

# Annual Report

2024-25

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**Sankala Foundation**

Voice for a Sustainable Planet



“ We face the sixth great extinction, climate change, loss of forests, poverty. But hope is about taking action in spite of it all. ”

- Dr Jane Goodall



# Annual Report

## 2024-25

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Voice for a Sustainable Planet

**Published by**

Sankala Foundation  
414 – 416, B block, 4<sup>th</sup> floor,  
Somdutt Chamber – 1,  
Bhikaji Cama Place,  
New Delhi- 110 066

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Sankala Foundation (2024-25), Annual Report,  
Sankala Foundation, New Delhi



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# 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.

The word 'Sankala' embodies the concept of 'coming together of all elemental units as one'. It 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 this belief of 'Sankala', we recognise the power of collaboration and the inter-relation of various elements in our work. We believe that by uniting diverse resources, perspectives, and efforts, one can create a more harmonious and transformative impact to address the emerging challenges.



## Vision

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



## Mission

Sankala Foundation is dedicated to carrying out research, scientific studies, and developing ideas and policy frameworks for knowledge-based advocacy.

# Our Two Centres

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## Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability

The Centre is dedicated to advancing research, training, education, outreach, and advocacy on subjects related to climate change and sustainability. The Centre is committed to collaborate with the government and its parastatal organisations, NGOs, local communities, women and youth, scientific communities, and domain experts, with a shared focus on working towards a planet-positive future for all life on Earth.

The 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 marginalised communities. The centre aims to design and support programmes that help in building a more inclusive environment for all, through evidence-based policy research, advocacy and sustainable resource management practices.

2

## Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage

The Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage plays a pivotal role in preserving and promoting the rich cultural and natural heritage within India and abroad. By engaging in comprehensive conservation efforts, educational programmes, research, community partnerships and publications, the Centre ensures invaluable heritage is cherished and protected for future generations.

Cultural heritage refers to what we acquire from our ancestors or previous generations, including art, architecture, languages, customs, traditions, etc. Natural heritage refers to preserving elements found in Mother Nature, such as flora, fauna, soil, water bodies, etc., that humans obtain from the natural world. Cultural heritage reveals the origins and natural heritage highlights the value of nature in one's life. Conserving both heritages is equally significant.

# Executive Summary

India is in the midst of transformative changes. Climate action, water conservation, ecological restoration, and social inclusion are shaping a new era of possibility. At Sankala Foundation, we see this as a moment of promise, a time to strengthen the connections between environment, economy, and equity. Our approach is rooted in collaboration and evidence, guided by the wisdom of local communities and the strength of collective action. The year 2024-25 saw our teams embark on research around various themes from eco-restoration in the Aravalli landscape to cultivation of safer tea in West Bengal and Assam, to women empowerment in textile hubs of and contributing to initiatives that restore ecosystems, advance gender equity, and celebrate India's living heritage.

## Eco-restoration of Aravalli Landscape

The Aravalli range, India's oldest mountain system, is a crucial ecological barrier protecting the Indo-Gangetic plains from spread of desertification. Spanning 692 km across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi, it supports more than 5 crore people and sustains unique flora and fauna, brings in water security, and climate stability. However, unsustainable extraction of natural resources, urbanisation have led to deforestation and land degradation. Rapid urban growth in cities like Gurugram and Jaipur, along with erratic rainfall, has worsened the crisis. To aid eco-restoration, Sankala Foundation is studying the region in partnership with the Haryana Forest Department and promoting the Aravalli Green Wall. It is developing a restoration model for the whole Aravalli based on pilot study taken up in 4 villages of Gurugram district - Gairatpur Baas, Naurangpur, Sakatpur, and Shikohpur by mapping native species, engaging communities, and designing nature-based solutions for ecological renewal. The Sankala team is undertaking rigorous field-based ecological studies, plot-level surveys, and biological and geospatial assessments to develop a science-driven, comprehensive eco-restoration plan for the Aravalli landscape.

## Water Security: Impact of the Jal Jeevan Mission

Access to clean and reliable water is fundamental

to human health, dignity, and development as it underpins education, livelihoods, and gender equality. Water security, therefore, remained a central focus of our work. Through field visits across states, we assessed the impact of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), which has delivered piped water to over 15 crore rural households. Our research highlights improvements in health, school attendance, women's dignity, and climate resilience. Our research, 'Jal Jeevan Mission-Har Ghar Jal: A Study of Access to Clean Tap Water in Every Rural Home in India' offers a model for countries in the Global South facing water scarcity and contamination challenges.

## Safe and Sustainable Tea Production

The tea sector in Assam and West Bengal, a key contributor to India's economy, faces ongoing challenges in balancing productivity, quality, and compliance. Small Tea Growers (STGs), who produce over half of India's tea, often contend with pests and diseases, which leads to heavy use of pesticides. This can result in tea consignments being rejected due to traces of restricted chemicals or missing MRL (Maximum Residue Limit) values, whether from direct application or pesticide drift from neighbouring fields. Small Tea Growers must navigate the delicate balance between protecting crops and meeting regulatory standards. Many face choices between suboptimal pesticides, risking reduced yields, or unapproved chemicals, risking compliance issues. To support sustainable solutions, we worked with STGs in Assam and West Bengal to explore safer and more sustainable agricultural practices. Our approach focused on building awareness, strengthening regulation, and fostering collaboration across the sector. By working closely with growers and communities, we aim to ensure that Indian tea remains both economically viable and environmentally responsible, supporting a resilient and sustainable future for the industry.

## Digital Health for Universal Healthcare

In many villages, primary healthcare services are either unavailable or understaffed, creating significant barriers to timely diagnosis, treatment, and preventive care. This gap underscores the growing need for digital health solutions that can extend medical expertise to

underserved populations. Our study of the Digital Health Centre model (DiNC) in Kolar, Karnataka, shows how virtual consultations, cloud-based records, and community outreach can bridge primary and mental healthcare gaps. The outcome of this work was a comprehensive research study highlighting how technology-enabled healthcare models can bridge service gaps in rural India, demonstrating a scalable and equitable approach for delivering primary and mental healthcare to underserved populations. We furthered the research to advocacy by releasing a report titled 'Leveraging Digital Solutions for Universal Health Coverage'.

### **Ecological Revival of Girnar: Coexistence-Based Conservation**

In Gujarat, we captured the remarkable ecological revival of the Girnar hills, once degraded, now thriving again as part of the Asiatic lion's habitat. Our team visited Girnar to study the ecological meeting forest officials, local community members, and conservation stakeholders to understand the protection and restoration work undertaken. As of 2025, at least 54 lions reside in Girnar wildlife sanctuary, and the overall Asiatic lion population has expanded to cover over 35,000 km<sup>2</sup>, far beyond the Gir Forest, from over 1400 km<sup>2</sup> in 1970s, achieving this natural expansion without translocation. The success of Girnar's recovery is credited to eco-restoration and eco-development strategies.

### **South-South Cooperation: Irrigation Transformation in Rwanda**

Our work also extended beyond India's borders. In Rwanda, we studied an irrigation programme supported by the Government of India that is transforming agriculture and strengthening climate resilience. In Rwanda, where nearly 90% of people rely on agriculture but the sector contributes less than 40% to GDP, the Indian government has helped implement modern irrigation infrastructure in the Mpanga and Mahama sectors of Kirehe District. The Sankala Foundation is studying the programme's socio-economic impact, capacity building for irrigation technologies, and their role in enhancing livelihoods and

food security. The initiative stands as a testament to the potential of South-South cooperation grounded in shared learning and local leadership.

### **Cultural and Natural Heritage: Research Across Tiger Reserves**

With the successful completion of three editions of 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre', an art exhibition, we are expanding the work of the Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage to further deepen research and engagement at the intersection of cultural and natural heritage, communities, and ecosystems. In partnership with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), we researched 63 heritage sites across 28 tiger reserves, including ancient temples, forts, and tribal traditions, that reflect India's enduring relationship with nature. This has resulted into a book 'Hidden Treasures: India's Heritage in Tiger Reserves', which celebrates the harmony between natural heritage and culture. This book is part of a trilogy, focusing on heritage, water bodies and waterfalls in tiger reserves of India. The remaining two volumes in the series will focus on water bodies and waterfalls in India's tiger reserves, and work on these books is currently in progress.

### **Women's Empowerment in the Textile Sector**

Education is not just a social right; it's an economic multiplier. When women are educated and have equitable access to employment, societies gain in productivity, innovation, and resilience. In India, the textile industry is the largest employer of women, and Tamil Nadu is one of the country's largest garment-exporting states. In Tamil Nadu, our team visited a garment factory that integrates a model of skilling and further educating girls and women while simultaneously employing them. We spoke to stakeholders and beneficiaries to understand the impact of this approach on financial security, job opportunities, and skill development for women from tribal and rural backgrounds. As India moves forward, the path is clear: collaboration, inclusion, and innovation are the keys to a sustainable future. Sankala Foundation is proud to be part of this shared journey, working alongside communities, partners and governments to restore, reimagine, and renew.

# Advisory Board



**Prof K VijayRaghavan**

Prof K VijayRaghavan, a renowned molecular biologist, chairs the advisory board of Sankala Foundation. He served as the Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, GoI, from January 2013 to 2018. His dedication 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 an academician with exceptional contributions in the fields of nano-sciences, nanotechnology, nanocomposites, soft matter, among others. He served as the Institute Chair Professor and INAE Visvesvarya Chair Professor at IIT, 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.



**Mr Ashok Malik**

With over 30 years of diverse experience in government, media, and thought leadership, Mr Ashok Malik is known for his knowledge of India's policy landscape and complex interplay between business and politics. From 1 August 2017, to 31 July 2019, he served as press secretary to the President of India. He has also served as Policy Advisor/ Additional Secretary in India's Ministry of External Affairs from 2019 to 2022.



**Mr Arun Kumar**

Arun M Kumar is a leader, diplomat, and author with extensive global experience in many fields: consulting and professional services, high technology, entrepreneurship, venture capital, non-profit service organizations, and public service. He is a Managing Partner at Celesta Capital, a leading Silicon Valley based deep technology venture capital firm, spending his time between Silicon Valley, Bengaluru and Washington, DC.





Sankala Foundation team on the ground, preparing for the biophysical sample survey of Aravalli Landscape

# Research that Mattered: Insights and Shifts

## Water Access and Security

Access to clean drinking water remains a challenge in many countries, especially in rural areas. India, on the contrary, managed to provide safe drinking water to 80%, i.e., more than 15.5 crore. households across the nation under the flagship 'Jal Jeevan Mission-Har Ghar Jal'. It was designed to ensure sustainable access to safe drinking water and improved public health by mainstreaming community engagement, technological advancements, and best practices in water management. The success of the mission inspired Sankala Foundation to further research its impact. The Foundation studied and released a comprehensive report, 'Jal Jeevan Mission-Har Ghar Jal: Access to Clean Tap Water to Every Rural Home in India.'

The report presents a powerful narrative of India's transformative journey to ensure safe and equitable access to drinking water in every rural household. Announced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in his address to the nation on Independence Day in 2019, from the ramparts of the Red Fort, JJM aimed to provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to 193 million rural homes in the next five years. Implementation started on 25 December, 2019, on Good Governance Day. It was a humongous effort that has already revolutionised access to clean tap water at the household level across the country.

Through real-life stories like that of Arunachal Pradesh's Mimey village, parched stretches of Bundelkhand, hilly and rugged terrain of Ladakh and Jammu Kashmir region, and various anganwadis across the country, the report showcases how improved water availability uplifts

health, education, gender equity, and economic livelihoods. It highlights the role of local leadership and women's empowerment in transforming water governance from women being water carriers to becoming water managers.

Building on this effort, the Foundation is now working on two books, one focusing on the Jal Jeevan Mission: Ideas and Impact, and the other on the critical role of water security in driving high economic growth.

'Jal Jeevan Mission: Ideas and Impact' structured into twelve thematically rich chapters, this book covers global water challenges to region-specific solutions, emphasizing JJM's inclusive, decentralized, and community-led model. It covers the evolution of drinking water policy in India, addresses long-standing exclusion and inequities, and explores how technology, innovation, and public-private partnerships are modernising rural water systems. The impacts of access to clean water on people's health, the socio-economic multiplier effects especially on women and children, and strategies for long-term sustainability are all thoughtfully analysed.

In addition to highlighting the journey of the Jal Jeevan Mission, this book serves as a blueprint for participatory development. Through data-driven insights and compelling case studies, the book offers valuable lessons for the Global South, demonstrating how large-scale development initiatives can empower communities, strengthen governance, and advance one of the most important Sustainable Development Goals, i.e., SDG6: ensuring universal access to clean water and sanitation.

The world faces a growing water crisis, with global freshwater demand projected to exceed supply of 40% by 2030. India, holding only 4% of global freshwater yet supporting 18% of the population, faces acute stress: 600 million people experience high to extreme water scarcity, and 200,000 die annually from unsafe water.

With seasonal rainfall, 40% arid or semi-arid land, and rain concentrated in just over 15 days per year, India must ensure water security for 1.45 billion people and 20+ million youth entering the workforce annually. Water is critical not only for agriculture, but also for manufacturing, energy, and services, all of which depend on reliable supply for jobs and livelihoods.





Access to clean tap water, a reality

Economic growth is closely tied to water availability. Reliable, and quality water supplies are essential for productive agriculture, industrial efficiency, and energy generation. Water scarcity disrupts these sectors, threatening food security, inflating costs, reducing income and jobs, and weakening people's ability to afford essentials like food, healthcare, and education.

To support India's journey toward water security, Sankala Foundation is conducting a research study to identify key drivers and outcomes that can position India as a water-secure nation. The study examines water's role as a socio-economic good, crucial for food security, economic growth, and livelihoods. It also explores opportunities for innovation and business in climate-resilient water solutions.

The research spans India's surface and groundwater landscapes, highlighting their impact on regional development. It reviews modern technologies in drinking water and wastewater treatment, agricultural water use efficiency, groundwater management, and river and waterbody rejuvenation. The study also traces the evolution of India's water management efforts, highlighting how government initiatives and community participation have transformed water-scarce regions.

**India must ensure water security for 1.45 billion people and 20+ million youth who are entering the workforce annually**



The study reinforces that India's aspiration to become the world's third-largest economy hinges on securing its water future.

### **Safe Tea Production: A Study on Causes, Practices and Remedies among Small Tea Growers**

India has long been a global leader in tea production. As the second-largest tea producer after China, India contributed approximately 1,382 million kilograms of tea in the 2023–24 fiscal year, with around 18% of this production exported globally. Renowned for its rich colour, aroma, and flavour, Indian tea, especially from Assam and West Bengal, not only caters to domestic and international markets but also serves as the economic backbone for millions, with countless livelihoods directly and indirectly dependent on tea plantations.

The tropical climatic conditions that favour tea cultivation also make the crop highly susceptible to pests and diseases, driving extensive pesticide use. Challenges such as the absence of established Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) values, traces of restricted pesticides, and unintentional pesticide transfer from neighbouring farms have resulted in the rejection of tea consignments at the manufacturer level, impacting the wider tea industry. Beyond economic implications, the use and residues of pesticides pose significant public health hazards, affecting workers, local communities, and consumers.

For Small Tea Growers (STGs), these rejections create severe economic pressures, as they struggle to balance crop protection with regulatory compliance. They often face two difficult choices: using suboptimal pesticides, risking pest damage and reduced yield, or using unapproved pesticides, risking compliance violations and potential rejection by Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs) or exporters. The availability and use of banned pesticides further complicate the situation, reflecting a general lack of awareness among STGs about safe and legal practices. Since rejections affect entire batches, the consequences extend across the entire tea industry.

The Sankala team conducted a study in Assam and West Bengal to understand the use of pesticides

by Small Tea Growers (STGs). The study aims to help in ensuring standardised pesticide usage protocols and find alternatives to present usage of pesticides to ensure food quality standards safeguarding the interest of the consumers, STGs and whole Indian tea industry. The study also seeks to develop an IEC campaign strategy among STGs and other stakeholders to generate awareness on the judicious use of pesticides for sustainable growth of tea industry. Sankala Foundation has forged strong collaboration with various stakeholders of tea Industry for achieving sustainable growth.

Between February and March 2025, the team conducted extensive field surveys across eleven tea-growing districts such as Jalpaiguri, North Dinajpur and Darjeeling in West Bengal and Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Charaideo, Sivasagar, Golaghat, Jorhat, Biswanarh and Udalguri in Assam. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue, the team engaged with key stakeholders, including, Tea Research Association, Kolkata; Tocklai Tea Research Institute, Jorhat and Bought Leaf Factories and Tea Estates in Tinsukia, Dibrugarh and Jorhat in Assam. The team also visited STG plantations and BLFs, assessing region-specific pest control needs, challenges, and pesticide usage patterns across Assam and West Bengal. The Foundation is working closely with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).



Sankala Team in Lahowal Patra Gaon, Dibrugarh, Assam

Plucking of tea leaves in a dense, high-yield plantation





An elderly availing services at the digital nerve centre, Kolar, Karnataka

## Digital Health: Scaling up Models for Universal Healthcare Access

Recognising the transformative potential of digital health in strengthening India's primary healthcare system, Sankala Foundation initiated a comprehensive study on a pilot digital health model implemented in Kolar, Karnataka. This study resulted into a report titled 'Leveraging Digital Solutions for Universal Health Coverage: Study of a Digital initiative in Kolar, Karnataka', which details the initiative's key features, its impact on healthcare service utilisation, and the benefits it offers to both patients and healthcare providers.

By capturing critical insights into the effectiveness of digital tools in primary healthcare, the report serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, healthcare professionals, and researchers in ensuring universal access to quality and affordable primary healthcare services.

The report was released in the National Conference on 'Universal Access to Healthcare: Digital Solutions' on 6th September 2024, which convened government officials, healthcare providers, technology experts, and thought leaders to discuss digital health innovations and chart a roadmap for expanding digital healthcare in India.



Sankala team interacting with ASHA workers in Kolar, Karnataka

The conference provided a platform to evaluate existing models and explore scalable strategies for achieving Universal Health Coverage through digital interventions.

Building on this foundation, Sankala Foundation aims to further scale digital healthcare solutions through targeted advocacy and outreach. As a next step, the Foundation will organise state-level conferences in Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and other states to promote the adoption of digital healthcare models, particularly in rural and tribal regions.

## Women's Empowerment: A Model for Skilling and Employment Integration

Women are central to India's growth story. When

they gain access to education, skills, and jobs, entire communities benefit. Yet, rural, and tribal women often face deep-rooted barriers. Focused efforts in training and skilling are changing this, fostering agency, resilience, and inclusion. As women lead in development, the ripple effects reach the economy, environment, and social fabric. Business models that blend social equity with sustainability are paving the way for lasting, inclusive progress.

Sankala Foundation is conducting primary research to examine how women working in a textile factory in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, are being simultaneously skilled and educated while earning a livelihood. By engaging directly with women workers, factory management, and training facilitators, the study aims to analyse how integrated models of employment and education are transforming lives. The research focuses on how structured learning programmes within workplaces enhance financial security, career mobility, and long-term empowerment. Additionally, it evaluates the broader socio-economic impact of these initiatives, particularly for women from rural and tribal backgrounds in states such as Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Bihar, where access to education and employment opportunities remains a challenge.

By identifying best practices, the study seeks to develop insights that can inform businesses, policymakers, and development organisations on replicating and scaling sustainable employment models. In March 2025, the team conducted a field survey, engaging with more than 100 women in the mills to understand their empowerment journey. The team also conducted interviews with managers and factory staff. Through these conversations, the team was able to capture their personal stories, tracing their socio-economic backgrounds, motivation for migration, and experience of working and studying at the textile mill. The discussions were critical in shaping our understanding of how employment and education are shaping their lives and aspirations.

**As of 2021, more than 45 million individuals were employed in the textile and apparel industry in India. Out of this, more than 60% are women**



Sankala team during the field visit to KPR Mills, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

A view of the production unit at KPR Mills, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

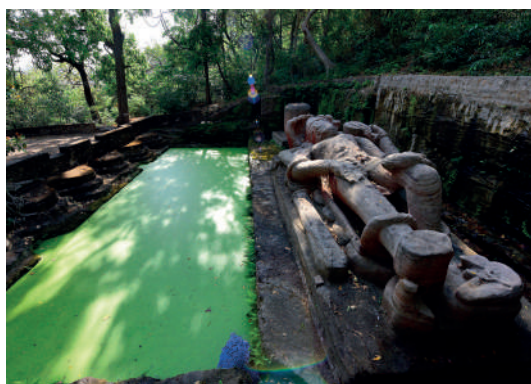


Through this research, Sankala Foundation aims to bridge knowledge with actionable and scalable strategies, ensuring that women's empowerment remains a central pillar in India's journey towards inclusive and sustainable growth.

## India's Hidden Treasures in Tiger Reserves

India is home to 58 tiger reserves, each representing a unique blend of biodiversity, history, and culture. While many visitors come primarily with the aim of spotting the majestic tiger, these reserves offer far more than wildlife observation. Beyond the forests and grasslands, they house cascading waterfalls, ancient temples, and other heritage structures that stand as enduring witnesses to the past. Many reserves were once royal hunting grounds, and the architectural and natural features within them reflect centuries of history intertwined with conservation. With this idea, we conceptualised a book- 'Hidden Treasures: India's Heritage in Tiger Reserves, aimed to provide readers and visitors with the opportunity to explore and appreciate the full spectrum of experiences that India's tiger reserves have to offer, encompassing wildlife, heritage, and scenic beauty.

For the book, the team from Sankala Foundation and National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) undertook field studies across 28 tiger reserves of India to gather primary data. For secondary data, Sankala Foundation perused records of various government departments such as the Archaeological Survey of India, state tourism boards and forest departments and reviewed existing literature on art



Structure of Shesh Shaiya depicting Lord Vishnu in a reclining state is situated in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh

and culture of India. The publication is a study of 63 heritage sites across 28 tiger reserves in 16 states, showcasing their historical, cultural, and ecological significance. Through meticulous research, including field visits and archival studies, the team has attempted to create a valuable repository of India's lesser-known heritage. This initiative aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 11, emphasising the protection of cultural and natural heritage. By exploring these hidden gems, the book aims to reignite interest in heritage conservation, ecotourism, and the sustainable coexistence of nature and history.

## Irrigation in Rwanda: A Global Partnership for Sustainability

India has emerged as a pivotal force in advancing bilateral and South-South cooperation, positioning itself as a partner of choice for developing nations seeking inclusive, sustainable growth. Guided by the principles of mutual respect, shared learning, and self-reliance, India's development partnerships go beyond aid, focusing instead on capacity building, technology transfer, and institution strengthening. Through initiatives in agriculture, healthcare, digital innovation, water management, and renewable energy, India is helping nations across the Global South build resilience against climate, economic, and social challenges.



Local farmers of Rwanda in the fields



Sankala team with farmers in Kirehe District, Rwanda

In this spirit, Sankala Foundation is studying how these initiatives translate into tangible benefits for local communities abroad. One such effort is underway in Rwanda, where India is supporting the modernisation of irrigation systems in partnership with local agencies. Though nearly 90% of Rwandans rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, the sector contributes less than 40% to the GDP, followed by low productivity, limited infrastructure, and volatile prices for major exports like coffee and tea.

Acknowledging the need to confront these challenges, Rwanda prepared Vision 2050 and its Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), recognising it as a key driver of economic growth. To support this vision, Rwanda has been working with the Indian government to implement modern irrigation infrastructure in the Mpanga and Mahama sectors of Kirehe District of Rwanda in its pursuit of food security. India's Export-Import (EXIM) Bank has provided low-cost credit lines for infrastructure, exemplifying how South-South cooperation can drive modernising irrigation facilities. The irrigation programmes are implemented by the collaborative efforts of India's Water and Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS) and Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB). These initiatives aim to strengthen Rwanda's agricultural sector and enhance food security by implementing modern irrigation systems, aligning with Rwanda's Vision

2050, which outlines the country's long-term development strategy.

As a leader in the Global South, India is facilitating knowledge exchange, providing technical assistance, and building capacity among stakeholders to ensure that agricultural transformation through irrigation in Rwanda is inclusive and sustainable.

To assess the impact of these irrigation programmes, Sankala foundation is conducting a study in Rwanda, focusing on:

- ❑ Evaluating socio-economic impacts post implementation in the Mpanga sector and establishing a baseline study in the Mahama sector.
- ❑ Examining how these programmes enhance productivity, secure livelihoods, and boost Rwanda's food security.
- ❑ Capacity building for the adoption of modern irrigation technologies.

The team is evaluating the impact of India's initiative to modernise irrigation technology and capacity building in Rwanda for food security and whether it can serve as a model for other countries in the Global South. This initiative demonstrates how strategic investments in irrigation can enhance food security, improve livelihoods, and drive economic growth in the region.

## Waterfalls in India's Tiger Reserves

Waterfalls play a crucial role in sustaining ecosystems, serving as vital components of the





Left: Ranipur waterfalls in Panna, Madhya Pradesh. Top Right: Raneh waterfalls in Panna Tiger Reserve.  
Right: Seegur waterfalls in Mudhumalai Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu

natural water cycle. Their continuous flow ensures oxygenation for aquatic life, supporting biodiversity in riverine environments. The presence of rich flora along riverbanks further reflects the ecological health of these regions. Additionally, waterfalls provide essential resources for various terrestrial and avian species, reinforcing their importance in maintaining the delicate balance of ecosystems.

India's tiger reserves stand as remarkable examples of rich biodiversity, hosting a range of endangered species, including the Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris*). Waterfalls, found in 37 of the 54 reserves, are integral to these ecosystems, regulating water cycles, enriching soil nutrients, and sustaining forest health. Their role extends beyond ecological functions, as they also contribute to climate regulation and habitat preservation. At the same time, the protected status of tiger reserves helps safeguard these waterfalls from environmental threats such as deforestation and pollution. The conservation of these reserves is, therefore, directly linked to the protection of waterfalls and the overall ecological integrity of these landscapes.

Sankala Foundation is creating a unique publication that delves into the waterfalls found within India's tiger reserves. This publication explores their ecological, cultural, and socio-

economic importance, offering insights into the landscapes, flora, and fauna that surround these natural wonders. Serving as both an educational resource and a guide for travellers and conservationists, it emphasizes the connection between natural water systems and wildlife. Additionally, it highlights sustainable tourism practices that can help preserve these pristine environments. Through this work, the publication aims to raise awareness, especially among the new generation, and support conservation efforts, ensuring that these waterfalls remain a vital part of India's natural heritage.

## Waterbodies in India's Tiger Reserves

Forests and tiger habitats play a vital role in ensuring water security by regulating water cycles, preventing soil erosion, and ensuring the availability of clean water for both human use and ecological balance. As water demand continues to rise, preserving these ecosystems is essential for long-term sustainability. Recognising the interdependence of biodiversity, forest cover, and water security allows policymakers to address the twin challenges of wildlife conservation and water resource management through an integrated approach.

Sankala Foundation is conducting a comprehensive study to analyse the role of tiger reserves in sustaining India's freshwater systems. This research involves mapping surface water in tiger landscapes, assessing conservation policies, and evaluating the ecological functions of these protected areas in maintaining water security. By examining the hydrological impact of tiger reserves, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights that inform conservation strategies and water management policies.

As part of this effort, the findings will be published in an upcoming book that explores the deep connection between tiger conservation, forest ecosystems, and water availability. Through case studies, policy analysis, and hydrological assessments, the book systematically examines how these reserves contribute to water conservation. It integrates academic research, conservation policies, and environmental assessments to highlight the essential role of tiger reserves in sustaining India's freshwater resources.

India's tiger reserves serve as natural water repositories, with 600 rivers originating from or passing through their catchment areas. These reserves regulate hydrological functions by enabling rainwater percolation, reducing runoff, and maintaining river base flows during dry periods. Key findings indicate that approximately

**Approximately 21,036 km of river and 33,248 km of streams are protected within the country's 58 tiger reserves**



Tiger resting in Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan

21,036 km of river and 33,248 km of streams are protected within the country's 58 tiger reserves. Additionally, these landscapes contribute to water security by supporting irrigation across nearly 59.285 million hectares of agricultural land.

## Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape

The Aravalli range, India's oldest mountain system, serves as a vital ecological barrier protecting the Indo-Gangetic plains from desertification. However, the range faces severe degradation due to unsustainable exploitation of natural resources leading to deforestation, urbanisation, and land misuse. In two decades, forest cover has declined significantly. The rapid urban expansion of the National Capital Region (NCR), including the city of Gurugram, in recent years has left a significant environmental footprint with loss of forest cover, declining groundwater levels and increased air and water pollution levels.

As the millennium city grows, the need for urban lungs has become ever more pressing. Aravalli landscape function as a critical ecological buffer for the region supporting diverse flora and fauna but, unfortunately, have also borne the brunt of swift urbanisation. These ancient hills also play a vital role as a natural barrier against the desert winds of Rajasthan and function as a crucial groundwater recharge zone, owing to their rocky terrain and natural slopes that enable rainwater percolation.

Recognising the need of the hour, Sankala Foundation, in collaboration with the Embassy of Denmark in India and the Haryana Forest Department, is studying and developing a model for the eco-restoration of the degraded Aravalli landscape. The Aravalli Green Wall Project is an ambitious plan to create a 1,400 km long and 5 km wide green belt buffer around the Aravalli range covering states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi. Sankala's study area spans four villages in the district of Gurugram, namely Gairatpur Bas, Naurangpur, Sakatpur and Shikohpur. It aims to develop a model for eco-restoration and sustainable development of Aravalli region with collective efforts of all stakeholders including state governments, Government of India, civil society, urban local bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The Foundation's eco-restoration initiative





Study site – Leopard Trail, Aravalli: A critical restoration zone within one of the world's oldest mountain ranges

represents a forward-thinking and scientific approach to reversing ecological degradation in one of India's oldest mountain ranges. The programme focuses on enhancing biodiversity, conserving water resources, and fostering climate resilience in the face of rapid urban expansion. Grounded in data-driven assessments and community-centred solutions, this initiative serves as a scalable framework for similar efforts across 29 districts of Aravalli region.

Through its multi-disciplinary, technology enabled and participatory approach, the eco-restoration programme aims to:

- ❑ Develop a scientific plan to restore the ecological integrity of degraded Aravalli landscape.
- ❑ Revive and enhance local biodiversity by reintroducing native plant and animal species.
- ❑ Improve water conservation and management by proposing blue infrastructure such as rainwater harvesting, treatment and recycling of wastewater, and rejuvenation of existing water bodies.
- ❑ Empower local communities through capacity building, harnessing the potential for green jobs and awareness campaigns.

Prior to development of the eco-restoration strategy, an in-depth baseline assessment was conducted using advanced tools such as GIS mapping and satellite imagery to map the extent of

land degradation, biodiversity loss, and the status of natural water resources. Additionally, ecological survey for native and invasive species as well as community engagement models through Focused Group Discussions (FGD) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with over 200 households in the study area, were employed to devise targeted and need-based interventions for the study area.

These surveys will serve as the foundation for the development of a comprehensive eco-restoration plan for whole Aravalli region, which integrates:

- ❑ Planned green infrastructure development, including strategically planting native species and invasive-alien species management.
- ❑ Soil conservation through mulching, check



Session on biodiversity conservation being conducted by Sankala Team in GMS Naurangpur, Gurugram, Haryana



Sankala team member interacting with forest guards on use of drones to monitor Shivratri mela and the peripheries of Girnar jungle

- dams, and contour bunding to prevent erosion.
- ❑ Water resource management, including rainwater harvesting structures and the construction of recharge wells.
- ❑ Innovative wastewater treatment systems to recycle greywater for use in landscape restoration.
- ❑ Real-time environmental monitoring using a dedicated Management Information System (MIS), allowing for adaptive management based on ongoing performance data.

Additionally, the programme places strong emphasis on community engagement through regular consultations, skill development workshops, and environmental education programmes. Local residents are involved not just as beneficiaries but as active participants, fostering long-term ownership and sustainability.

The programme aims to establish a replicable model for eco-restoration that combines modern

science, traditional knowledge, and grassroots participation. As urban India grapples with increasing environmental stress, this initiative of Sankala Foundation will demonstrate how degraded urban ecologies can be transformed into thriving, resilient ecosystems that support both people and the planet.

## Eco-restoration of Girnar Forest and Asiatic Lion Habitat

Once a thriving habitat for Asiatic lions, Girnar, a sacred hill near Junagadh, Gujarat, faced several severe ecological degradation due to illegal tree felling and mining. By 1963, these pressures led to the complete disappearance of Asiatic lions from the region, highlighting the urgent need for reversing the degradation of forest and habitat of lions. Recognising the potential for ecological revival, the Gujarat Forest Department





Gir landscape, Gujarat

launched targeted conservation efforts in early 1990's to restore Girnar as an additional abode of Asiatic lions and its biodiversity. As a result, since 1993, Asiatic lions once again made Girnar their permanent home and with ample water bodies, fodder, flourishing population of herbivores, now Girnar has become a permanent home of Asiatic lions.

This success can be attributed to twin strategies of eco-restoration and eco-development. Unlike conventional 'fortress conservation' models, where ecosystems are isolated from human presence, local communities were actively encouraged to coexist within the ecosystem. Protection and restoration efforts included soil regeneration, water conservation, and habitat management, enhanced habitat protection alongside community-led initiatives that balanced human activity with wildlife needs.

Sankala Foundation is researching this transformation of Girnar as a model for eco-restoration in other parts of the country as well as Global South. Through extensive field visits and research, the foundation aims to analyse how strategic interventions, particularly in forest and water conservation, can drive large-scale habitat recovery. The restoration efforts in the 1990s, which focused on watershed development – constructing check dams, van talawadis (forest ponds),

converting open mines into water bodies with the support of local communities, played a crucial role in reviving the whole ecosystem. These measures improved groundwater retention, replenished vegetation, and created a sustainable environment for wildlife to return. Today, Girnar is a thriving wildlife sanctuary, home to over 50 Asiatic lions, showcasing the success of conservation-driven restoration.

Building on this study, Sankala Foundation is exploring how similar eco-restoration models can be implemented across India's degraded landscapes and other semi-arid and dry parts of the world. By studying Girnar's eco-restoration, the Foundation seeks to develop frameworks that integrate water conservation, habitat restoration, and community involvement. This work aims to serve as a guiding model for forest and wildlife officers, policymakers, and conservation enthusiasts, demonstrating the transformative impact of conservation efforts when aligned with scientific planning and local engagement.

The story of Girnar stands as a testament to the resilience of nature and the dedication of conservationists. Its revival underscores the potential for restoring degraded landscapes through sustained efforts, offering a replicable model for preserving India's biodiversity and ensuring the long-term survival of endangered species.

# Seminars, Roundtables and Dialogues that Drove Change

## National Conference on Universal Access to Healthcare: Digital Solutions

India has committed to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030, ensuring accessibility, affordability, and quality healthcare through strengthened public health infrastructure and digital technology. With nearly 65% of the population residing in rural areas, digital solutions hold immense potential in advancing this goal.

To explore these possibilities, the National Conference on Universal Access to Healthcare: Digital Solutions was held on 6th September 2024, in New Delhi. Organised by Sankala Foundation, with the support of NITI Aayog, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), and the National Human Rights Commission, India, the conference was inaugurated by Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog and Mr Apurv Chandra, Secretary, MoHFW. It brought together government officials, healthcare practitioners, innovators, and policymakers to discuss how digital solutions can bridge gaps in healthcare service delivery.

The conference marked the release of Sankala Foundation's research study, 'Leveraging Digital Health Solutions for Universal Health Coverage.' This study examines how digital innovations in healthcare, particularly in Kolar, Karnataka, are transforming service delivery and accessibility. This report outlines strategies for integrating digital health technologies into the national healthcare framework.



Top to Bottom: Mr Apurv Chandra, Secretary, MoHFW; Dr V K Paul, Member (Health) NITI Aayog and Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, at the inaugural session





Release of the report 'Leveraging Digital Health Solutions for Universal Health Coverage', 6 September, 2024

The conference featured insightful discussions across three key areas: successful digital healthcare models in India, future frontiers in digital health, and the integration of technology into Universal Health Coverage.

The first session on Models of Change in Healthcare was chaired by Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, National Human Rights Commission, India. It focused on showcasing innovative healthcare models that are revolutionising the healthcare landscape in India. The panel comprised of Mr Madhukar Kumar Bhagat, Joint Secretary (E-Health), MoHFW, Mr Basant Garg, Additional CEO, National Health Authority (NHA) and Mr Girish Krishnamurthy, CEO and Managing Director, Tata MD.

The second session, Future Frontiers in Digital Health, chaired by Dr Rajiv Bahl, Secretary, Department of Health Research (DHR) & Director General, ICMR, and co-chaired by Ms. Debjani Ghosh, President, NASSCOM, explored the potential of using digital solutions in healthcare. Panellists included Mr Lav Aggarwal, Resident Commissioner, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Mr Shashank N. D., Digital Health Committee, Confederation of Indian Industries and Co-Founder & CEO Practo and Mr Jagdeep Singh Gambir, Co-founder and CEO, Karma

Healthcare Ltd.

The third session, Technology Enabled Universal Healthcare was chaired by Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog. It focused on Panellists of this session included Mr C K Mishra, Former Union Health Secretary and Advisor IPE Global, Mr S Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Dr Manohar Agnani, Former Additional Secretary, MoHFW & Professor (Public Health), Azim Premji University and Dr Pavana Murthy, Lead, IHIP Project, World Health Organisation.



A diverse audience of government, private sector, and NGO representatives attended the conference

By fostering dialogue among experts, policymakers, and industry leaders, the conference reinforced the role of digital technology in shaping the future of healthcare. It underscored Sankala's commitment to advancing Universal Health Coverage by strengthening health systems, improving access, and driving equitable care delivery across the country.



Session 1 led by Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India. (Left to right): Mr Madhukar Kumar Bhagat Joint Secretary (E-Health), MoHFW, Mr Girish Krishnamurthy, CEO and Managing Director, Tata MD and Mr Basant Garg, Additional CEO, National Health Authority (NHA)



Session 2 on Future Frontiers in Digital Health. (From left to right: Mr Lav Aggarwal, Resident Commissioner, Andhra Pradesh Govt; (Chair) Mr Rajiv Bahl Secretary, Department of Health Research & Director General, ICMR; Ms Debjani Ghosh, President, NASSCOM and Mr Shashank N D, CEO Practo





Session 3 chaired by Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog. (From Left to right): Mr S Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Speaking), Dr Pavana Murthy, Lead, IHIP Project, World Health Organisation, Mr C K Mishra, Former Union Health Secretary and Advisor IPE Global and Dr Manohar Agnani, Former Additional Secretary, MoHFW & Professor (Public Health), Azim Premji University



Audience at the National Conference on Universal Access to Healthcare: Digital Solutions



Release of the report 'Jal Jeevan Mission- Har Ghar Jal: A Study of Access to Clean Tap Water to Every Rural Home in India' on 20 September, 2024

## Jal Jeevan Mission: Access to Clean Tap Water to Every Rural Home in India

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) – Har Ghar Jal is a landmark initiative by the Government of India, designed to ensure universal piped water access for every rural household. This mission has transformed the access to piped water supply in rural areas of the country, improving public health, boosting rural economy, enhancing management skills of rural local bodies, water supply, sanitation, and gender empowerment. From just 3.23 crore tap water connections in August 2019 to over 15 crore by December, 2024, JJM has brought assured clean tap water supply to millions of homes, enhancing quality of life and resilience against climate-related water challenges.

On Sept 20, 2024, UNOPS India and Sankala Foundation organised the release of the report, 'Jal Jeevan Mission – Har Ghar Jal: A Study of Access to Clean Tap Water to Every Rural Home in India.' The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the mission's achievements, challenges, and future roadmap, offering insights into its policy framework, technology integration, community participation, and sustainability strategies.

The event began with Mr Vinod Mishra, Country Manager, UNOPS, setting the agenda. A panel discussion on 'Assured Piped Water Service Delivery to Every Rural Home – Achievements, Challenges, and the Road Ahead' was chaired by Mr Ashok K K Meena,

Officer on Special Duty (OSD), Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation (DDWS), Government of India. The session brought together government officials, UN representatives, policy experts, and industry leaders to reflect on the mission's achievements, challenges, and the roadmap for the future.

During the discussion, Ms Roopa Mishra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, highlighted the mission's scale, speed, and skill-based approach, which has been key to its success. Mr Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India, positioned JJM as a global model for water security, emphasising its relevance beyond India. Mr Yugal Joshi, Senior Adviser, NITI Aayog, underscored the crucial role of women in water governance, which has improved social equity and local ownership of water resources.

Mr Pradeep Singh, Director, NJJM, shared insights into JJM's real-time digital monitoring system, which ensures water quality and efficiency in distribution. Mr Biswajit Datta, Head Digital Entrepreneurs, TCS, showcased technology-driven solutions, explaining how digital tools have enhanced the speed and accountability of water service delivery.

The report itself presents a detailed study of JJM's evolution, tracing its growth from inception to implementation. It highlights cutting-edge technology interventions such as data analytics, AI-based monitoring, and geospatial tracking that have enabled large-scale progress. The report



Audience included key stakeholders from the government, the private sector, international organisations, and embassies



also showcases case studies from different states and villages, demonstrating how community engagement and grassroots leadership have strengthened the mission's impact.

A significant theme of the report is climate resilience, addressing how JJM is adapting to changing rainfall patterns, groundwater depletion, and extreme weather events. It discusses sustainable solutions such as rainwater harvesting, solar-powered water systems, and integrated watershed management, ensuring long-term water availability in rural India.

As of August 2024, the mission provided tap water access to over 78% of rural households, with seven states, three Union Territories, 188 districts, and 2.5 lakh villages achieving universal coverage. The report not only presents the achievements of JJM but also serves as a blueprint for future water security policies in India and beyond.

Through this initiative, Sankala Foundation and UNOPS India reaffirm the commitment to advancing sustainable water solutions, ensuring that clean and safe drinking water becomes a fundamental right for all.

A panel discussion on 'Assured piped water service delivery to every rural home: Achievements, challenges and road ahead' led by Mr Ashok K K Meena, OSD, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Govt of India





Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, stressed the need to define a comprehensive package of services tailored to the health and nutritional needs of the elderly, 18 December, 2024

## Seminar on Ageing in India – Actionable Solutions

By 2050, one in every five individuals in India will be elderly (UNFPA 2023), highlighting the urgent need for policies that address the challenges of an ageing population.

Sankala Foundation, in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India NITI Aayog, and the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, organised the seminar 'Ageing in India: Actionable Solutions' on 18th December 2024. The event brought together policymakers, experts, and stakeholders to discuss strategies for improving healthcare, economic security, and social inclusion for the elderly.

The seminar featured two focused sessions. The first session, 'Addressing the Health and Nutritional Needs of the Elderly', was chaired by Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog. Discussions explored the importance of healthy ageing practices, integrated healthcare, mental health services, and caregiving support into a comprehensive healthcare package.

This will strengthen the primary healthcare infrastructure, and expand health insurance coverage for older persons. Speakers also emphasised the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to address the unique vulnerabilities of

elderly women during this session.

The second session, Economic Security, Social Inclusion, and Quality of Life, was chaired by Mr Amit Yadav, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. He referenced constitutional provisions, particularly Article 47, which addresses aspects of ageing, underscoring the responsibility to improve the welfare of the elderly. He called for a collaborative approach among all stakeholders to enhance the quality of life for senior citizens and



Mr C K Mishra, Former Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare advocated for the creation of an integrated National Plan on Elderly Care



Participants at the seminar on Ageing in India

emphasised the importance of raising awareness on this critical issue. Additionally, he highlighted the Ministry's Senior-care Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE) scheme, which encourages innovation in elderly welfare by supporting startups focused on creating products, services, and solutions tailored to the needs of the elderly.

The session focused on strengthening pension systems, creating opportunities for meaningful engagement, implementing gender-sensitive social protection mechanisms, and addressing

ageism through intergenerational programmes. The discussions underscored the importance of financial security, community participation, and inclusive policies in ensuring a better quality of life for the elderly.

The seminar convened eminent policymakers, academicians, and industry experts, including Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India; Mr C K Mishra, Former Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Dr K Madan G, Advisor, National Health Systems Resource Centre; Mr Puneet Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Social Justice Department, Kerala; Ms Uma Devi, Joint Director, Social Justice Department, Tamil Nadu; Ms Kajari Biswas, Senior Director, Ministry of External Affairs, India; and Dr Srinath Reddy, Former President, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) along with members from the private elderly care and NGO sector.

The seminar served as a platform to develop actionable solutions for improving elderly well-being. Discussions focused on integrating geriatric care into primary healthcare, strengthening pension systems, enhancing mental health support, and fostering intergenerational programmes.



Left to right: Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India; Mr Amit Yadav, Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, GoI and Mr Devendra Kumar Nim, Director (Programmes), Sankala Foundation



# Publications and Releases That Created an Impact

## Tigers & Tribes: A Silent Conversation

Sankala Foundation, with the support of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), unveiled its first publication- 'Tigers & Tribes: A Silent Conversation', a visual art book.

Inspired by the tribal art exhibition, 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre,' this book celebrates the intricate bond between tigers and the tribal communities living in and around India's 55 tiger reserves. The release event was graced by Mr Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; Mr Kirti Vardhan Singh, MoS in the MoEF&CC and MEA; Mrs Leena Nandan, Secretary, MoEF&CC; Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India; Mr Jitender Kumar, Director General (Forests) & Special Secretary MoEF&CC; Dr S P Yadav, Interim Director General, International Big Cat Alliance and Mr G S Bharadwaj, Addl. DG Forests (Project Tiger) & Member Secretary (NTCA) along with senior officers of the ministry and eminent domain experts.

'Tigers & Tribes: A Silent Conversation' showcases the artwork featured at the art exhibition, 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre,' by various tribal artists, celebrating their symbiotic relationship with the tiger. It seeks to spark a dialogue about the intangible cultural heritage embedded in tiger reserves and the indispensable role of tribal communities in preserving these ecosystems. Through their unique art forms, this book aims to bring tribal artistry to the forefront, advocating for its potential as a livelihood source and a means of inspiring sustainable wildlife conservation practices. The book is available for purchase on Amazon.



Cover of the visual art book 'Tigers & Tribes: A Silent Conversation'

## Hidden Treasures – India's Heritage in Tiger Reserves

The book 'Hidden Treasures: India's Heritage in Tiger Reserves' was formally released by Dr S Jaishankar, Union Minister of External Affairs, at the tribal art exhibition 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre', held in New Delhi. The exhibition, a collaborative effort by Sankala Foundation and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA),



Cover page representing Ranthambore Fort in Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, by artist Gajanand Singh Tungariya



Release of 'Tiger and Tribes: A Silent Conversation' by Mr Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, on 29 July, 2024

served as the perfect platform to unveil this landmark publication celebrating the intersection of India's natural and cultural heritage. By exploring these hidden gems, the book aims to reignite interest in heritage conservation, ecotourism, and the sustainable coexistence of nature and history.

The book profiles 63 heritage sites across 28 tiger reserves in 16 states, drawing from field studies and archival research. It serves as a significant step in furthering awareness on the role of heritage within conservation landscapes and aligns with SDG 11, which promotes the safeguarding of cultural



Release of the first edition of Big Cats magazine by Dr Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, at the art exhibition 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre', on 17 October, 2024





Release of the second edition of Big Cats magazine by Mr Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister for Forest and Climate Change, at the launch of the IBCA website in New Delhi on 13 December, 2024

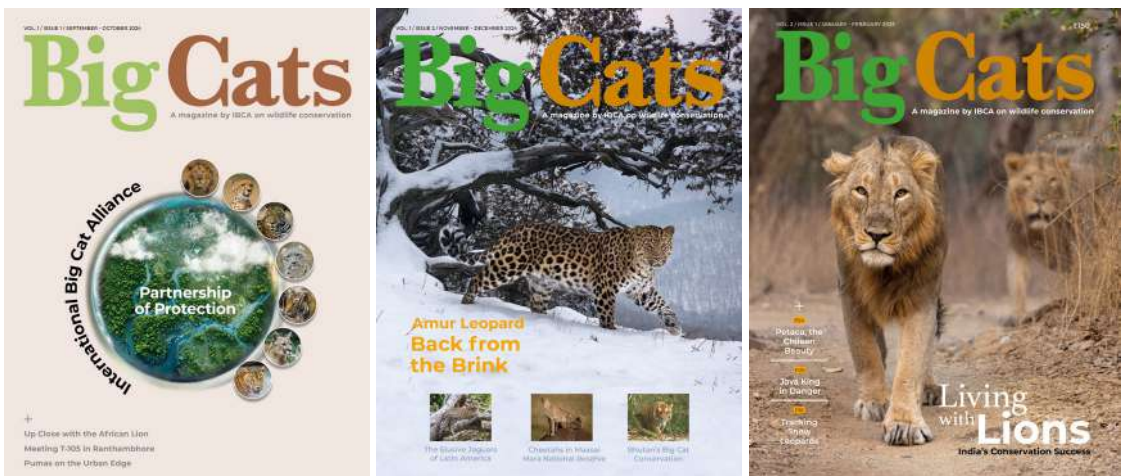
and natural heritage. The aim of the book is to bring national attention to India's lesser-known architectural and cultural treasures hidden within its protected forest areas.

### Big Cats magazine

The Big Cats magazine, a bi-monthly publication by Sankala Foundation in collaboration with the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), is dedicated to wildlife conservation, with a particular focus on the world's seven big cat species — tiger, lion,

leopard, cheetah, jaguar, puma, and snow leopard. Since its release, Big Cats has become a platform for knowledge exchange, conservation discourse, and awareness building, bringing together policy makers, practitioners, researchers, conservationists, and wildlife enthusiasts.

Recognising the urgency of big cat conservation, this magazine aims to encourage transboundary conservation efforts, sustainable development models, and community-led initiatives. Through exclusive interviews, expert analyses, and stunning



Left to right: Volume 1 (Issue 1, Issue 2 and Issue 3) of the Big Cats magazine

## Transforming Livelihood Forest Communities in

A Study of the UFRMP-JICA Livelihood



Sankala Foundation  
Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability

A study on livelihoods of forest communities in Uttarakhand by Sankala Foundation

visual storytelling, Big Cats continue to engage and inspire stakeholders in the mission to preserve these apex predators and their ecosystems.

The first edition of the magazine, unveiled by Dr S Jaishankar, Union Minister of External Affairs, highlighted global conservation success stories — from the pumas of California to the cheetahs of Maasai Mara. It also featured a captivating photo story on Ranthambore's hidden gem, tigress T-105, also known as Noori, and her cubs.

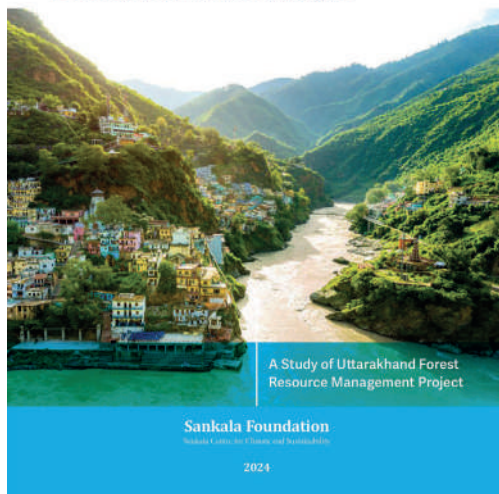
The second edition of the magazine was released by Mr Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. This issue highlighted the conservation success of the Amur leopard in Siberia, along with a special feature on Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre, a tribal art exhibition showcasing India's tribal communities' conservation ethos and their deep-rooted coexistence with tigers.

The third edition of the magazine features a cover story on Asiatic lions of Gir Forest and describes how local community members, the Maldharis, live close to the lions. It also features stories on Javan Leopard, snow leopard and pumas of Chile.

## Transforming Livelihoods of Forest Communities in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand, with its rich biodiversity and substantial forest cover, is also home to many rural communities that depend on forest resources for their livelihoods. However, unsustainable use of these resources has led to biodiversity loss and economic challenges. To address this, the Uttarakhand Forest Resources Management Project (UFRMP), in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), launched a programme in 2015. It aims to implement sustainable forest management practices that conserve biodiversity while improving the livelihoods of local communities. The UFRMP-JICA initiative has empowered rural communities by forming Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and cluster federations. These groups have been instrumental in fostering economic and social development through sustainable livelihoods. Sankala Foundation has been carrying out field study with focus on the impact of capacity-building programmes initiated under this programme, which have strengthened the skills of SHG members and promoted sustainable forest management. Financially, the programme has improved household incomes and supported financial inclusion through microfinance initiatives like revolving funds. By

## Micro-watershed for Sustainable Socio-economic Development in the Himalayas



A study on micro-watershed for sustainable socio-economic development in the Himalayas by Sankala Foundation

integrating sustainable forest management practices with community empowerment, empowerment, the study found that the initiative has demonstrated the potential for achieving long-term environmental and economic benefits. The report underscores the importance of continuing to build on the programme's successes, with a focus on enhancing governance, financial inclusion, and market access to ensure the sustainability of these efforts in the future.

## Micro-Watershed for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in the Himalayas

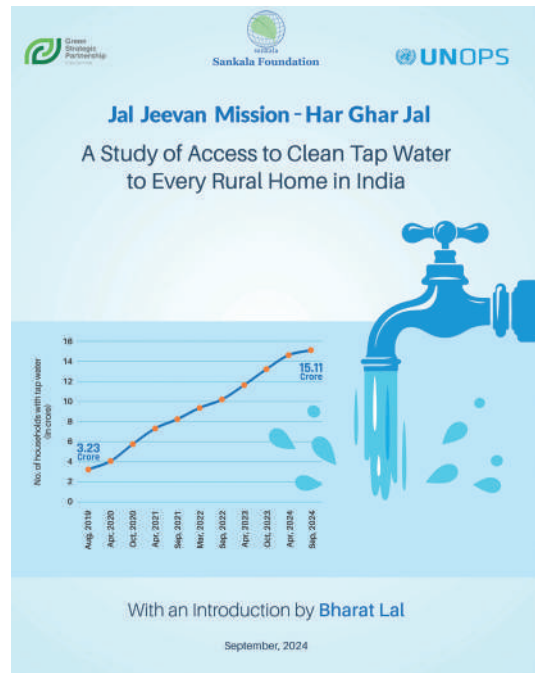
This study by Sankala Foundation is focussed on focussed on the challenges and success of the Micro-watershed (MWS) programme implemented by the Uttarakhand Forest Resource Management Project (UFRMP), in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Uttarakhand. The research employs mixed methodologies, combining quantitative indicators with qualitative insights gathered from field observations, beneficiary surveys, and participatory approaches. The findings underscore the transformative potential of watershed management in restoring degraded ecosystems, enhancing water security, and supporting rural livelihoods. The report also highlights areas for improvement, including the need for sustained capacity-building, robust monitoring systems, and policy-level support for scaling these interventions.

The micro-watershed management approach exemplifies a sustainable model for balancing ecological restoration with socio-economic development. As climate uncertainties and developmental pressures burden the Himalayan region, scaling such initiatives will be crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of Uttarakhand's natural ecological systems. This report provides a comprehensive assessment of the programme and serves as a resource for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders invested in advancing watershed management in the region.

## Jal Jeevan Mission – Har Ghar Jal: A Study of Access to Clean Tap Water in Every Rural Home in India

Jal Jeevan Mission – Har Ghar Jal is one of India's

most ambitious initiatives to ensure access to clean and safe drinking water for all rural households. This report evaluates the significant milestones achieved



A study on access to clean tap water to every rural home in India by Sankala Foundation

under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), offering an in-depth analysis of its impact on rural communities, particularly in terms of health, sanitation, and gender empowerment. The report is structured into eight sections, offering a comprehensive analysis of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). It examines the mission's background, implementation strategy, and transformative impact. The study highlights how JJM worked at an unprecedented scale and speed, empowering communities, strengthening local self-governments, integrating bottom-up planning, and improving quality of life. Notably, these achievements took place despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report traces the historical evolution of water management, highlights technological and community-driven solutions, and outlines sustainable practices like rainwater harvesting and solar energy integration. The report also celebrates success stories from states and regions that have achieved universal household tap water access,



offering inspiration for the challenges that lie ahead. It also shares the complexities and challenges of water supply distribution and conservation. Equally path-breaking in the implementation of JJM is the attention the programme gave to community's role: assured availability of water is their basic right and to enjoy this right, they must also shoulder certain responsibilities, and they will learn to manage water resources, water supply delivery, understand quality issues, grievance redressal, inclusiveness, equity, public health and hygiene, and commit to sustainability.

### Leveraging Digital Solutions for Universal Health Coverage

Study of a Digital Health Initiative in Kolar, Karnataka



A study on digital health initiative in Kolar, Karnataka by Sankala Foundation

The report also details how technology helped to address the challenging objectives of scale and speed in the programme. The use of dashboard, data analytics and modern technology enabled JJM to reach its goals faster. This report aims to meet the needs of all those connected to various issues of water resource management and water supply delivery and management: researchers, engineers, innovators, entrepreneurs, tech experts, public policy and government officials and even corporates and businesspersons, and people working at the grassroots level. The detailed research in the book can guide those who want to address challenges of drinking water shortages.

## Leveraging Digital Solutions for Universal Health Coverage

India has made considerable progress towards achieving its goals for Universal Health Coverage (UHC), but challenges in accessibility and affordability persist. While the country has achieved several advancements in healthcare, many still face obstacles like a shortage of health professionals, poor infrastructure, and high out-of-pocket expenses.

To address these gaps, digital health solutions are emerging as transformative tools, leveraging smartphones and internet access to improve healthcare delivery. One such initiative is the Digital Nerve Centre (DiNC), implemented in Kolar district, Karnataka, to enhance public healthcare services and reduce patient overload in secondary and tertiary hospitals.

The DiNC connects public health facilities with a centralised system that enables patients to book appointments, access information, and consult healthcare providers through a toll-free number. The initiative aims to increase the utilisation of public health facilities, reduce out-of-pocket expenses, and improve healthcare accessibility in rural areas.

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the Digital Nerve Centre (DiNC), outlining its key features, digital application, technology infrastructure, and implementation framework. It evaluates the platform's digital integration, interoperability, and safeguards for data privacy, confidentiality, and patient safety. Additionally, the report examines the capital and recurring costs associated with DiNC's implementation.

It captures the healthcare services and continuum of care practices facilitated by DiNC, highlighting its role in disease prevention and health promotion. The report also assesses the initiative's impact on healthcare utilisation, treatment adherence, and care continuity, with a particular focus on maternal and child health, Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), mental health, geriatric care, and tuberculosis management. Furthermore, the report captures the perspectives of service users, healthcare providers, and health system administrators in Kolar, identifying potential adaptations to optimise care delivery and patient experience.

By embracing digital innovation, India is advancing closer to its goal of achieving UHC, making healthcare more equitable and accessible for all.

# Events that Told a Story

## Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre

### Second Edition

The second edition of the Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre, a tribal art exhibition was held from 17th to 20th October 2024 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. Organised by Sankala Foundation in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), supported by International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA) and Ministry of Culture, the exhibition expanded its scope this year, reaching beyond tiger reserves to national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and community reserves, exploring traditional art forms from tribal communities and forest dwellers from across these areas.

The second edition of Silent Conversation aimed to create a sustained market for tribal artworks, providing an alternative livelihood for forest-dependent communities. It also sought to educate younger generations about India's rich cultural heritage and inspire urban audiences to embrace traditional conservation values. The exhibition served a three-fold objective: generating livelihood opportunities for tribal artists, promoting traditional arts and crafts, and enhancing the discourse on wildlife conservation and forest preservation. Looking ahead, the exhibition aspires to transcend national boundaries, bringing Indian tribal art and traditions to a global audience while spreading the message of conservation, culture, and empowerment.

The highly anticipated event was inaugurated by Dr S Jaishankar, Union Minister for External Affairs. He was taken on a curatorial tour by Ms Divya Singh Rathore, Curator, 'Silent



Dr S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, inaugurating the 2nd edition of 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre' held on 17 October, 2024

Conversation: From Margins to the Centre.' While viewing the intricate paintings, he also interacted with the tribal artists who came in from over 22 tiger reserves across India.

In his address, Dr Jaishankar said India's development story was intertwined with environmental conservation. He said the government is committed to the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes through various schemes. The concept of Antodaya scheme was based on the principle of upliftment of the marginalised groups and ensuring that no one is left behind. He also announced that the artworks by tribal artists would make wonderful gifts for his guests abroad. It was the best way to showcase Indian art.

In his video message, Mr Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change said the co-existence shows that they live, protect and respect the nature. This is appreciable as the world was facing the threat of climate change, loss of biodiversity and desertification of soil.

In his speech, Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, National Human Rights Commission, India, said the tribal population had been the biggest beneficiary of the government's schemes in the past 10 years which are aimed at reaching out to the last person. Speaking about the symbiotic relationship between the tribal communities and nature, Mr Lal said they followed the conservation ethos that used nature of need and not greed as preached by Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi. He said tribal communities live in a symbiotic relationship between



Dr S Jaishankar and Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC, India, interacting with the tribal artists at the exhibition

man and nature and promote the 'conservation ethos.' This ethos is expressed in the paintings and art works displayed at the exhibition.

Dr S P Yadav, Director General, International Big Cat Alliance; Mr Jitendra Kumar, Director General (Forests) and Special Secretary and Dr Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, Member Secretary, NTCA also graced the occasion.

Visitors were treated to an expertly curated display of over 200 paintings and 100 art pieces representing the rich cultural heritage of India's tribal communities. Art forms such as Gond, Warli, Patachitra, Bhil, and Sohrai were showcased, highlighting the deep connection between tribal communities and their natural environment. The

pieces were created using sustainable materials, aligning with the Mission LiFE initiative of the Government of India, which promotes sustainable living practices.

This year, the exhibition featured 40 tribal artists, who were invited to participate in the event, providing them with a platform to engage with an urban audience and share their artistic traditions. As part of the programme, the artists were taken on guided tours of Delhi, exploring the city's historical monuments, bazaars, gardens, and diverse cuisines.

The event also featured cultural performances, further promoting India's diverse folk traditions. The evening was graced by Mr Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism.



Mr Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change delivering his video message



Dr S Jaishankar, delivering the address at Silent Conversation 2024





Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, delivered an address at Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre, 2024



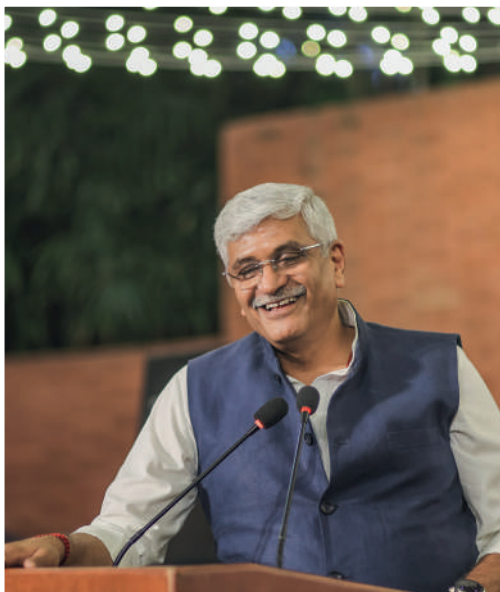
Mr Jitendra Kumar, DG (Forests) and Special Secretary, MoEFCC and Dr Gobind Sagar Bharadwaj, Member Secretary, NTCA, at the event



Tribal artists on a tour to Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi



Mr Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India interacting with a tribal artist during the exhibition



Mr Shekhawat delivers address at the event





Third from left: Mr Prem Watsa, CEO of Fairfax Financial; Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India; Mr Ricky Kej, Indian musical composer and environmentalist among others at Silent Conversation 2024

He interacted with tribal artists at the exhibition & praised them as true custodians of our forests.

In his address, he acknowledged and appreciated the invaluable contributions of India's tribal communities in safeguarding and promoting the nation's rich intangible cultural and natural heritage. He highlighted how their traditional knowledge systems, art forms, rituals, folklore, and sustainable practices have played a crucial role in maintaining the diversity and continuity of India's cultural identity across generations.

Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC

India, highlighted the conservation ethos of tribal communities.

The event was also graced by Mr Ricky Kej, Indian musical composer and environmentalist, His Excellency, Mr Freddy Svane, Danish Ambassador to India, Mr Prem Watsa, CEO of Fairfax Financial, among others.

This was followed by cultural performances featuring songs by Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee Gazi Khan Barna, master of Khartal and another by classical Hindustani music artists Lalitya Munshaw & her group.



Left: Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India at the cultural evening of Silent Conversation

Right: Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India; Mr Gobind Sagar Bharadwaj, Member Secretary, NTCA; Mr Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism; Dr S.P. Yadav, Director General, International Big Cat Alliance and Mr Jitendra Kumar, DG (Forests) and Special Secretary, MoEFCC





A captivating Khartal performance by Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee Gazi Khan Barna and Lalitya Munshaw group from Gujarat

## Artists in Residence Programme

Out of 40 plus tribal artists who came to Delhi for the second edition of 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre', an art exhibition, 12-15 artists were selected for the 'Artists-in-

Residence' programme hosted by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Under this programme, these artists got an opportunity to paint and showcase their unique expression of painting and create art forms by residing within the Rashtrapati Bhawan premises.

### Third Edition

The third edition of Silent Conversation was held at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC) from December 5th –15th, 2024. The paintings and artworks from 'Artists-in-residence' programme were presented to the Hon'ble President at the third edition.

The exhibition featured artworks of various tribal art forms, including Bhil, Warli, Sohrai, and

Aipan, along with select contemporary pieces.

Some artists drew inspiration from their surroundings, creating scenic paintings of Rashtrapati Bhavan, which were highly appreciated by visitors to the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum.

Through this initiative, the Silent Conversation exhibition continues to serve as a platform for tribal artists to sustain their livelihoods while promoting India's rich cultural heritage.



Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, National Human Rights Commission, India, gives a walk-through to the Hon'ble President of India at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, New Delhi, held on 5 December, 2024



Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre





Tribal artists and Team Sankala with the Hon'ble President of India



Dignitaries at the third edition included Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, Ms Deepti Umashankar, Secretary to the President of India, Dr Rakesh Gupta, Additional Secretary to the President of India, among others





Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, at a storytelling session in Sunder Nursery, New Delhi, held on 31 January, 2025

### **Kathakar 2025: Bringing conservation & folklore to life**

Sankala Foundation partnered with the Kathakar International Storytellers Festival 2025, India's first and only oral storytelling festival. Founded in 2010 by the NGOs Nivesh and HHACH under the patronage of UNESCO, the festival honours the legacy of Thakur

Vishva Narain Singh, India's first Braille Editor and the Father of Braille Literature. Organised by the Gahilote Sisters – Rachna, Prarthana, and Shaguna, the festival celebrated the art of storytelling through performances by renowned storytellers, engaging discussions with acclaimed artists, and vibrant musical performances.



Mr Imtiaz Ali, Filmmaker, with Mr Mohit Chauhan, Singer and Chief Patron, Kathakar 2025



Dr S P Yadav, Interim Director General, International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), co-author of the visual art book 'Tigers & Tribes: A Silent Conversation' on Doordarshan

Over the years, Kathakar has hosted distinguished personalities, including Hon'ble President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, A R Rahman, Imtiaz Ali, and Manoj Bajpayee, along with internationally renowned storytellers such as Nell Phoenix, Usifu Jalloh, and Polina Tšerkassova. This year's Chief Patron was the celebrated singer-songwriter and composer, Mohit Chauhan.

As part of the festival, Sankala Foundation conducted a special storytelling session led by our mentor, Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, National Human Rights Commission, with school children. He narrated stories of conservation and peaceful coexistence between tribal communities and their natural surroundings, inspiring young minds to protect and preserve India's cultural and natural heritage.

During the session, Mr Bharat Lal brought to life stories from the wild, reflecting on his experiences of field while working in Junagadh, Gujarat. He recounted a gripping incident where a leopard wandered into a school, sharing the challenges of ensuring its safe rescue without harm to anyone.

At Kathakar 2025, Mr Lal also presented the book 'Tigers & Tribes: A Silent Conversation' to the international storytellers, further reinforcing the festival's theme of conservation and preserving traditional wisdom.

The festival also celebrated the power of storytelling in everyday life, cinema, and music through engaging sessions with renowned artists such as Imtiaz Ali, Filmmaker; Lucky Ali, Singer; Anurag Basu, Director and Screenwriter; Bhupinder Babbal, Singer, among others.

### **'Tigers and Tribes' on DD Morning Show**

Dr S P Yadav, Interim Director General, International Big Cat Alliance, featured on DD National's Morning Show in the segment Into the Wild, where he highlighted the global significance of big cat conservation. During the discussion, he underscored the efforts being made to protect these majestic species and emphasised the crucial role of tribal communities in conservation. As part of the conversation, he also showcased Sankala Foundation's publication, Tigers and Tribes: A Silent Conversation, co-authored by Dr S P Yadav and Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India which celebrates India's deep-rooted conservation ethos and the coexistence of tribal communities with wildlife. The feature served as a platform to raise awareness about wildlife protection and promote a broader discourse on sustainable conservation practices.



# A Year of Conversations: Where We Spoke, Who We Reached

## IBCA International Steering Committee Meeting

Sankala Foundation, as a partner of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), participated in the inaugural meeting of the International Steering Committee (ISC) held on 16 April, 2024, in New Delhi, India. The meeting, chaired by Dr SP Yadav, Interim Director General, IBCA, marked a significant milestone in global big cat conservation efforts.

The gathering brought together representatives from fourteen member countries—Armenia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Peru, Suriname, Uganda, and Mexico (Special Representative), as well as seven key partner organisations, including the Global Tiger Forum, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Wildlife Institute of India, the World Bank, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India, and Sankala Foundation.

Key discussions focused on shaping IBCA's foundational structure, including administrative arrangements, the framework agreement, rules of procedure for the assembly, manual regulations, branding, work plan and budget. Rules of Procedure for the Assembly, manual regulations, IBCA Branding, the Work Plan, and the Budget. As an IBCA knowledge partner, Sankala Foundation remains committed to advancing collaborative conservation strategies that ensure the long-term survival of big cats and their habitats worldwide.



The first steering committee of the International Big Cat Alliance held at New Delhi on 16 April, 2024

## India Water Week 2024

Sankala Foundation team had the opportunity to attend India Water Week (IWW) 2024, held from September 17–20, 2024, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Organised by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, the event served as a dynamic platform for national and international dialogue on water resource management and innovation. The inaugural session was graced by the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, alongside Union Minister Mr C R Paatil and Minister of State Mr Raj Bhushan Choudhary.

This year's theme, 'Partnerships and Cooperation for Inclusive Water Development and Management,' emphasized the need for integrated and collaborative approaches in tackling today's complex water challenges. With a particular focus on 'Sustaining Rural Water Supply', the event provided valuable insights into global best practices, innovative solutions, and community-driven approaches towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).

India Water Week 2024 hosted over 40 expert-led sessions, 186 paper presentations (both offline and online), and 5 panel discussions, covering a wide range of topics including water quality monitoring, greywater management, community engagement strategies, IEC/ BCC (Information, Education, Communication/ Behaviour Change Communication) tools, and climate-resilient water systems.

Sankala Foundation's team members, Mr Aakash Chaturvedi and Ms Shriya Saraswat, Research Associates, actively participated in various sessions and found the discussions to be visionary and grounded in practical innovation. The knowledge





India Water Week 2024 graced by Hon'ble President of India Smt Draupadi Murmu held on 17 September 2025

gained at the event significantly informed and enhanced the development of Sankala Foundation's report titled 'Jal Jeevan Mission: Har Ghar Jal – A Study of Access to Clean Tap Water in Rural India.' The exposure to scalable models and evidence-based approaches reinforced the Foundation's commitment to data-driven, inclusive, and sustainable development practices in the WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) sector.

### Workshop on micro-economics of irrigation and household water use, IIIT Delhi

The workshop on microeconomics of irrigation and household water use, hosted by the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at IIIT-Delhi, brought together experts, researchers, and policymakers to discuss critical issues surrounding water management, irrigation efficiency, and sustainability. The event was inaugurated by Prof Ranjan Bose, Director of IIIT-Delhi, setting the stage for an insightful exchange of ideas on the pressing challenges and innovations in water economics.

The workshop attended by Dr Adeeba Parveen, Senior Research Associate and Mr Aakash Chaturvedi, Research Associate, Sankala

Foundation, featured a series of engaging discussions and presentations on topics such as drilling in the drought, the industrial organisation of groundwater, pricing farm electricity, water use and efficiency: The case of paddy cultivation in Punjab, and the impact of social networks on electric pump adoption and irrigation access in Bangladesh's informal water market. These sessions explored the intersection of water access, agriculture, and policy-making, with a strong emphasis on the economic and environmental implications of irrigation practices. Experts also deliberated on decentralisation and the spatial (mis) allocation of irrigation water, shedding light on ways to optimise resource distribution in the agricultural sector.

In addition to these insightful discussions, the workshop included paper presentations on crucial sustainability-related issues such as the economic cycle in agriculture, India's carbon emissions in farming, water and food insecurity, and alternative water sources for agriculture. A significant focus was placed on rethinking irrigation infrastructure to align with sustainable development goals. Through active engagement in these discussions, Sankala Foundation reaffirmed its dedication to promoting research-driven solutions for sustainable water management. The insights gained from this event will contribute to the foundation's



Mr Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change at the Aravalli Green Wall Partnership Summit held on 6 February, 2025

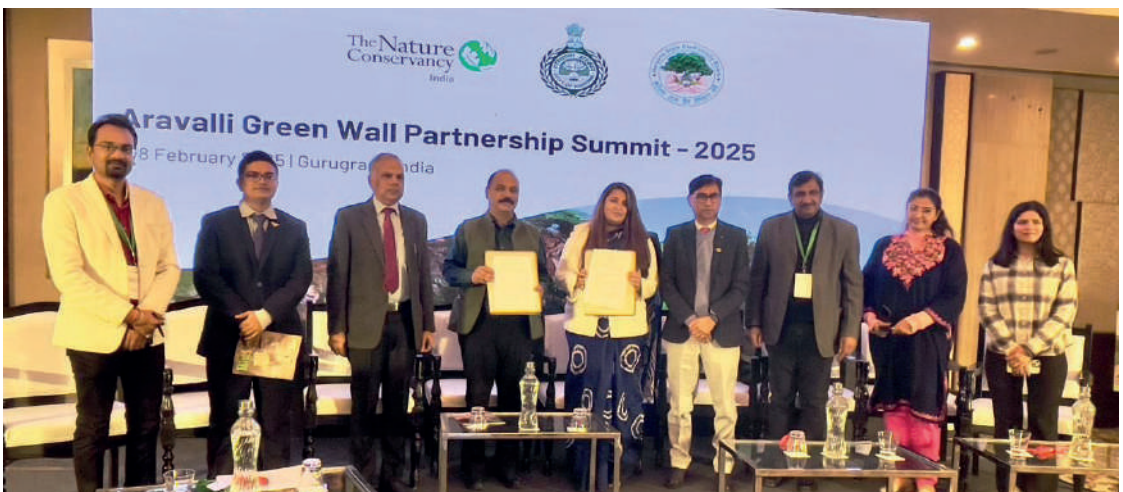
ongoing programmes aimed at developing eco-friendly and economically viable water conservation strategies.

## Aravalli Green Wall Partnership Summit

Sankala Foundation participated in the Aravalli Green Wall Partnership Summit 2025, held in Gurugram from February 6-8, organised by the State Biodiversity Board, Government of Haryana, and The Nature Conservancy India Solutions (NCIS). The summit convened government agencies, conservation groups, scientists, and civil society leaders to develop strategies for restoring the Aravalli

range, tackling environmental challenges, and ensuring long-term ecological sustainability.

The summit also featured key insights from prominent leaders in the environmental sector. Mr Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, emphasised the urgency of restoring green cover and preserving natural heritage. Mr Rao Narbir Singh, Minister of Environment & Forests, Government of Haryana, called for stronger multi-stakeholder collaboration to protect the Aravallis' ecological and cultural legacy. Dr Vivek Saxena, PCCF, State Biodiversity Board, Haryana, highlighted the growing threat of desertification as the Thar desert advances, endangering biodiversity



Signing of MoU between Sankala Foundation and the Forest Department of Haryana

and local communities. Dr Anjali Acharya, Managing Director of NCIS, underscored the importance of leveraging partnerships for effective conservation and sustainable development.

The Aravalli range, spanning Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi, plays a crucial role in preventing desertification, conserving biodiversity, and supporting local communities. The discussions at the summit aligned with the Aravalli Green Wall Landscape (AGWL) Programme, launched in 2023 by the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change, which aims to enhance green cover, restore water bodies, and implement ecosystem-based conservation efforts.

As part of its commitment to environmental restoration, Sankala Foundation signed an MoU with the Forest Department of Haryana, formalising its role in eco-restoration initiatives. The agreement was signed in the presence of Mr Vineet Garg; Dr Vivek Saxena; Mr Subhash Yadav (CF Gurgaon); and Mr V B Kumar (Distinguished Fellow, Sankala Foundation) along with other team members from the foundation. This collaboration will focus on reforestation, water security, and sustainable land management, with Sankala contributing through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and the implementation of eco-restoration strategies. By working closely with local stakeholders, the partnership aims to create a lasting impact on the region's ecological health.

Through its engagement in the summit, Sankala Foundation reaffirmed its role as a leader in sustainability and ecological restoration. The partnership established at the summit will drive policy advocacy, grassroots initiatives, and

conservation efforts to ensure a resilient and thriving Aravalli landscape for generations to come.

## Youth Environment Summit 2024

Sankala Foundation champions the power of youth in environmental leadership. Recognising the unique blend of passion, fresh perspectives, and innovative thinking young minds bring to the table, Sankala actively supports and empowers them to drive progress toward a sustainable future.

Dr Pramod K Yadav, Programme Associate, represented Sankala Foundation at the Youth Environment Summit (YES) at Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi. The conference was organised around the theme of youth leadership in environment and sustainability.

He participated in the panel discussion at a conference on youth stewardship for a sustainable future, sharing valuable insights on Sankala's sustainable livelihoods, water security, and community health initiatives. Additionally, he conducted a workshop to guide students and young researchers on fellowship opportunities and the art of proposal writing, offering practical insights and tips for crafting winning proposals and scholarship applications.

## Climate Change Hackathon

As climate change intensifies, its impact on public health is becoming increasingly evident, necessitating urgent and innovative solutions. Digital technologies are emerging as powerful tools in mitigating these challenges—enhancing disease surveillance, improving healthcare access, and enabling real-time responses to climate-related health crises. The Climate Change and Health Hackathon, organised by the Centre for Environment, Sustainability, and Climate Justice at Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), served as a platform to explore these intersections. The event brought together young innovators to develop digital solutions aimed at strengthening health systems and building climate resilience.

Ms Palak Chakraborty, Research Associate, Sankala Foundation participated in the hackathon, serving as a judge. Drawing on her expertise in digital health, she evaluated innovations addressing climate-health challenges. The hackathon reinforced the need for technology-driven interventions



Programme Associate, Sankala Foundation, at the Youth Environment Summit 2024





USISPF roundtable on Leveraging AI for Transformational Governance and Ethical Safeguards held on 6 February, 2025

and showcased the immense potential of digital innovations in shaping a sustainable and climate-resilient future.

### Round Table on AI

Sankala Foundation's Dr Malvika Kaul, Director (Research and Communications) and Ms Disha Joshi, Director, participated in the USISPF Closed-Door 'Deep Dive: Leveraging AI for Transformational Governance and Ethical Safeguards' on February 6, 2025. Led by Mr Srinivas Narayanan (Vice President, OpenAI), Mr James Hairston (Head of International Policy & Partnerships, OpenAI), and Ms Pragya Misra (Lead, Public Policy & Partnerships, India, OpenAI), the session convened government representatives, policy experts, and researchers to explore AI's governance potential and risks. With OpenAI CEO Mr Sam Altman and his team in India to engage in AI policy discussions, the dialogue underscored the need to balance AI innovation with ethical responsibility.

As a stakeholder in sustainable governance and technology-driven solutions, Sankala Foundation remains committed to fostering dialogue on AI's responsible adoption. AI should be an enabler of progress, one that strengthens institutions, empowers communities, and drives inclusive development. The future of AI governance depends on collaboration, regulation, and a shared vision



Team IBCA and Sankala at IRALE Conference held on 26 February, 2025

that prioritises humanity alongside technological advancement.

### IRALE Landscape Conference

The Indian Regional Association for Landscape Ecology (IRALE), a Regional Chapter of the International Association of Landscape Ecology (IALE), conducted its conference from February 26 to 28, 2025, near Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, India. The conference focused on methods to encourage collaborative discussions and interactions between scientists, policymakers, practitioners, experts, researchers, students, working professionals,

representatives of government agencies and non-profit organisations, and communities to advance innovative conservation strategies that improve landscape integrity. The IBCA (International Big Cat Alliance) also co-hosted a special Big Cat Landscape Conservation session. During the session, eminent conservation practitioners and managers discussed the journey big cat re-introduction and species re-covering programmes at the landscapes.

During the conference, Sankala Foundation and IBCA organised an exhibition to showcase Big Cats magazine to attendees, including researchers, policymakers, and wildlife enthusiasts, so that they could gain exposure to the latest developments in big cat conservation. The Sankala team including Dr Pramod K Yadav, Programme Associate and Ms Ravina Yadav, Research Associate also talked about how the magazine provides in-depth articles, stunning visuals, and expert insights, making big cat conservation more accessible and engaging. The exhibition also had other Sankala Foundation publications, including the 'Tigers & Tribes: A Silent Conversation' book.

Dr Pramod Yadav, Programme Associate, presented Sankala Foundation's study on transforming livelihood in the Himalayan landscape. The study provides evidence of how programme implementation has helped transition livelihood capitals (i.e., social, financial, human, physical, and natural capital) through adapting principles of environmental governance in Uttarakhand.

The study concludes that capacity-building programmes and micro-finance have been imparted to communities to encourage them to adopt various value chains initiated by the Uttarakhand Forest Resources Management Project (UFRMP).

## Seminar on 'Aging and Social Care for the Elderly'

On 31st July 2024, Dr Abha Jaiswal, Visiting Fellow at Sankala Foundation, participated in a national seminar titled 'Aging and Social Care for the Elderly', jointly organised by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and the World Bank. The seminar served as a high-level platform to engage policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and civil society representatives in a dialogue on the growing needs and challenges associated with an ageing population in India and globally.

The discussions focussed on building inclusive and sustainable care systems for the elderly, with a particular focus on the development of structured policy frameworks to address age-related vulnerabilities in a systematic and dignified manner. The event facilitated cross-sectoral collaboration and knowledge-sharing, featuring international case studies and best practices on long-term care models, community-based support systems, and rights-based approaches to social protection for older persons.

Insights from the seminar will further inform the Foundation's work on promoting age-responsive frameworks that prioritise dignity, access, and support for the elderly, especially in underserved and rural communities.

## Universal Health Coverage and India's Evolving Demography: Harnessing the Silver Dividend and Beyond

In the run-up to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day, Dr Abha Jaiswal, Visiting Fellow, and Ms Palak Chakraborty, Research Associate, Sankala Foundation, attended an event titled 'Universal Health Coverage and India's Evolving Demography: Harnessing the Silver Dividend and Beyond'. The closed-door dialogue was co-organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) India on 12th December 2024.

India stands at the intersection of two powerful demographic shifts: a burgeoning young population, the largest in the world, with over 350 million individuals aged 10 to 24, and a rapidly ageing society, with the elderly expected to constitute 13% of the population by 2030.

Discussions centred on advancing UHC in the context of digital transformation, healthy ageing, and the need for systemic reforms that address gaps in outpatient care, financial protection, and social inclusion for the elderly. Through their participation, Dr Jaiswal and Ms Chakraborty contributed to Sankala Foundation's broader mission of supporting responsive, rights-based health policies that are informed by demographic realities. Key insights from the dialogue will help inform the Foundation's ongoing advocacy around age-responsive healthcare, intergenerational equity, and inclusive digital health strategies.



Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, the keynote address at the Global Digital Health Summit, held on 4 October, 2024

## Digital Health Summit 2024

The Global Digital Health Summit was held on October 4 – 5, 2024, at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai. Discussions centred around AI integration in healthcare systems, patient centricity, privacy and security in Digital Health, safety in hospitals, empowering women for economic growth, digital hospital transformation strategies, and the role of the Ayushman Bharat Scheme in driving industry collaboration.

Eminent speakers at the summit included Nobel Peace Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, Founder and Former MD of Grameen Bank; Dr Devi Shetty, Chairman and Founder of Narayana Health; and Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General and CEO, National Human Rights Commission, India, among others. Mr Bharat Lal in his keynote address emphasised the importance of Digital Health in ensuring equitable access to healthcare. He stated that empathy and compassion form the foundation of healthcare. The right to healthcare is inseparable from the right to life. This makes improving access, affordability, and quality of care essential. It's vital to ensure that everyone in the country has access to basic

healthcare services. In this regard, Digital Health has the potential to drive progress in the right direction. Therefore, embracing technology should be done with confidence and without hesitation.'

Sankala Foundation was represented at the Digital Health Summit held on October 4, 2024 in Mumbai by Ms Palak Chakraborty, Research Associate. The summit served as a vital platform to engage with global thought leaders who have pioneered the shift from conventional healthcare delivery to technology-enabled care. It provided valuable



Audience at the Global Digital Health Summit, 2024





Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, delivering his address at the National Conference on Rights of Older Persons held on 18 October, 2024

insights on integrating digital health solutions across individual and institutional healthcare systems.

## National Conference on Rights of Older Persons

On October 18, 2024, Dr Abha Jaiswal, Visiting Fellow, and Ms Palak Chakraborty, Research Associate, Sankala Foundation, attended the National Conference on Rights of Older Persons, organised by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Themed 'Assessing the Structural Framework, Legal Safeguards, Social Security Rights and Institutional Protection of India's Elderly,' the conference served as a critical platform to examine the status of older persons in India and advocate for their dignity, security, and well-being.

The conference highlighted key initiatives undertaken by the government to improve the quality of life and health of the elderly, while also seeking to bridge the gap between policy design and implementation. Importantly, it brought together stakeholders from across sectors to reimagine ageing as a phase of meaningful contribution to society, rather than marginalisation.

Three focused technical sessions provided deep insights into emerging concerns:

- ❑ Addressing the Issue of 'Ageing of the Aged' –

exploring the vulnerabilities of the oldest old and the need for long-term care frameworks.

- ❑ Analysing the Gendered Face of Ageing – unpacking how ageing disproportionately affects older women and what measures can ensure gender-equitable ageing.
- ❑ Evaluating the Healthcare Scenario – assessing existing health infrastructure and services available to the elderly, and identifying gaps.

Sankala Foundation's participation in the dialogue reflected its commitment to equity, inclusion, and intergenerational justice. The learnings from the conference continue to inform the Foundation's work in supporting rights-based, age-friendly policy environments.



Gathering at the National Conference on Rights of Older Persons at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi

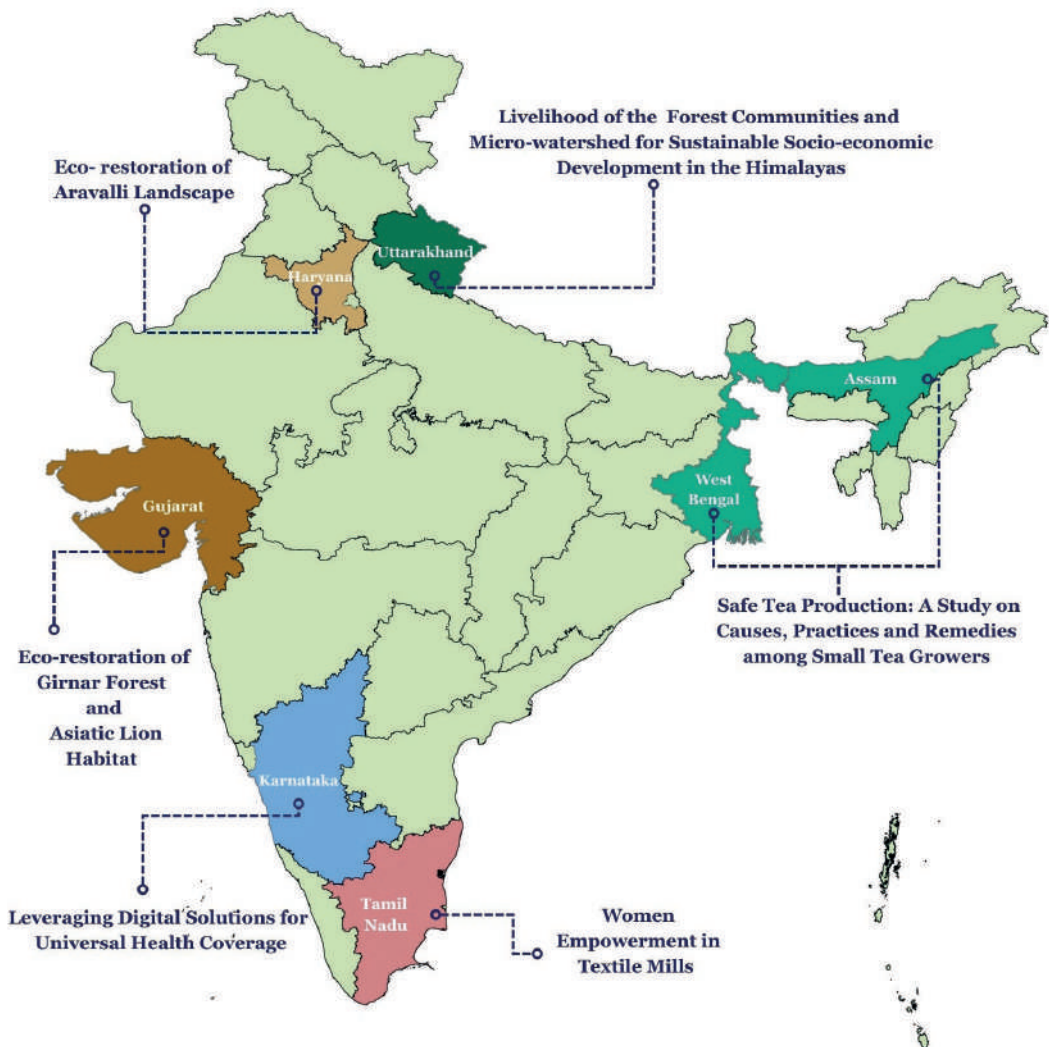
## Our Research Work Across States

Sankala Foundation's work spans a diverse geography, reflecting India's social, ecological, and economic landscapes. From the Aravallis in Haryana to the tea gardens of Assam and West Bengal, mountain villages in Himalayas, the forests of Gujarat, districts in Karnataka, and the textile hubs of Tamil Nadu, our programmes are rooted in local contexts yet connected by a shared vision of sustainability, inclusion, and resilience.

In Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh, we engage with communities on conservation and livelihood initiatives, strengthening the link between natural resource management and socio-economic

development. Each study, whether focused on water security, ecosystem restoration, or women's empowerment, builds on partnerships with local governments, communities, and institutions.

Expanding our reach beyond India, Sankala is also active in Rwanda, Africa, where we are studying India-supported irrigation programmes that promote food security and climate resilience. This initiative exemplifies India's growing role in South-South cooperation, and Sankala's commitment to strengthening and sharing models of sustainable development that benefit people and ecosystems alike, across borders



# Partnerships

## New Partnerships



**International Big Cat Alliance:** On 1st April 2024, Sankala Foundation entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), a global coalition working for the conservation of big cats and their ecosystems. The MoU establishes a collaborative framework for knowledge exchange, capacity building, research, and awareness initiatives focused on big cat conservation and sustainable development in forest landscapes.

The partnership aims to identify and implement joint programmes that integrate climate-resilient practices, eco-development strategies, and livelihood promotion around big cat habitats. It also supports research and evaluation to develop innovative conservation approaches rooted in local contexts.

Under this agreement, IBCA and Sankala Foundation will collaborate on developing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, organizing training programmes, and conducting national and international seminars and conferences. Additionally, the Foundation will support IBCA's efforts to expand outreach in regions including Central Asia, East Asia, Nepal, and Bangladesh by contributing expertise, programme design, and field-level insights.

This collaboration aligns with Sankala's mandate and reinforces its work at the intersection of biodiversity, climate action, and sustainable development.



**Haryana Forest Department:** On 7th February 2025, Sankala Foundation entered into a strategic partnership with the Haryana Forest Department through a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to advance ecological restoration and sustainable development in the Aravalli region of Gurugram, Haryana.

The partnership aims to develop a comprehensive eco-restoration plan grounded in scientific assessments and sustainability principles. Key areas of work include biodiversity mapping, soil and water conservation, afforestation with native species, management of invasive species, and promotion of climate-resilient land use practices.

Additionally, this MoU also seeks to promote capacity building through targeted training programmes, community mobilisation for ecosystem preservation, and development of monitoring mechanisms to track ecological recovery. The initiative is expected to serve as a replicable model for urban natural resource management and climate mitigation in rapidly growing regions of the National Capital Region (NCR).



**Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS):** On 5th February 2025, Sankala Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), popularly known as the National Museum of Mankind. It aims to jointly advance the preservation and promotion of India's rich cultural and natural heritage. This collaboration aligns the strengths of IGRMS in cultural research and museum innovation with Sankala's work on conservation, education, and sustainability through its Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage (SCCNH).

The MoU establishes a framework for mutual knowledge sharing, joint research, and outreach initiatives. Key areas of collaboration include preservation and promotion of traditional ecological knowledge, joint exhibitions, public education campaigns, and development of multimedia resources to engage wider audiences.

The partnership aims to create impactful programmes that deepen understanding of India's diverse cultural expressions and environmental legacy, while encouraging community participation and institutional cooperation in heritage conservation.





**EMBASSY  
OF DENMARK**  
New Delhi

**Denmark Embassy in India:** In alignment with the India–Denmark Green Strategic Partnership, Sankala Foundation signed two significant Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the Embassy of Denmark in India to advance

sustainable development, environmental conservation, and climate resilience. These MoUs, signed on September 17, 2024, build on the shared commitment of both countries to the Paris Agreement and UN Sustainable Development Goals. This collaboration focuses on developing a model for eco-restoration in the Aravalli Forest belt near Gurugram, Haryana. The programme aims to restore degraded lands through afforestation, soil and water conservation, and implementation of green and blue infrastructure to create ecological ‘lungs’ for urban areas. Activities include biodiversity assessments, sustainable land management, community mobilisation, and development of targeted training programmes for sector stakeholders. The initiative also seeks to contribute to climate mitigation by strengthening natural resource management in rapidly urbanising areas.

**Climate-Resilient Rainwater Management in Navsari, Gujarat:** Signed in December 2024, the second MoU with the Danish Embassy in India centres on designing an innovative rainwater management model to address water scarcity in a district. It combines Danish expertise in water systems with local community knowledge to implement climate-resilient rainwater harvesting, aquifer recharge, and smart stormwater management solutions. The programme emphasizes behavioural change, community-led conservation efforts, and integrated water resource management (IWRM) to reduce groundwater dependency and enhance water security in both urban and rural contexts.

Together, these two partnerships aim to deliver scalable, community-driven solutions rooted in scientific research and international cooperation, setting new benchmarks for ecological restoration and water resilience in India.

## Ongoing 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 disseminate 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 disseminate 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, 2023 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 programme 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 programme processing, and engage in joint efforts to address emerging challenges. The collaboration will focus on mutual benefit, aiming to improve the quality of life and ease of living, and facilitate sustainable development at both national and global levels.



**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 updated knowledge and information, thus co-

developing 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.



**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.

## Building Future Partnerships



Confederation of Indian Industry

**CII Foundation:** This year, CII Foundation and Sankala Foundation initiated a series of meetings to explore collaborative opportunities in promoting women's leadership, entrepreneurship, and innovation. The discussions aimed to lay the groundwork for jointly organising conferences, roundtable dialogues, and knowledge platforms aimed at advancing inclusive development. Both institutions also expressed a shared interest in promoting art, culture, and natural heritage, areas that align closely with the mutual commitment to holistic nation-building. These dialogues mark the beginning of a long-term partnership, envisioned to create impactful programs that bridge sustainability, inclusion, and creative expression in the coming year.



**Bharti Airtel Foundation**

**Bharti Airtel Foundation:** Sankala Foundation and Bharti Airtel Foundation engaged in exploratory discussions to identify areas of collaboration that advance women's leadership across education, skill development, entrepreneurship, and innovation, all closely aligned with the government's vision of inclusive growth, particularly within the Global South. The dialogue focused on leveraging the strengths of both institutions to build enduring partnerships on key developmental issues such as education, health, women, and social empowerment. The discussions also emphasized the creation of common platforms to exchange ideas, showcase best practices, and drive collective impact through integrated and sustainable initiatives.



# Sankala Foundation in the News

## National Conference on Universal Access to Healthcare: Digital Solutions

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**Health Ministry announces U-WIN platform to digitise vaccination data in India**

The online vaccine management platform will capture every vaccination event of all pregnant women and children under the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).




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6 Sept 2024 8:37 PM

## Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre

EDITION: IN \* FARIDABAD 20°C

**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

City: Delhi Mumbai Bengaluru Hyderabad Kolkata Chennai Agra Agartala Ahmedabad Ajmer Amaravati

PHOTOS WEATHER

NEWS / CITY NEWS / DELHI NEWS / Inspiration For Creativity And Art Through Eye Of The Tiger

**Inspiration for creativity and art through eye of the tiger**

Ambika Pandit / TNN / Updated: Oct 21, 2024, 08:56 IST

Tribal artists from tiger reserve areas are participating in Delhi's 'Artists-In-Residence' programme at Rashtrapati Bhawan to create artworks reflecting their coexistence with tigers. Supported by various organizations, the initiative promotes conservation and showcases cultural stories while benefiting the artists financially. [Read More](#)



**NEW DELHI:** Countering the perception that tigers as a species can only evoke fear, tribal artists, who live in and around tiger reserves, are here in Delhi to tell a story of how the majestic beast, revered by many as "Baghdev" in their culture, is an inspiration for creativity that finds expression in art and gives a strong message for harmonious co-existence as the essence of sustainable development.

To build on the message of conservation, 15 tribal

**The Telegraph online**  
Monday, 29 December 2025


HOME OPINION INDIA WEST BENGAL WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS MY KOLKATA ENTERTAINMENT ENIGMATS

HOME / 1994 / External Affairs Minister V Jaishankar: India's development journey deeply intertwined with environmental conservation

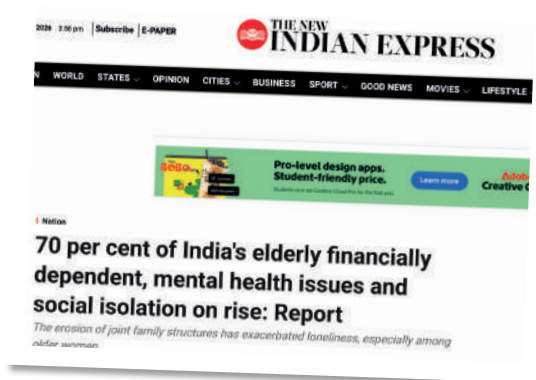
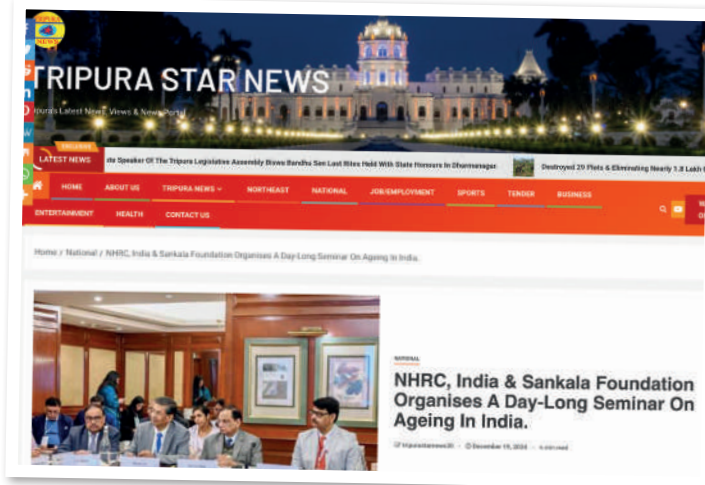
**India's development journey deeply intertwined with environmental conservation: EA Jaishankar**

In his address, the External Affairs Minister spoke of the philosophy of 'Antyodaya', which means to leave no one behind, and a policy, it is a soul and guiding principle of our government

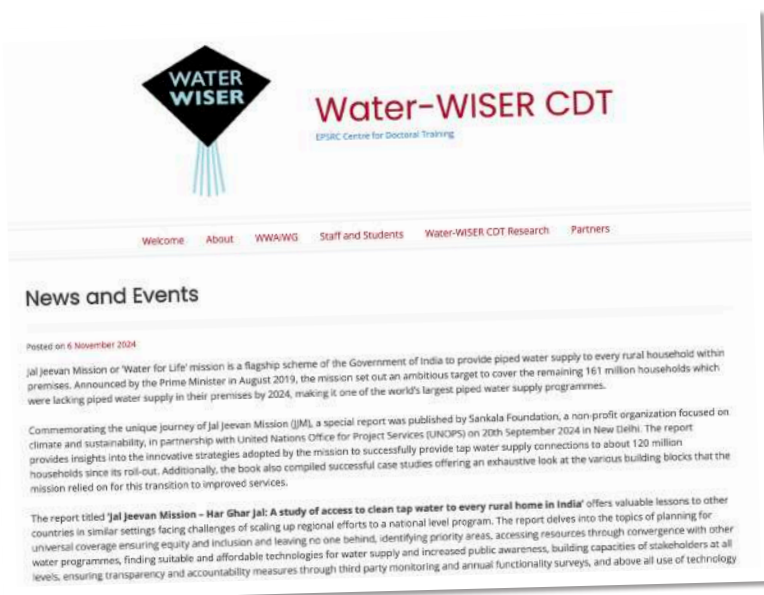
PTI | Published 18.10.24, 12:06 PM



## Seminar on Ageing in India – Actionable Solutions



## Release of the Report 'Jal Jeevan Mission – Har Ghar Jal: A Study of Access to Clean Tap Water to Every Rural Home in India'



## Looking Ahead: 2025 and Beyond

As Sankala Foundation enters its fourth year, it is ready to build on what it has achieved so far. The organisation will focus on strengthening its current work while also starting new programmes and studies in conservation, sustainability, and community development. With a growing team and network of partners, Sankala is committed to making an even bigger impact in the year ahead.

One of the key focus areas will be policy engagement and advocacy. Sankala plans to use its on-ground experience and research to take part in important policy discussions at the state, national, and global levels. Reports like 'Water Security for High Economic Growth' and 'Jal Jeevan Mission: Ideas and Impact' will help share useful ideas and promote better policies for water, climate, and conservation.

Sankala will also expand its work on community-led conservation. Building on successful programmes in the Aravalli region, the Foundation will continue to develop models that restore nature while involving local communities. This includes work on rainwater harvesting, planting trees, protecting biodiversity, and improving water management, all with strong community participation.

In 2025, Sankala will begin the first edition of its 'Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future' conference. This new initiative will bring together women leaders and experts from across the country and beyond to share ideas and create more opportunities for women in leadership, especially in areas like climate action, governance, and business. It aims to support and promote women as important voices in solving environmental and social challenges.

The Foundation will also grow its work around tribal art and cultural preservation. The Silent Conversation exhibition series will travel to more cities in India and explore global collaborations. These exhibitions will help tribal artists reach wider audiences, connect with markets, and highlight how culture and conservation are closely linked.

To share what it learns, Sankala will publish new materials on topics like ecological restoration, rainwater management, and building community

resilience. These research studies will be based on real experiences from the field and will serve as useful resources for other organisations, governments, and communities.

Internally, the Foundation will continue to strengthen its team and systems. With nearly 25 professionals, it will invest in better tools to monitor and evaluate its work and encourage learning across programmes. This will help improve the impact and sustainability of all its programmes.

Sankala will begin research studies under its Sankala Cultural and Natural Heritage Centre. This centre will serve as a space for exhibitions, research, and public education focused on India's tribal cultures, natural ecosystems, and conservation values. It will aim to connect people with the country's rich heritage and promote a deeper understanding of the need to protect both culture and nature. Our teams are currently in the field conducting research for two upcoming publications, 'Stripes and Streams: Water Bodies Inside India's Tiger Reserves' and 'Waterfalls Inside Tiger Reserves of India.' While often admired for their scenic beauty, these water bodies are far more than picturesque retreats. They serve as vital freshwater sources, support rich biodiversity, purify ecosystems, and sustain the delicate balance between forests and fauna. These cascading landscapes also play a crucial yet often overlooked role in climate regulation, water purification, and habitat creation. Through these works, we aim to raise awareness that tiger reserves are not only about tigers, they are living ecosystems where every element contributes to the harmony of nature. As part of this effort, our photographers Ms Radha Dutta and Mr Shikhar Mohan, are travelling to some of the most remote and untouched locations across India's tiger reserves. The mission is to capture the unseen beauty of these landscapes and reveal the hidden stories of water, wildlife, and wilderness that define the soul of these protected areas.

In the year ahead, Sankala Foundation will continue to bring people, knowledge, and action together to build a more just, resilient, and environmentally conscious future for all.



# Our Team

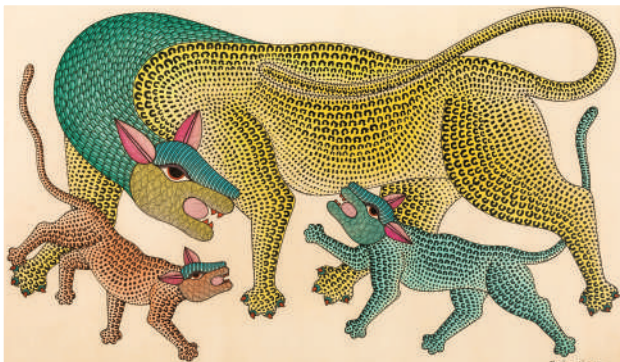


Name	Designation
Vidya Bhushan Kumar	Distinguished Fellow
Amitabh Agnihotri	Distinguished Fellow
Umakant	Distinguished Fellow
Vivek Kapadia	Distinguished Fellow
Dr Abha Jaiswal	Visiting Fellow
Dr Malvika Kaul	Director (Research and Communications)
Disha Joshi	Director
Mohammed Khalid	Dy Director ( Admin and Finance)
Dr Aarti Mahajan	Senior Fellow
Dr Pramod K Yadav	Programme Associate
Dr Adeeba Parveen	Senior Research Associate
Dr Deepesh Goyal	Senior Research Associate
Divya Singh Rathore	Consultant
Deepna Kaveriappa	Consultant
Utkarsha Rathi	Research Associate
Palak Chakraborty	Research Associate
Yamini Rajora	Research Associate
Shivani Solanki	Research Associate
Shriya Saraswat	Research Associate
Ravina Yadav	Research Associate
Aakash Chaturvedi	Research Associate
Satish Chopra	Administrative Officer
Shikhar Mohan	Photographer
Ishani Nangia	Communications and Outreach Associate
Vibha Mukati	Research Associate
Vani Sehgal	Research Associate
Narender Kumar	Associate (Designer)

Glimpses of the art work displayed at 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre', an art exhibition



Artist: Rohit Shukla



Artist: Radheshyam Kherwar



Artist: Uttam A Shrirame



Artist: Vishwanath J Dahikar



Artist: Behelti Ama



Artist: Manikchand Mahto

## समानी प्रपा सह वोऽन्नभागाः

We share food, water, air, and consequence.  
Climate collapse is never individual, it is shared destiny.  
(Rigveda 10.191.2)



Voice for a Sustainable Planet

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Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi - 110 066



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