paintings displayed, over 50% found buyers. The diverse group of patrons included diplomats, business professionals, corporate houses, and art enthusiasts from India and abroad. Silent Conversation garnered significant media attention, receiving coverage in leading national newspapers and independent news platforms.

Glimpses of Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre



Hon'ble President of India receives a painting 'Baghdev' from tribal artists



Hon'ble President interacting with tribal artists at the exhibition



Unlock our story: Scan to watch the video on 50 years of Project Tiger



Elated art enthusiasts at the Atrium, India Habitat Centre



Totems at the exhibition displaying different geographies and associated art



Ms. Patricia A. Lacina (center), Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy, with other delegates

Policy Incubation Studio

Internship Programme

The Sankala Internship Programme is designed to engage young students, offering them opportunities to gain hands-on experience in policy and practice within the fields of environment, climate, sustainability, and essential services aimed at improving quality of life. This programme acts as a boot camp for policy enthusiasts interested in working at the intersection of government, public policy, private sectors, innovation, and society. The course is curated and delivered by domain experts with national and international repute, providing interns with valuable knowledge and skills. This year, four interns - Ms. Palak Chakraborty, Ms. Salakha Saini, Mr. Aakash Chaturvedi, and Ms. Arifa N. M - completed the internship programme and were awarded certificates acknowledging their contributions and acquired skills.

Volunteers Programme

The Sankala Volunteers Programme provides individuals the opportunity to collaborate with the Foundation on ongoing projects, campaigns, and events. This year, eight volunteers - Mr. Abhay Majhi, Mr. Avisha Naveen Kumar, Mr. Bhukya Meghanath, Ms. Komal Sharma, Ms. Preity Laishram, Mr. Sanskar Pathak, Mr. Sirivella Jayanth, and Ms. Shreshta Dhar - played an active role in the art exhibition 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre' in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority. Through their involvement, they gained valuable knowledge and skills in event coordination and stakeholder engagement. This programme is ideal for public-spirited individuals seeking meaningful ways to contribute to the Foundation's work.



Volunteers with the tribal artists at the Gujarat Bhawan, New Delhi

Experts Corner

Sankala Foundation's projects have greatly benefited from the mentorship of distinguished professionals across various fields.

Water Management: Mr. Bharat Lal, Secretary General, NHRC, India and Founder Mission Director, Jal Jeevan Mission, walked the team through the inception of the programme to its implementation. He discussed the criticality of community engagement in planning, implementing, managing, operating, and maintaining in-village water resources, water supply, and surveillance management systems.

Mr. R. K. Sama, Former Project Director, WASMO, explained in detail the importance of change in the role of governance from provider to facilitator and how citizens engaged in drinking water service delivery at user level. His work in Gujarat was used as a case study and example at various places.

Mr. Pradeep Singh, Director of Jal Jeevan Mission, shared his expertise in water manage-

ment, guiding the team through critical components such as technology and sustainable practices.

Mr. Murlidharan, Former Deputy Advisor, National Jal Jeevan Mission shared his expertise in technological and engineering innovations that were made in the mission, which demystified water supply to the community and ensured their participation. His experiences helped formulate chapters on technology, health, and sustainable solutions/sustainability.

Mr. Yugal Joshi, Former Director, Jal Jeevan Mission discussed the impact of information, education, and communication interventions for behaviour change. His expertise in social interventions brought insightful information for chapters highlighting women and their roles in JJM.

Ms. Renjitha Haridasan, Former Director, Jal Jeevan Mission assisted the team navigate complex policy framework in water governance.



Mr. Amitabh Agnihotri, a Distinguished Fellow with Sankala Foundation



Field Assistants on their way to the study site in Uttarakhand

Public Health: Dr. Manohar Agnani, former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, provided valuable insights on integrating technology into primary healthcare services, improving the team's understanding of public health complexities.

Sustainable Livelihoods: Mr. Amitabh Agnihotri, former Director of the State Forest Research Institute (SFRI), Jabalpur, contributed his knowledge on creating environmentally sustainable and economically viable livelihood programmes.

Art and Culture: Dr. Alka Pande, a renowned expert in tribal art and culture, provided essential guidance in curating 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre.' Her deep understanding of tribal art traditions was crucial in organising and documenting the exhibition.

Field Assistants

Field assistants played a vital role in the Foundation's initiatives by conducting surveys, participatory rural appraisals, in-depth interviews, and ensuring accurate data collection. The team included Ms. Priyanka Negi, Mr. Bhadresh Patel, Mr. Rakshat Bonyal, Ms. Rashi Nautiyal, Ms. Sakshi Sharma, Ms. Shika Pandey, Ms. Shiny Sharma, Ms. Tamanna, Ms. Ravina Yadav, and Mr. Vivek Kumar. They conducted surveys in remote areas, ensuring diverse representation and adhering to rigorous protocols. Their efforts in participatory sessions helped integrate local knowledge into project planning, and their interviews with key informants provided nuanced perspectives that enriched the Foundation's understanding of community needs. Their contributions ensured that the projects were data-driven and responsive to local contexts.

Outreach Activities

Bridging Expertise with Innovation for Sustainable Water Management

Sankala Foundation understands the immense potential in enhancing the youth's skills and expertise. On 27th March 2024, Sankala Foundation participated in the US-India Forum on Decarbonising Pathways, hosted by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF). This event brought together global leaders and experts to explore innovative solutions for sustainable water management, a critical component of environmental stewardship. Ms. Ankita Menon, a Consultant at Sankala Foundation, moderated a session titled 'Innovative Technologies for Sustainable Water Management,' facilitating insightful discussions on cutting-edge approaches to address water challenges.

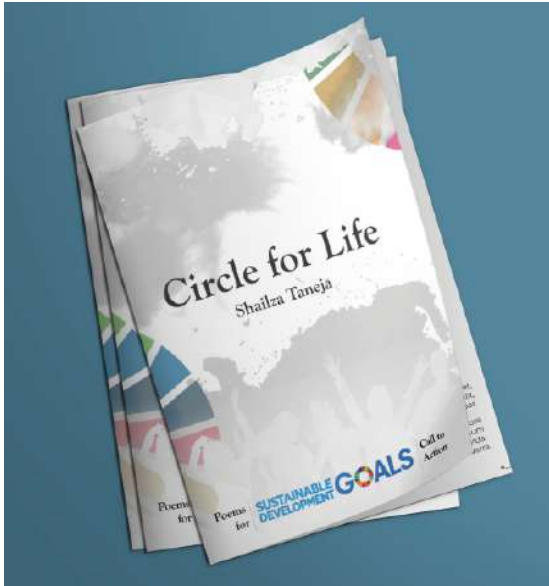
The forum provided a platform for the Sankala Foundation to showcase its expertise and foster strategic collaborations. Armed with insights and partnerships forged at this influential gathering, the Sankala Foundation is poised to drive meaningful impact in sustainable water management and beyond. By continuing to leverage its expertise and collaborative spirit, the Sankala Foundation aims to inspire transformative change and contribute to a more resilient and sustainable future for communities worldwide.

Empowering Young Minds Through Poetry for a Sustainable Future

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, represent a global commitment to address



Ms. Ankita Menon, WASH Consultant, Sankala Foundation, moderates the discussion at the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) event



The book 'Circle for Life'

pressing challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation by 2030. With over a third of its 169 targets emphasizing the empowerment and engagement of young people, there is a critical need to educate and inspire future generations about these goals. Most young people today are optimistic about the future and believe in its potential for positive change. To harness this optimism and ensure their active participation in achieving the SDGs, it is essential to integrate these goals into educational curricula early on. This is why the book - Circle for Life was created. Edited by Ms. Deepna, Consultant Communications and Outreach, Sankala Foundation, this collection of poems provides a simplified and engaging introduction to all 17 SDGs, making complex concepts accessible to children and youth. By enhancing pedagogy with creative literature, Circle for Life equips young minds with the knowledge and motivation to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development efforts. The book, published in February 2024 by Redgrab Books Pvt Ltd., is now available on

Amazon. It serves as a valuable resource in our mission to cultivate a generation that is well-informed and proactive in shaping a sustainable future.

Technical Workshop on Landslide Treatment and Erosion Control Works

The Sankala Foundation team attended the technical workshop on landslide treatment and erosion control works in the hills under the project for Natural Disaster Management in Forest Areas in Uttarakhand in December 2023. This workshop, part of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) Technical Cooperation Project initiated in 2017, aims to develop erosion control technologies suited to Uttarakhand's conditions, build capacity within the Uttarakhand Forest Department (UKFD), and share knowledge across Uttarakhand and other Himalayan states.

The workshop featured interactive sessions to address challenges and solutions specific to Uttarakhand, followed by visits to model sites at Nirad and Raipur. These sites, managed by the Uttarakhand Forest Resource Management Project (UFRMP), demonstrated 'Chisan', a Japanese method for forest restoration and erosion prevention. Techniques included terracing, retaining walls, check dams, gabion groundsills, vegetative cover, and proper drainage systems.

The workshop provided valuable insights into effective landslide treatment and erosion control strategies, highlighting the importance of knowledge sharing to build a robust natural disaster management framework. This experience will greatly benefit our ongoing and future projects at Sankala Foundation.



The Nirad Model Site for the URFMP Soil Erosion Control Project

Field Study: Kanha Tiger Reserve

The Sankala team embarked on a field trip to Kanha Tiger Reserve to deepen their understanding of the intricate and dynamic forest ecosystem.

During their field trip, they focused on how various prey populations, including swamp deer, boar, and Indian gaur, play crucial roles in maintaining the balance of the forest ecosystem. The team extended their research beyond the well-known mammals, delving into the essential roles of reptiles, birds, and insects to



Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh



The Sankala team with a local Baiga family in Kanha, Madhya Pradesh

understand the delicate web of life within the forest. One notable feature of the reserve was the abundance of water bodies. The team observed how these water sources are sustained by the forest, supporting a diverse range of flora and fauna.

Additionally, the team engaged with the local communities living in and around the Kanha tiger reserve, including the Baiga tribe, classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). The Baiga people inhabit the villages of

Manegaon, Chapri, and Khatiya within Kanha. Their ancestral connection to the forest and wildlife has been nurtured over generations. Through their visit, the team gained valuable insights into the Baiga tribe's way of life, witnessing a vibrant culture rich in traditional crafts such as basket weaving and jewelry making, which are vital to their livelihood. Apart from these enriching experiences, the team had the thrill of spotting tigers, adding an unforgettable highlight to their field trip at Kanha Tiger Reserve.



Gond painting by tribal artist Rameshwar Dhurwey of Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh

Policy Seminars

The Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability conducted three day-long policy seminars during the FY 2023-24 to explore potential project areas in various domains, which included discussion, deliberation, and culmination of ideas and knowledge sharing as follows:

Preservation of India's Cultural & Natural Heritage: Challenges and Opportunities

Agenda

To deliberate on the importance of safeguarding India's diverse cultural and natural heritage, highlighting the challenges faced, the role of policy frameworks, and the potential for collaborative efforts to ensure sustainable preservation.

Summary

The discussions from 15 February to 17 February 2024 revolved around the critical need to preserve India's cultural and natural heritage, recognising these assets as pillars of the nation's identity and history. Cultural heritage includes elements passed down through generations—such as languages, traditions, and architecture—while natural heritage pertains to flora, fauna, landscapes, and ecosystems. The global recognition of cultural and natural heritage preservation as a key component of sustainable development is echoed in UN SDG 11, specifically Target 11.4, which aims to protect and safeguard the world's heritage.

In India, this mission takes on unique importance due to the country's millennia-old civilization, vast biodiversity, and rich history. Despite government initiatives, the challenges to preserving this heritage are vast, ranging from rapid urbanisation, environmental degradation, and inadequate resources to climate change impacts. The session explored how the Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage can take a leading role in addressing these challenges through collaborative partnerships, education, research, and community engagement.

The Sankala Foundation introduced the Centre as a response to these challenges, to foster appreciation, protection, and promotion of India's cultural and natural treasures. The Centre will serve as a hub for research, conservation efforts, and community-based projects, bridging gaps between policy frameworks and on-ground implementation.

Key discussions during the session highlighted:

- The growing impact of climate change on natural heritage, particularly biodiversity in protected areas like tiger reserves.
- The vital role of tribal communities in preserving both cultural and natural heritage.
- Opportunities for leveraging technology in documenting, conserving, and promoting heritage assets.
- The need for greater public-private partnerships, CSR initiatives, and international cooperation in preserving heritage at both local and global levels.

The session concluded with an aspirational roadmap for the Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage. Moving forward, the Centre aims to:

1. **Develop a Library:** A knowledge hub that compiles resources on heritage conservation, research on tribal communities, biodiversity, and more.
2. **Develop Publications:** These will include reports, case studies, and visual narratives to disseminate knowledge on cultural and natural heritage preservation.
3. **Establish a New Office and Onboard Experts:** A dedicated space for heritage conservation activities, supported by subject matter experts, researchers, and conservationists.
4. **Collaborative Initiatives:** Foster partnerships with national and international organisations, cultural bodies, and educational institutions to create scalable models for heritage preservation.

The Centre's initiatives will support Sankala's broader mission of promoting cultural diplomacy, advancing sustainable development, and nurturing a deeper connection between people and their cultural and natural heritage.

Way Forward

The Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of heritage conservation in India. With a focus on research, education, outreach, and strategic partnerships, the Centre will actively work to protect India's heritage, both cultural and natural, for future generations. This initiative aligns with global efforts to promote sustainable development and inclusive growth, ensuring that India's rich legacy is preserved, appreciated, and celebrated.

Big Cat Conservation: Global Challenges and Best Practices

Agenda

To explore the key challenges and opportunities in big cat conservation worldwide, focusing on habitat protection, combating poaching, and building collaborative strategies across regions facing similar conservation challenges.

Summary

The roundtable held on March 10, 2024, focused on the pressing need for conservation efforts aimed at protecting big cats, with an emphasis on their critical role in maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem balance. Big cat species—such as tigers, lions, leopards, and jaguars—face grave threats due to habitat loss, poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and the illegal wildlife trade. Globally, more than 45,300 species are threatened with extinction, including numerous big cat species, as highlighted by the IUCN Red List.

The seminar discussed the Global South's pivotal role in big cat conservation, including regions like Africa, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and South America. Effective wildlife management was highlighted as key not only for the preservation of species but for the overall health of ecosystems that provide essential services to humanity, such as clean air, water, and food.

India's leadership in big cat conservation was emphasised, particularly the success of Project Tiger, which has made India home to 75% of the world's wild tiger population. The country's achievements in the Gir ecosystem—the only place in the world with a growing population of Asiatic Lions—were also noted, with

their numbers rising from fewer than 20 to over 700 today.

Discussions also touched upon the broader challenges of illegal wildlife trade, driven by high demand for animal parts like tiger skins and rhino horns, as well as habitat fragmentation due to urbanisation, agriculture, and infrastructure development. Climate change further exacerbates these issues by altering habitats, disrupting species' natural ranges, and increasing human-wildlife conflict.

Key outcomes of the seminar included:

- Acknowledgment of the importance of building capacity in wildlife management across countries in the Global South, where wildlife conservation efforts are often under-resourced.
- Training and knowledge exchange initiatives were proposed to help countries develop leadership in wildlife conservation, with India's model of balancing economic development and ecological preservation serving as a blueprint.
- Best practices from India, such as Project Tiger, were shared, including strategies for involving local communities in conservation efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) was also recognised as a vital platform for fostering cross-border collaborations, enabling countries to share resources, knowledge, and expertise in wildlife management.

The session concluded with a roadmap for moving forward, which includes:

1. **Strengthening global partnerships:** Countries in the Global South should collaborate on wildlife enforcement efforts to combat poaching and illegal wildlife trade more effectively.

2. **Expanding training programs:** India will continue to lead in providing training to wildlife conservation professionals from across the globe, building capacity for ecosystem and species management.
3. **Developing sustainable models:** Initiatives like Project Tiger serve as benchmarks for creating scalable models that can be adapted to suit the needs of other countries facing similar challenges.

Way Forward

To address the global wildlife conservation crisis, including big cat conservation, the seminar emphasised the need for multinational collaboration and capacity building. India, as a leader in sustainable conservation, will spearhead efforts to develop adaptable, region-specific strategies and strengthen enforcement mechanisms to protect big cats globally.

Eco-Restoration and Sustainable Development in Urban Spaces

Agenda

To address the challenges posed by rapid urbanisation and the need for eco-restoration, green infrastructure, and sustainable urban planning to ensure a balanced and livable urban environment.

Summary

Rapid urbanisation worldwide has placed immense pressure on cities, with nearly 56% of the global population now residing in urban areas, contributing significantly to the global economy but also to 70% of greenhouse gas emissions. The challenge for urban spaces is not only to meet the demand for housing, infrastructure, and services but also to balance

this growth with sustainable development and environmental preservation.

According to United Nations Habitat's World Cities Report (2022), the global urban population is expected to grow by an additional 2.2 billion by 2050, with urban areas becoming centers of economic growth, contributing 80% of the global GDP. However, this expansion also presents ecological challenges, such as the loss of green spaces, declining air and water quality, and increased environmental degradation.

In India, which is undergoing a massive shift toward urban-centric growth, the challenges are especially acute. With projections that 675 million people will reside in Indian cities by 2035, there is an urgent need to implement sustainable urban habitat management practices. The National Capital Region (NCR), a critical economic and administrative hub, exemplifies the balance between urbanisation and ecological preservation, facing degradation in key forest areas like the Aravalli Range and increasing stress on its natural resources.

Urban Eco-Restoration Initiatives

The seminar held on January 15, 2024, focused on the urgent need for integrated urban habitat management to restore degraded environments, such as the Aravalli Hills, which play a crucial role in maintaining NCR's ecological balance. These hills, once rich in natural flora, now suffer from the dominance of invasive species like *Prosopis juliflora*, which hampers rainwater percolation and reduces biodiversity.

Key strategies for eco-restoration include:

- Afforestation and reforestation with native species to restore biodiversity.

- Soil and moisture conservation techniques, rainwater harvesting, and groundwater recharge to combat over-extraction and poor rainwater absorption.
- Removal of invasive species and creation of water bodies to support both wildlife and ecosystem resilience.

These efforts will help alleviate the environmental pressures caused by rapid urbanisation and mitigate issues such as water scarcity, air pollution, and loss of biodiversity. It also aligns with India's commitments to global environmental goals like COP15 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Way Forward

To achieve sustainable urban development, the seminar emphasised the need for:

1. Integrated habitat management: Restoring degraded lands, improving water management, and enhancing green spaces in cities.
2. Collaborative urban planning: Policymakers must work together to ensure efficient land use, resource conservation, and sustainable infrastructure development.
3. Public awareness and education: Engaging urban residents in conservation efforts through educational initiatives like biodiversity parks and eco-restoration projects.

India's cities have the potential to lead the world in sustainable urban development, using eco-restoration as a tool to balance growth and environmental preservation.

IoT-Driven Solutions for Water Management

Agenda

To explore the role of Internet of Things (IoT) devices in enhancing water management systems, focusing on improving water quality monitoring and addressing challenges such as resource scarcity, contamination, and inefficiency.

Summary

Water is a critical resource under growing pressure due to population growth, urbanisation, and climate change. Ensuring access to clean, safe, and reliable water sources is a major challenge worldwide. IoT (Internet of Things) devices offer innovative solutions to improve water management, monitor water quality in real-time, and optimise usage to reduce waste and prevent contamination.

As per United Nations Water, an estimated 2.2 billion people globally lack access to safe drinking water. Additionally, poor water quality, mismanagement, and inefficient infrastructure often lead to water loss, contamination, and health hazards. The integration of IoT devices into water management systems can address these issues by enabling real-time monitoring, smart distribution, and automated maintenance, all of which enhance the sustainability of water resources.

The Role of IoT in Water Management: IoT devices can significantly enhance water management by:

- **Real-time monitoring:** IoT sensors provide constant updates on water quality parameters, such as pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, and pollutant levels, allowing for immediate action in case of contamination.

- **Leak detection and prevention:** Smart sensors detect leaks in pipes and distribution networks, enabling prompt repairs and reducing water loss.
- **Efficient water usage:** IoT systems optimise water distribution based on demand, minimising wastage and ensuring that water reaches the areas where it is needed most.
- **Predictive maintenance:** IoT devices help in predictive analysis, alerting authorities about equipment malfunctions or pipe deterioration before they escalate into major issues.

These innovations address the growing demand for better water management, particularly in urban environments, industrial sectors, and agricultural systems.

Challenges in Water Management: Globally, water scarcity, quality degradation, and inefficient distribution systems are critical issues that demand urgent solutions. These challenges are exacerbated by:

1. **Aging infrastructure:** Much of the water distribution infrastructure in cities is outdated, leading to frequent leaks, inefficient use, and potential contamination.
2. **Contamination risks:** In many regions, water sources are exposed to pollutants such as chemicals, industrial waste, and pathogens, making it difficult to ensure safe drinking water.
3. **Resource mismanagement:** Without accurate data, water authorities struggle to balance supply and demand, often resulting in over-extraction or under-utilisation of resources.

These issues highlight the need for technology-driven solutions that provide accurate, real-time data for better decision-making and resource optimisation.

IoT Solutions for Improving Water Quality: IoT-enabled water quality monitoring devices can play a key role in reducing contamination risks and ensuring access to safe drinking water. These devices monitor key water quality indicators and transmit data to centralised systems, allowing authorities to respond quickly to potential hazards.

Key advantages include:

- **Remote monitoring:** IoT sensors can be deployed in hard-to-reach areas, such as reservoirs, rivers, and underground pipes, ensuring that water quality is monitored even in remote locations.
- **Instant alerts:** In the event of contamination, IoT systems send alerts to authorities, allowing them to take swift corrective action before the contamination spreads.
- **Data-driven decision-making:** By collecting and analysing large volumes of water quality data, IoT systems enable water authorities to make informed decisions about treatment processes, resource allocation, and emergency response.

In regions with limited access to clean water, IoT technology can dramatically improve public health by ensuring that safe drinking water is always available.

Reducing Challenges with IoT in Water Management: Beyond quality monitoring, IoT devices offer solutions to various challenges in water management, such as:

- **Reducing water waste:** IoT-based smart meters track water consumption patterns and identify areas where water is being

wasted, helping to promote conservation efforts.

- **Water distribution optimisation:** IoT platforms allow for the smart management of water distribution networks by automatically adjusting the flow of water based on usage patterns and needs.
- **Cost savings:** By detecting leaks and faults early, IoT systems reduce the cost of repairs and maintenance, as well as the financial burden of wasted water.

This technology-driven approach aligns with the global goal of sustainable water management, particularly in urban areas where population growth and industrialisation increase the demand for efficient water use.

Case Study: Smart Water Management in Urban India: In India, where water scarcity and contamination are growing concerns, cities are beginning to adopt IoT-based smart water management systems. For instance, Smart City Mission projects in cities like Pune and Bhubaneswar have implemented IoT systems to monitor water quality, detect leaks, and manage water distribution more effectively. These systems not only help ensure a reliable water supply but also reduce wastage and improve efficiency across the water network.

One example is the deployment of IoT sensors in pipelines to detect and repair leaks in real-time, preventing water loss. Similarly, IoT-based smart meters in residential and commercial areas provide detailed data on water consumption patterns, helping authorities design better conservation strategies.

Way Forward

IoT technology holds immense potential to revolutionise water management, enabling real-time monitoring, reducing waste, and

improving overall efficiency. As cities grow and resources become scarcer, integrating IoT devices into water management systems is essential for ensuring sustainable access to clean water while addressing the challenges of urbanisation and climate change.

Roundtable Discussions on Jal Jeevan Mission

In February and March 2024, a series of roundtable discussions and digital meetings were held as part of the ongoing project on models and case-studies of Jal Jeevan Mission. These sessions brought together key stakeholders to discuss the challenges and opportunities related to water delivery and management, focusing on the Jal Jeevan Mission's goals.

The discussions provided a platform for participants to explore best practices in piped water delivery, emphasising the importance of robust infrastructure and efficient operations. Attention was given to maintenance strategies, where experts stressed the significance of routine system checks and the role of community involvement to ensure the longevity of the supply networks. Ensuring water quality was a

key concern, with a focus on regular testing and proper treatment protocols to safeguard the health of residents.

A major highlight was community engagement, where local participation in decision-making and maintenance was recognised as essential for the mission's success. Strategies to foster ownership at the grassroots level were discussed in depth, along with capacity-building programs aimed at training operators and residents in sustainable water management practices. The sessions also addressed environmental concerns, recommending sustainable solutions such as rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge to complement piped systems.

Insights from Mr. Pradeep Singh, Director of NJJM, and other experts like Mr. Arpan De Sarkar (Economist, Ministry of Jal Shakti), Mr D. S. Dhapola, Mr R. K. Sama and Mr A. Muralidharan provided valuable perspectives on the technological innovations and implementation strategies necessary to ensure access to clean water in every rural household. The roundtable discussions underscored the importance of pairing technical excellence with active community participation, aiming to deliver safe, reliable water to all.

Collaborations and Partnerships



National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

The Sankala Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, established under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 on 29th September 2023. Under the 'Project Tiger' initiative, the NTCA has made significant strides in conserving and improving the tiger population in India, while also enhancing the protection of other wildlife species and flora. Sankala Foundation is equally committed to this goal of protecting our natural heritage.

The MoU aims to strengthen relations and foster collaboration in areas aligned with the foundational goals of conserving wildlife and promoting livelihood activities for tribal communities and forest dwellers living around tiger reserves. The key objectives include identifying and implementing sustainable programmes within tiger reserves, facilitating knowledge exchange and capacity building, conducting research to innovate tiger habitat conservation and sustainable livelihoods, and collaborating on advocacy and awareness campaigns. This partnership seeks to enhance the understanding and implementation of sustainable development practices, particularly in the context of tiger conservation and surrounding communities.



INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Institute for Development Support (IDS)

On 8th September 2023, the Sankala Foundation and the Institute for Development Support (IDS) partnered to research and document the best practices under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). The Sankala Foundation, dedicated to sustainability and innovation, will leverage its expertise to study and analyse success stories and best practices under JJM. IDS provides technical support and manages activities aimed at the mission's success. This collaboration aims to identify, study, research, and document success stories, develop a comprehensive compendium, and facilitate knowledge sharing for improved water resource sustainability and service delivery.



Tata Medical & Diagnostics

The Sankala Foundation and Tata Medical & Diagnostics Ltd (Tata MD) have partnered to enhance the accessibility of digital healthcare in India. The Foundation focussed on improving access to primary healthcare and technological innovation, will collaborate with Tata to leverage the learnings and challenges of the Digital Nerve Centre (DiNC) model implemented in Kolar, Karnataka. This model has demonstrated the use of IT, data analytics, and AI to improve healthcare delivery.

The partnership aims to study the DiNC model's impact on healthcare accessibility, affordability, and quality, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas. Objectives include conducting research, developing a comprehensive case study, and proposing scalable digital healthcare solutions. This collaboration seeks to create a framework for cost-effective, replicable digital healthcare delivery across India, fostering public-private sector cooperation and contributing to the nation's healthcare goals.



US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)

On December 28th, the Sankala Foundation and the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on the twin goal of improving water security for India and work on the mission to provide clean tap-water delivery in every Indian household. USISPF, an independent non-profit organisation, aims to build and facilitate partnerships between the United States and India to create meaningful opportunities for citizens of both countries. Sankala Foundation, by partnering with USISPF is looking to make a positive and lasting impact on the planet.

The MoU elaborates on fostering knowledge exchange, capacity building, and research collaborations. The key objectives include identifying best practices for achieving water security, studying the delivery mechanisms of the Jal Jeevan Mission, conducting research to design sustainable measures for clean tap-water delivery, and collaborating on water governance and awareness campaigns. The partnership will contribute to sustainable development practices and promote public participation in water security initiatives, impacting climate, biodiversity, and natural resources.



Water and Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS)

Sankala Foundation signed an MoU with Water and Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS) Limited, a premier international consultancy under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, on the 28th of March 2024. WAPCOS, recognised for its excellence in public sector management and consultancy in water resources and urban infrastructure, and Sankala Foundation, dedicated to advancing sustainability through education, research, and advocacy, will work together in areas such as water supply, conservation, sanitation, clean energy, river rejuvenation, and urban habitat management.

This partnership will outline activities including knowledge exchange, capacity building, and research collaborations. Both organisations will actively seek opportunities for project implementation and technology transfer, sharing expertise and best practices to enhance sustainable development. They aim to create good conditions for regular information exchange, support each other in project processing, and engage in joint efforts to address emerging challenges. The collaboration will focus on mutual benefit, aiming to improve quality of life and ease of living and facilitate sustainable development at both national and global levels.



Uttarakhand Forest Resource Management Project

The partnership between the Sankala Foundation and Uttarakhand Forest Resource Management Project (UFRMP), funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is pivotal for promoting sustainable development in the Himalayan region. Sankala Foundation is dedicated to addressing climate change and enhancing livelihoods through innovative and evidence-based initiatives. UFRMP's focus on ecological restoration, livelihood improvement, and erosion control aligns seamlessly with the Sankala Foundation's mission. This collaboration will facilitate the exchange of expertise and best practices in sustainable forest management, watershed management, and erosion control.

By combining the Sankala Foundation's commitment to research and advocacy with UFRMP's on-ground experience, this partnership aims to develop and implement effective strategies for improving livelihoods and managing natural resources in the Himalayan ecology. The MoU will

support comprehensive studies on sustainable livelihood models, the impact of watershed management, and measures to control soil erosion. This joint effort will not only enhance the resilience of local communities but also contribute to the preservation of the delicate Himalayan ecosystem. Ultimately, this partnership will serve as a model for similar initiatives across other ecologically sensitive regions.



Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

The Sankala Foundation partnered with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to enhance forest and wildlife conservation efforts. This collaboration is crucial for the Sankala Foundation as it aligns with our mission to promote sustainability and mitigate climate change. Through this MoU, Sankala Foundation will benefit from WII's wildlife research and management expertise, gaining access to cutting-edge infrastructure and comprehensive training programmes. The partnership facilitates knowledge exchange, promotes capacity building, and fosters research collaborations. By leveraging each other's strengths, this collaboration will extend the impact of their conservation efforts and contribute to sustainable development practices.

Institutional Development

Institutional development at the Sankala Foundation is aimed at advancing its core objectives with a focus on comprehensive planning and inclusive growth. Recognising that the establishment of any institution takes time, Sankala Foundation is committed to creating an environment that fosters innovation, learning, and research, while maintaining its dedication to conservation, cultural heritage, and sustainable development. By integrating advanced features and modern facilities, the foundation strives to become a center of excellence in its areas of work.

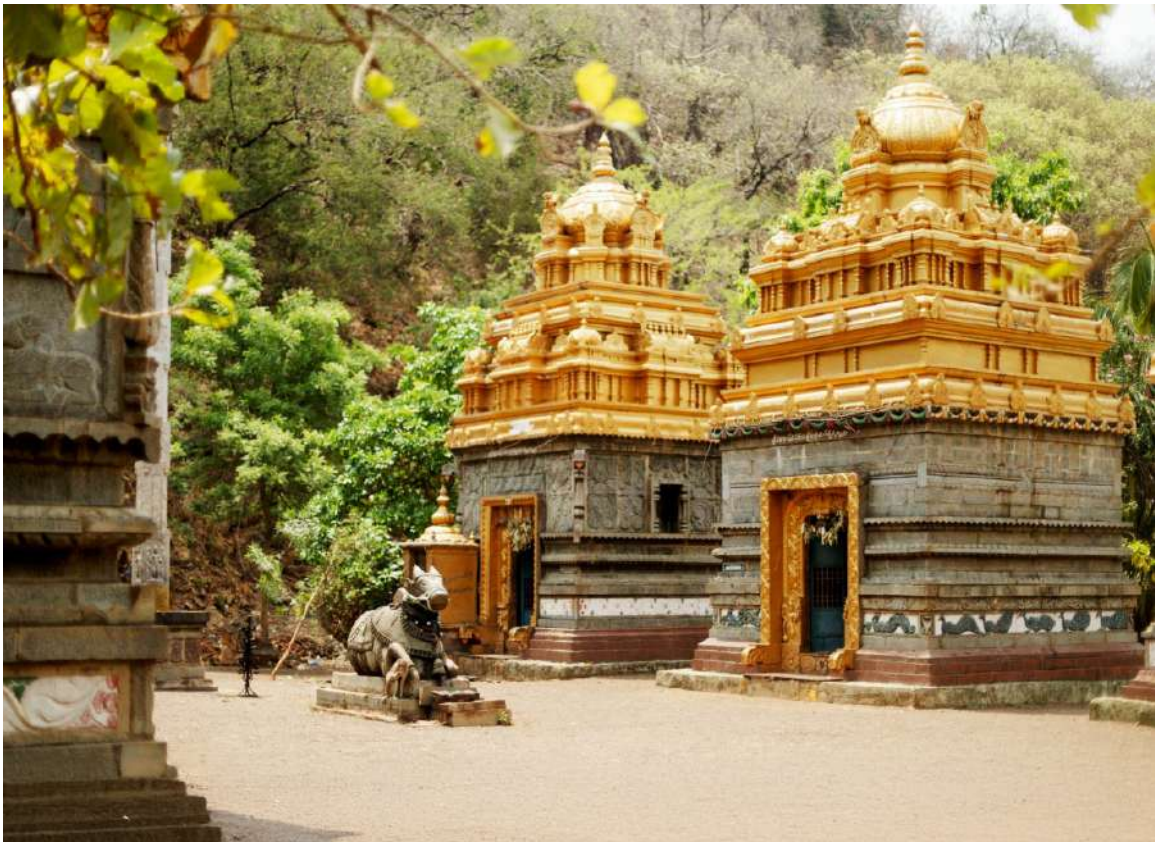
The foundation's strategy for development is centered around the following key areas:

Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage

The Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage is envisioned as a pioneering initiative aimed at preserving and promoting India's rich and diverse heritage. It will serve as a hub for research, education, and advocacy, dedicated to safeguarding both cultural and natural assets that form the essence of India's identity.

Core Focus Areas

1. Cultural Heritage: The Centre will focus on promoting and preserving India's diverse



Kolanu Bharathi Saraswathi Temple in Nagarjuna-Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Andhra Pradesh

cultural heritage, encompassing traditional art, architecture, customs, and language. Through exhibitions, cultural exchanges, workshops, and community outreach, it will foster a deeper understanding of these cultural treasures, both domestically and internationally.

2. **Natural Heritage:** Natural heritage, including India's rich biodiversity, water bodies, and forest ecosystems, will also be a key focus. The Centre will engage in activities aimed at preserving these natural resources, advocating for sustainable environmental practices, and raising awareness about the interconnectedness of cultural and natural conservation.
3. **Research and Documentation:** The Centre will undertake extensive research to document both tangible and intangible heritage. Field studies, surveys, and collaborations with experts will help create a knowledge repository that contributes to academic research and policy development.
4. **Education and Outreach:** By organising workshops, educational programmes, and public events, the Centre aims to build awareness and foster an appreciation for heritage conservation among the public, especially the younger generation. It will work to integrate traditional knowledge with modern scientific approaches to conservation.
5. **Community Engagement:** The Centre will actively engage local communities, particularly those that are custodians of cultural and natural heritage. It will ensure their involvement in conservation efforts, empowering them with resources, train-

ing, and platforms to preserve and promote their heritage.

The Centre will collaborate with government agencies, educational institutions, international organisations, and the private sector to amplify its impact. These partnerships will foster cross-cultural dialogue, technical innovation, and resource sharing, strengthening both cultural diplomacy and sustainable development. Leveraging technology, the Centre will create digital archives, virtual exhibitions, and online educational resources to broaden its reach and make heritage accessible to a global audience. This will also include the use of digital tools for heritage mapping and conservation planning.

Building Research Library

In its journey toward becoming a knowledge-driven institution, the Sankala Foundation is establishing a dedicated research library. This facility will house extensive resources on conservation, public health, environmental sustainability, cultural heritage, and policy innovation. By providing access to a wide range of publications, reports, case studies, and archival materials, the research library will serve as a critical asset for scholars, practitioners, and researchers. It will also support the Foundation's internal capacity-building efforts by offering a repository of knowledge that informs and shapes the organisation's initiatives.

Publications and Knowledge Dissemination

The Sankala Foundation places significant emphasis on the dissemination of knowledge through its publication efforts. This year the

Foundation is working on seven different publications which includes research papers, case studies, books, and reports that document and analyse the foundation's work across various fields such as water conservation, public health, wildlife preservation, and cultural diplomacy.

Publications serve as an outreach tool for engaging with a broader audience, including policymakers, academics, and the public. By making these resources accessible, the foundation contributes to the larger discourse on sustainability and heritage conservation, while also amplifying India's voice on the global stage.

Office Space and Onboarding Experts

To further its mission, Sankala Foundation is planning to expand its physical and intellectual infrastructure. A new office space is being developed to accommodate growing teams and facilitate collaborative work environments. Additionally, the foundation is in the process of onboarding subject-matter experts who will bring specialised knowledge in areas such as cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, public health, and policy advocacy. These experts will play a key role in shaping the Foundation's future direction, ensuring that it remains at the forefront of impactful research and programmatic innovation.



A heritage site at Badoli, Mukundara Hills National Park, Rajasthan

Road Ahead

The journey of building an institution is long and complex, requiring careful planning, vision, and sustained effort. The Foundation's envisions a comprehensive approach to institutional development that integrates advanced features and facilities, along with a strong focus on inclusivity and capacity building. In the coming years, Sankala aims to expand its influence and impact by scaling up its operations, diversifying its areas of expertise, and fostering collaboration at local, national, and international levels.

At the heart of this vision is the aspiration to create a dynamic, multi-faceted organisation that not only addresses the challenges of today but anticipates and prepares for the needs of the future. The Foundation's strategy for growth is rooted in the belief that strong institutions are built through an inclusive, participatory approach that brings together diverse perspectives and stakeholders. By leveraging cutting-edge technology, research,

and partnerships, Sankala will continue to push the boundaries of innovation in its key areas of focus.

Building on the success of the first edition of *Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre*, we plan to host the second edition of this unique art exhibition on a much larger scale. The goal is to not only enhance its reach within India but also elevate it to an international platform, showcasing the intersection of art, conservation, and community engagement to a global audience.

Our future projects will also focus on critical areas of sustainability, beginning with clean energy initiatives. We aim to undertake a comprehensive study of the impact of pesticides and insecticides on cash crops like tea, which are vital to India's agricultural economy. This research will explore sustainable farming practices to protect both the environment and the livelihoods of farmers.

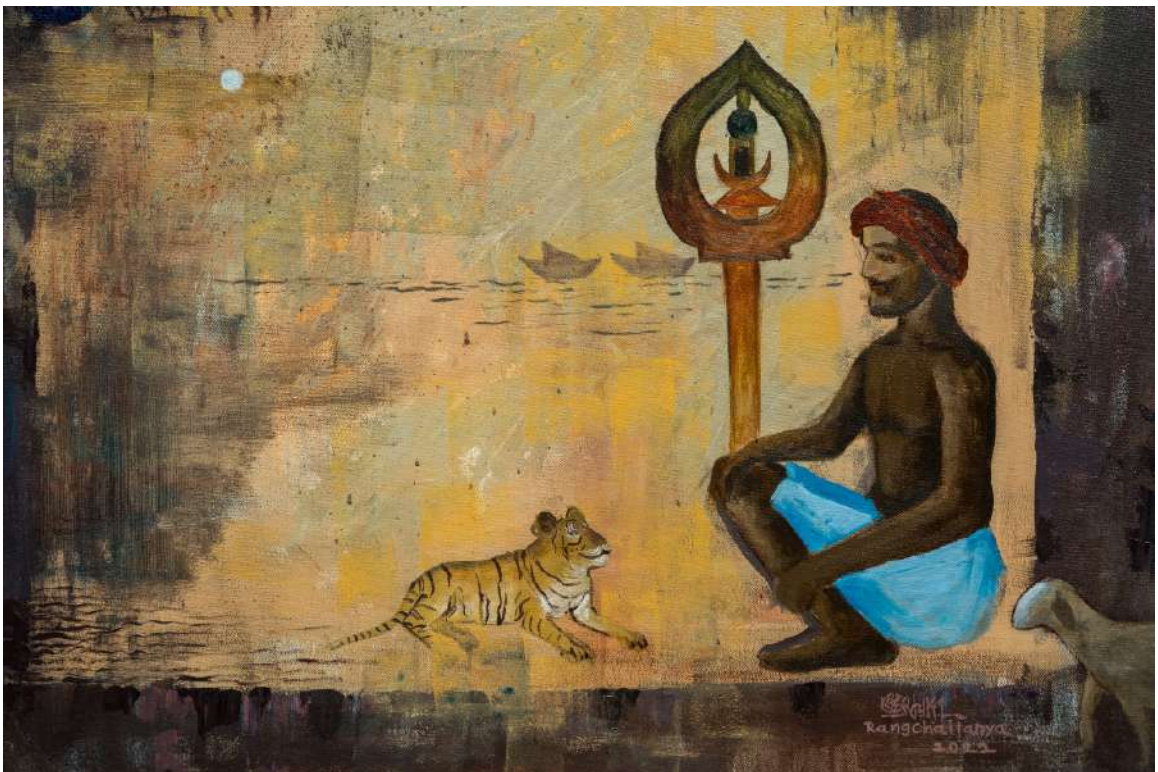


Sankala team members gather to celebrate the first Foundation Day on 11 October, 2023

A significant aspect of our efforts will be directed towards empowering women and the girl child. Through targeted programs, we aim to address social and economic inequalities, providing access to education, vocational training, and opportunities for leadership. We also plan to celebrate and preserve India's diverse cultural heritage, recognising its potential to inspire and unite communities. This includes supporting traditional art forms, storytelling, and heritage conservation

projects that bridge the gap between past and present.

Our efforts will also focus on restoring green spaces, improving biodiversity, and promoting sustainable urban development. By integrating modern conservation techniques with traditional ecological knowledge, we aim to create models of environmental harmony that can be replicated in other urban areas.



Painting by tribal artist Siddhesh Manohar Yadav, Pench Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra

Our Team

Name	Designation
Amitabh Agnihotri	Distinguished Fellow
Dr. Pramod Yadav	Programme Associate
Dr. Aviral Marwal	Sr. Research Associate
Himanshu Shekhar	Sr. Research Associate
Piyush Soni	Research Associate
Yamini Rajora	Research Associate
Shivani Solanki	Research Associate
Palak Chakraborty	Research Associate
Shriya Saraswat	Junior Fellow
Salakha Saini	Junior Fellow
Satish Chopra	Administration and Office Manager
Dr. Malvika Kaul	Editor
Dr. Alka Pande	Consultant (Art)
Akrita Reyar	Consultant (Event Curation)
Disha Joshi	Consultant (Watershed)
Ankita Menon	Consultant (WASH)
Deepna Kaveriappa	Consultant (Communications &
Divya Singh	Consultant (Art & Heritage)
Shalini Singh	Consultant (Public Health)
Sanand Kumar	Consultant (Public Health)
Jaison Joseph	Consultant (Public Health)
Radha Datta	Consultant (Design)

Sankala Foundation in the News

THE ECONOMIC TIMES News
 Illustrating tribal affection for big cats via their art

ANI
 South Asia's Leading Multimedia News Agency
 To mark 50 years of Project Tiger, NTCA to organize art exhibition from November 3-5
 ANI | Updated: Nov 02, 2023 16:22 IST

The Statesman
 # Delhi
 Art Exhibition Celebrates Tigers and Tribal Artistry
 President inaugurates Silent Conversation exhibition, bridging tigers, tribal communities, and art.
 ANI | November 5, 2023 2:39 pm

THE TIMES OF INDIA
 President Droupadi Murmu opens exhibition on Project Tiger
 TNN / Nov 4, 2023, 01:56 IST





Art by Behelti Ama from Kamlang Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh at
Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre

“यं च मे पृथिवि धर्षयसि यं च वि धर्षयसि।
तयोः शान्तिरभि मतिरस्मासु धीयताम्।”

“O Earth, whatever I dig from you, may that grow back quickly.
O purifier, may we not harm your vital essence and strength.”
- Atharva Veda (12.1.11)



sankala

Voice for a sustainable planet

414-416, B Block, 4th floor, Somdutt Chamber- 1,
Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi - 110 066