



Green
Strategic
Partnership
India-Denmark



Ministry of Environment, Forest
and Climate Change



National Conference
on
Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape
Strengthening the Aravalli Green Wall

14 January, 2026
10:00 - 17:15 hrs (IST)
Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi



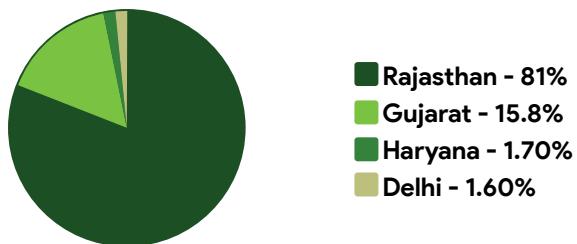
Eco-restoration of the Aravallis

Land degradation and desertification represent one of the most pressing global environmental and development challenges, directly affecting an estimated 3.2 billion people worldwide. The burden falls disproportionately on vulnerable populations, particularly rural communities and farmers with small landholdings whose livelihoods, food security, and resilience are intrinsically linked to land resources. Currently, nearly 75% of the Earth's land surface has been degraded by varying degrees, undermining agricultural productivity, ecosystem services, and socio-economic stability. Global assessments indicate that land degradation has reduced crop yields by 10–50% and contributed to the displacement of nearly 700 million people, intensifying distress-driven migration. If existing trends continue, up to 90% of the world's land could be degraded by 2050, with profound implications for climate stability, biodiversity, and human well-being.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its Sixth Assessment Report (2023), highlights the critical role of land-use systems in addressing climate change. The Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector contributes approximately 13–21% of total global greenhouse gas emissions, positioning land degradation as both a driver and consequence of climate change. Addressing degradation within the AFOLU sector is therefore central to achieving climate mitigation, adaptation, and land degradation neutrality, while delivering co-benefits for food security, livelihoods, and ecosystem resilience.

Recognising this interlinkage, India has prioritised land restoration as a core element of its climate and sustainable development strategy, including its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. According to the Indian Space Research Organisation's Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas, nearly 29.7% of India's total geographical area, approximately 97.85 million hectares was degraded during 2018–19. The challenge is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions, with states such as Delhi, Gujarat, and Rajasthan reporting more than half of their land area under degradation, posing serious risks to ecological stability, livelihoods, and regional climate regulation.

Degraded area in the Aravalli Landscape



Source: Detailed action plan for the Aravalli Landscape 2025, MoEFCC

Within this broader national and global framework, the Aravalli Range assumes critical strategic importance. One of the world's oldest mountain systems, the Aravallis span 29 districts across Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Delhi, supporting over 50 million people. The range serves as a vital ecological barrier against the eastward expansion of the Thar Desert and plays a crucial role in groundwater recharge, biodiversity conservation, air quality regulation, and climate moderation in the National Capital Region (NCR) and the Indo-Gangetic Plains. Accelerated degradation of the Aravalli landscape threatens these ecosystem services, with cascading impacts on human health, water security, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

However, rapid urbanisation, illegal mining, deforestation, and encroachment have severely degraded the Aravalli range. Habitat loss, soil erosion, and groundwater depletion now threaten its ecological balance, making the restoration and protection of the Aravalli landscape essential for the environmental health and water security of north-west India.

A study analysing data between 1975 and 2019 revealed that 7.6% (approximately 5,77,270 ha) of the Aravalli landscape across all states (Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi) had degraded, with a significant portion converted to barren land and settlements. The degradation of Aravallis has major environmental consequences, including opening breaches through which dust from the Thar Desert can reach Delhi-NCR, impacting air quality and local climate patterns, and depleting groundwater.

The Aravalli buffer zone extends across 6.45 million ha, of which 42% (2.7 million ha) is degraded. To address this, the Aravalli Range has been identified as a priority restoration zone under Land Degradation Neutrality and India's pledge to restore 26 million hectares of land under the Bonn Challenge. The central government has launched the Aravalli Green Wall Project to restore degraded land and create a green barrier against desertification.

Ecosystem Services of the Aravalli Range

Regulating Services

Climate: Acts as a barrier against the eastward spread of the Thar Desert, reducing dust storms & moderating local temperatures.

Air quality: Forests & scrublands trap dust & pollutants, benefiting the Indo-Gangetic plains.

Water regulation & groundwater recharge: Hillocks, forests, and traditional water structures enhance infiltration & recharge of aquifers.

Soil conservation: Vegetation binds fragile soils, reducing erosion, landslides, and land degradation.

Disease regulation: Scavengers like striped hyenas & vultures reduce carcass accumulation and disease risks.

Provisioning Services

Fodder: Supports pastoral livelihoods through grasses, shrubs, and open forests.

Fuelwood and non-timber forest produce: Includes firewood, fruits, medicinal plants, and gums.

Water resources: Seasonal streams, lakes, and wetlands support drinking water, irrigation, and livestock.

Cultural Services

Cultural identity and heritage: Embedded in the traditions of Gujjars, Meenas, Rebari, Bhils, and other communities.

Spiritual and sacred landscapes: Hills, groves, Orans, and water bodies hold religious significance.

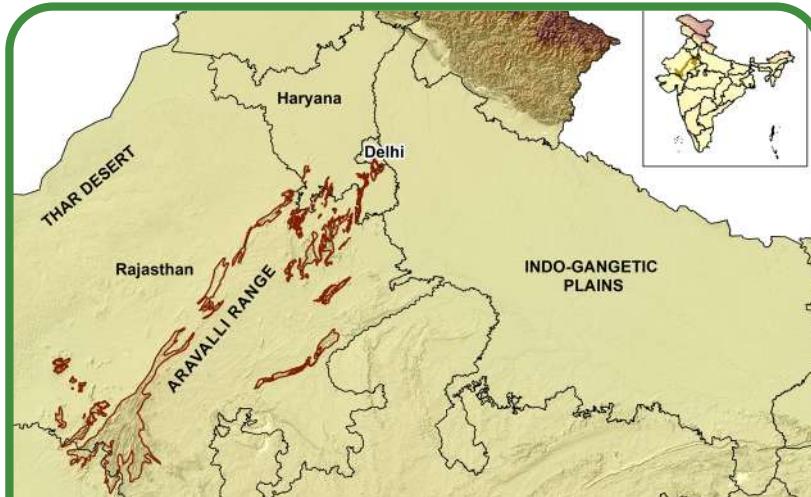
Recreation and education: Opportunities for nature learning, research, and eco-tourism.

Supporting Services

Biodiversity: Provides refuge for diverse flora and fauna adapted to semi-arid conditions.

Pollination and seed dispersal: Carried out by bats, birds, insects, and mammals, sustaining forest regeneration.

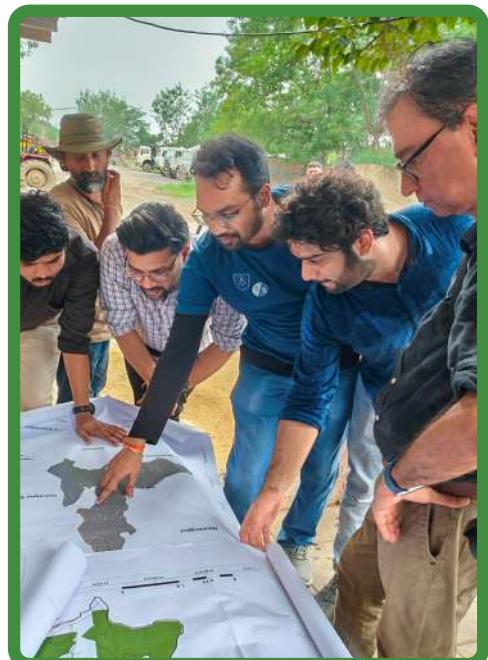
Nutrient cycling: Through grazing, decomposition, and soil-dwelling fauna.



The Aravalli Range, one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world, spans across four states in northern and western India: Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi.

Sankala Foundation's Study

Sankala Foundation, in partnership with the Haryana Forest Department and with support from the Embassy of Denmark in India, conducted a field study and developed a model for ecological restoration, recovery, and resilience. The foundation has prepared a report titled 'Eco-Restoration of Aravalli Landscape', which details a model that tackles ecological challenges through site-specific, evidence-based, and community-inclusive approach for a pilot area comprising four villages in the Aravalli belt of Gurugram. Sankala Foundation has created a replicable eco-restoration framework that integrates scientific analysis, community participation, and adaptive governance. By adopting a landscape-based restoration approach that includes ecological, hydrological and socio-economic aspects, it aims to enhance biodiversity, ecosystem services, and climate resilience in the Aravalli landscapes.



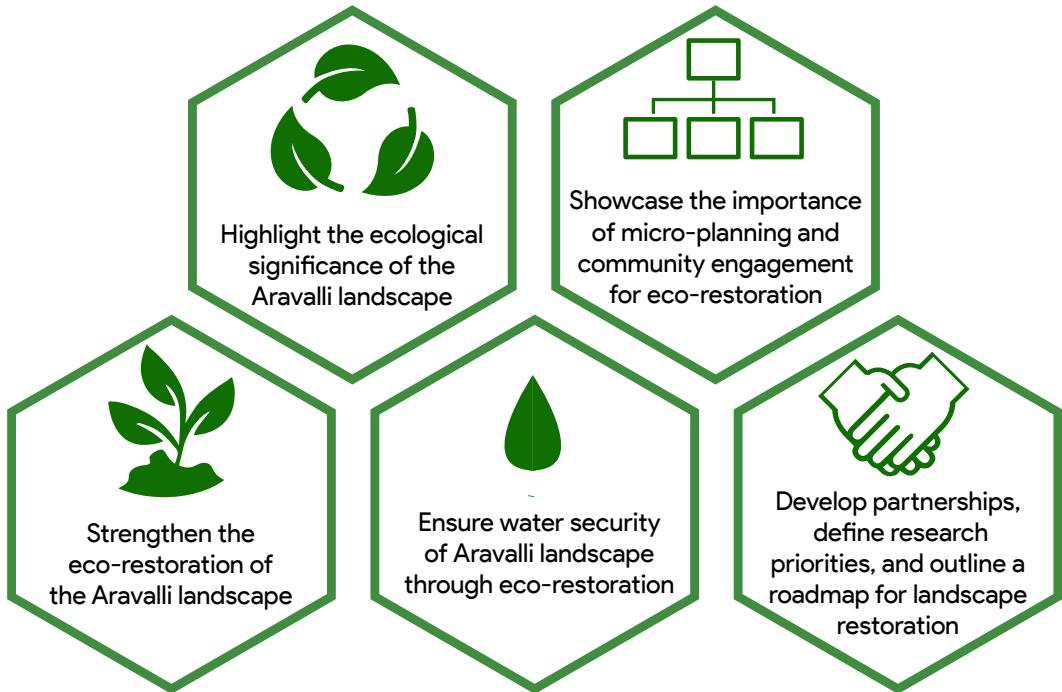
Sankala Foundation, in partnership with the Embassy of Denmark, and Gurugram municipal authorities, has also been working to address the issue of rainwater harvesting to promote water security and prevent urban flooding in Gurugram. Sankala Foundation has been carrying out an in-depth study of the geomorphological landscape and the rapid urbanization patterns of Gurugram.

National Conference on Eco-restoration of Aravalli Landscape

Strengthening Aravalli Green Wall

The Sankala Foundation has developed a multi-stakeholder eco-restoration model for the Aravalli region and is organising a national conference to disseminate findings, undertake stakeholder consultations, and develop a way forward for eco-restoration to strengthen the Green Wall. It will release the report based on its study at the conference.

Objectives of the Conference



About Aravalli Green Wall Project

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in partnership with four states has initiated the Aravalli Green Wall Project (AGWP) to combat land degradation and desertification by restoring over 6 million hectares across Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Delhi. The project involves planting native species on degraded forests, scrublands, and wastelands, rejuvenating water bodies, and promoting agroforestry and pasture development to support local livelihoods.

By improving ecological health, preventing the eastward spread of the Thar Desert, enhancing carbon sequestration and biodiversity, and reducing soil erosion and dust storms, the project is strengthening ecosystem services in the Aravallis. Implemented through collaboration among governments, forest departments, research institutions, civil society, and local communities, it is contributing to India's commitments under the UNCCD, CBD, and UNFCCC while reinforcing India's leadership in sustainable development.

Conference Themes

Session I

Ecological Significance of Aravalli Landscape

This session will highlight the Aravallis role in sustaining semi-arid ecosystems, regulating water, soil, and climate, and supporting biodiversity throughout north-west India. It will examine the landscape's ecological functions and why its restoration is critical for long-term environmental resilience.

Session III

Towards Water Security in Aravalli Landscape

This session will examine how eco-restoration of forests, grasslands, and hillock ecosystems in the Aravallis can enhance groundwater recharge, revive traditional water bodies, and strengthen natural watersheds. It will highlight pathways through which landscape restoration can secure long-term water availability for communities and urban centres in this water-stressed region.

Session II

Community Mobilisation and Micro-planning for Eco-restoration

This session will focus on the role of local communities and institutions in driving ecological restoration, with emphasis on micro-planning and the traditional conservation systems such as sacred groves, Orans, and culturally protected landscapes. It will discuss how social capital, community incentives, and long-term stewardship mechanisms can sustain restoration outcomes, while exploring convergence with government programmes to scale up community-led restoration efforts.

Session IV

Strengthening Aravalli Green Wall

This session will feature focused discussions based on eco-restoration approaches led by the MoEFCC and the State Forest Departments of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. The states will provide updates on the AGWP, outline planned future implementation activities, and explore partnership opportunities.



“It is widely known that the Aravalli range is one of the oldest on our planet, covering Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi. The past several years has brought to the fore several environmental challenges relating to this range, which our government is committed to mitigating. Our focus is to rejuvenate areas linked with this range. We are going to work with the respective local administrations and emphasize things such as improving water systems, curbing dust storms, stopping eastward expansion of the Thar Desert, and more.”

Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

(Announcement about Aravalli Green Wall Project on World Environment Day, 5 June, 2025)

Expected outcomes

Through collaborative interventions, the Sankala Foundation aims to support the Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) and state governments in their collective endeavour for the ecological restoration of the Aravallis, thereby promoting sustainable development in the region. The conference would set a rolling agenda to:

- ▶ Ensure water and food security, and biodiversity of the region.
- ▶ Provide a timely platform for all stakeholders – researchers, local bodies, international organisations, institutions, and government bodies who will put their collective mind for Eco-restoration of the landscape.
- ▶ Rejuvenate water bodies in the Aravalli region to ensure freshwater conservation and improved water security for communities.
- ▶ Enhance the quality of life and well-being of local communities while safeguarding the region’s ecological heritage.

About Sankala Foundation

The Sankala Foundation is a non-profit organisation established in 2022 under Section (8) of the Companies Act, 2013 of India. Our primary focus is to strengthen the knowledge base and promote dialogue among various stakeholders to foster initiatives that contribute to the sustainability of our planet. We are particularly committed to mitigating the effects of climate change and environmental disasters, with a strong focus on protecting and fostering vulnerable communities. We strive to contribute to the development of sustainable policies and practices, and to foster partnerships at all levels with governments, NGOs, the scientific community, and domain experts who share similar objectives. The Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability (SCCS) aims to advance knowledge and action to combat climate change and promote sustainability. The Centre focuses on building alliances with the government and NGOs, UN agencies, international organisations, scientific communities, and domain experts with shared objectives to create synergy and drive collective action.

Programme

| Time | Programme |
|-------------------|---|
| 10:00 - 11:00 hrs | Inaugural Session |
| 11:00 - 12:15 hrs | Session I: Ecological Significance of Aravalli Landscape |
| 12:15 - 12:30 hrs | Tea Break |
| 12:30 - 13:45 hrs | Session II: Community Mobilisation and Micro-planning for Eco-restoration |
| 13:45 - 14:30 hrs | Lunch Break |
| 14:30 - 15:45 hrs | Session III: Towards Water Security in Aravalli Landscape |
| 15:45 - 17:00 hrs | Session IV: Strengthening Aravalli Green Wall |
| 17:00 - 17:15 hrs | Valedictory Session: The Road Ahead |
| 17:15 hrs onwards | Tea |



Sankala Foundation Sankala Centre for Climate and Sustainability

414-416, 4th Floor, B – Block, Somdutt Chamber – I,
Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi – 110 066
Email: programmes@sankala.org



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