



Annual Report

Research for Impact **2025-26**



Sankala Foundation

Voice for a Sustainable Planet

“

It is a well-established scientific fact that where forests are denuded of trees, rains cease, where trees are planted rains are attracted and the volume of water received increases with the increase of vegetation.

”

**Mahatma Gandhi**

Young India, October 15, 1925



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01 About Sankala Foundation

Sankala Foundation is a non-profit organisation established in 2022 under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013, India. The Foundation works to strengthen the knowledge base and promote dialogue among diverse stakeholders to support initiatives that contribute to environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

Sankala Foundation is committed to addressing the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, with particular attention to protecting and supporting vulnerable communities. Through research, knowledge-driven advocacy, and collaborative engagement, the organisation aims to contribute to the development of sustainable policies and practices.

Our research focusses on challenges in the healthcare sector and seeks innovative solutions through new technologies and data-driven and evidence-based approaches. The Foundation also advocates safe drinking-water, sanitation, and

hygiene as the foundation of human health, socio-economic development, and dignity. We promote understanding of biodiversity's crucial roles and explore how values, rights and norms evolved by local communities over the years can take centre stage in decisions and policy-making to drive the transformative changes we need.

The Foundation believes in the power of partnerships and works closely with governments, non-governmental organisations, the scientific community, and domain experts to advance solutions that support a sustainable and resilient future.

The philosophy of Sankala is inspired by the idea of 'Sankalan', meaning the coming together of diverse elements such as knowledge, ideas, cultures, science, innovation, and entrepreneurship. This approach reflects the belief that collective action and shared knowledge are essential to addressing complex environmental challenges and creating lasting impact.

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

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.

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 of them is equally significant.

02 Advisory Board



Prof K VijayRaghavan

Prof K VijayRaghavan, a renowned molecular biologist, chairs the advisory board of Sankala Foundation. He served as Secretary of the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, from January 2013 to 2018. His distinguished contributions to science and policy earned him the prestigious position of Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, where he served from 2018 to 2022.

Prof Ashutosh Sharma



Prof Ashutosh Sharma, a Padma Shri awardee, is a distinguished scientist known for his contributions to nanoscience, nanotechnology, and soft matter research. He currently serves as the president of the Indian National Science Academy. He previously served as Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India (2015–2021), and as Institute Chair Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. His work has been widely recognized with several prestigious national and international awards.



Dr C N Pandey

Dr C N Pandey is a distinguished officer of the Indian Forest Service known for his contributions to forest conservation and environmental management. He served as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) in Gujarat and currently works as a Professor of Practice at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, focusing on environmental sustainability and natural resource management.

Dr Leena Srivastava



Dr Leena Srivastava is a distinguished expert in sustainable development and former vice chancellor of the TERI School of Advanced Studies, New Delhi. She previously served as executive director at The Energy and Resources Institute and as deputy director general at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Vienna. She has contributed significantly to global climate and sustainability initiatives, including as a coordinating lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report.



Mr Arun M Kumar

Mr Arun M Kumar is a global business leader, diplomat, and author with extensive experience across consulting, technology, entrepreneurship, and public service. He is a managing partner at Celesta Capital, a Silicon Valley-based deep technology venture capital firm. He previously served as Chairman and CEO of KPMG India and is currently on the board of Dr Reddy's Laboratories. He is also the author of *The Global Trade Paradigm*, a book on international business and global value chains.

Mr Ashok Malik



Mr Ashok Malik, a Padma Shri awardee, is a noted policy expert with over three decades of experience across government, media, and strategic affairs. He previously served as policy advisor and additional secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (2019–2022), and as press secretary to the president of India. He is currently chair of the India subsidiary of The Asia Group, advising on policy, international business, and strategic affairs.

03 Executive Summary

The 2025–26 period marked a year of strategic advancement for Sankala Foundation. We focused on four pivotal developments: eco-restoring the Aravalli landscape, securing long-term rural water sustainability, aligning India's tea sector with global safety standards, and elevating national discourse on ageing and women's leadership.

Each of these areas reflects a critical transition point from degradation to restoration in fragile ecosystems, from access to reliability in water systems, from compliance gaps to market readiness in agriculture, and from under-recognised demographics to active economic participation.

Our work this year was anchored in addressing these shifts with targeted interventions, combining technical expertise, policy engagement, and practical implementation, to ensure that progress is not only visible but sustained over time.

Eco-restoration of the Aravallis

The Aravallis are much more than a geographical feature; it is a vital life-support system for North India, standing as a final shield against the expanding desert. The pilot spans across four villages in the Gurugram Aravalli belt: Sakatpur, Shikohpur, Naurangpur, and Gairatpur Bas. Utilising advanced geospatial mapping and native seed-bombing techniques, we partnered with the Haryana Forest Department and the Embassy of Denmark to implement a landscape-led model that revives native biodiversity.

To deepen this mission, we hosted the national conference 'Eco-Restoration of the Aravalli Landscape,' graced by Hon'ble Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Mr Bhupender Yadav, Mr Rao Narbir Singh, Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forests & Wildlife, Government of Haryana, Mr Sushil Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Forests & Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, among others.

Water Security

As India achieves significant progress in expanding piped water access under the Jal Jeevan Mission, the focus is now shifting from infrastructure creation to long-term system sustainability. Our high-level dialogue, in collaboration with UNOPS India, 'Assured Clean Piped Water to All, brought attention to the next phase of water security, strengthening service delivery through robust local governance, improved monitoring systems, and sustained functionality of infrastructure.

The event was graced by Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, H E Mr Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador of Denmark to India, among others. Building on our policy prescriptions from the previous year, several of these critical components have found reflection in the rollout of JJM 2.0, marking an important shift toward citizen-centric water management. It is expected to significantly enhance water security, improve public health outcomes, and strengthen the participation of women, particularly in water governance and service delivery.

Sustainable and Safe Tea Production

Small tea growers form the foundation of India's tea sector, yet they face increasing pressure to meet evolving global standards on safety, traceability, and sustainability. Building on our engagement in Assam and West Bengal last year, Sankala continued to support the transition toward safer and export-aligned production systems. A key milestone this year was the development of the Practitioner's Handbook, which translates complex international safety standards and pesticide regulations into clear, locally accessible guidance.

The handbook was launched at the National Conference on 'Safe Tea Production: Policy, Compliance, and Sustainable Practices,' in the presence of Hon'ble Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Mr Piyush Goyal. By bridging the gap between global compliance requirements and field-level practices, this initiative strengthens small growers' ability to access international markets while promoting environmentally responsible cultivation.

Honoring the Living Wisdom of Tribal Communities

India's conservation landscape is deeply enriched by the ecological knowledge embedded within its tribal traditions. We continued to bring this knowledge into sharper national focus through the 4th edition of 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre,' an art exhibition that positions tribal perspectives within mainstream environmental discourse.

This effort was further advanced through the national conference on 'Tribal Arts & India's Conservation Ethos,' graced by Hon'ble Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. By foregrounding these practices and exploring their alignment with modern science, Sankala is contributing to a more inclusive and culturally rooted approach to conservation. This initiative supports the broader vision of strengthening the orange economy, recognizing cultural heritage not only as a repository of knowledge but also as a driver of sustainable livelihoods and creative enterprise.

Dignity and Inclusion in an Ageing India

India's demographic transition is bringing the question of ageing into sharper national focus. With the elderly population projected to grow significantly by 2050, there is an increasing need to move beyond welfare-based approaches toward frameworks that enable participation, productivity, and dignity. We advanced the national discourse on productive ageing and the silver economy, positioning ageing as an area of opportunity rather than dependency.

This was anchored by the national conference, 'Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses'" graced by distinguished leaders including Dr V K Paul, Member, NITI Aayog; Dr Kiran Bedi, Former Lt Governor of Puducherry; Justice V Ramasubramanian, Chairperson, NHRC India; and Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, among others. The conference served as a platform to examine emerging challenges and policy responses. It also marked the release of the status report, 'Ageing in India: Challenges and Opportunities,' contributing to a more informed and forward-looking policy dialogue on ageing in India.

A Moonshot for Women's Leadership

Advancing women's leadership remains central to building a more inclusive and forward-looking economy. Sankala Foundation deepened its focus on understanding and addressing the structural barriers that limit women's participation in decision-making roles, particularly across STEM, education, research, and leadership ecosystems. Through the national conference on Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future, we examined gaps in access, representation, and career progression, with an emphasis on identifying actionable pathways to accelerate women's presence in positions of influence. This initiative aimed to move beyond broad advocacy toward more targeted, sector-specific solutions that can enable sustained change.

Complementing this, Sankala continued its work on women's economic empowerment within industrial ecosystems. In the textile sector, we studied an earn-and-learn model in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu to understand how skill development, income generation, and workplace integration can be effectively combined. These models offer practical and scalable approaches to financial independence, particularly for women entering or re-entering the workforce. Together, these efforts reflect a dual strategy, strengthening pathways to leadership while expanding access to economic opportunity. By addressing both ends of the spectrum, Sankala aims to contribute to a more enabling environment where women can participate, progress, and lead across sectors.

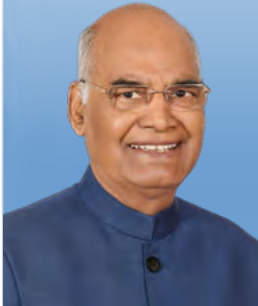
Our Strategic Path Forward: Convergence in Action

Over a period of last four years, we moved from basic research to active policy advocacy. Sankala Foundation continues to position itself as a bridge between intent and impact, translating research, dialogue, and partnerships into pathways for tangible change. In 2025–26, our engagement with over 300 stakeholders and 25 institutions enabled us to move beyond isolated insights toward shaping integrated, actionable roadmaps across sectors.

This year reinforced the value of actionable research not as an end in itself, but as a tool to inform policy direction, strengthen implementation frameworks, and support scalable solutions. Whether through influencing restoration approaches in the Aravallis, contributing to the evolving framework of water security under JJM 2.0, enabling compliance in the tea sector, or advancing national conversations on ageing and women's leadership, our work has focused on ensuring that ideas translate into outcomes. As we look ahead, our principle of Sankalan (union/coming together of forces) will continue to guide our approach, not merely as a convergence of ideas, but as an alignment of priorities, partnerships, and execution. The emphasis will remain on deepening impact within identified focus areas, strengthening institutional collaborations, and supporting frameworks that are both resilient and adaptive.

Elevating the Discourse with Thought Leadership

In 2025-26, Sankala Foundation solidified its position as a premier forum for research on issues of climate change, wildlife conservation, public health and women leadership by convening distinguished personalities and leading experts to address the sector’s most pressing challenges. Our flagship events served as critical platforms for knowledge exchange, driving impactful dialogues. We were privileged to host distinguished voices, visionaries who brought unparalleled insights to our community, offering actionable frameworks for the future. The presence of high-calibre expertise not only enriched the Foundation’s collective understanding but directly informed strategic initiatives. By bridging the gap between theory and execution, these engagements strengthened our network and set a benchmark for future collaborative progress.

			
Shri Ram Nath Kovind Former, President of India	Mr Bhupender Yadav Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change	Mr Gajendra Singh Shekhawat Union Minister of Culture & Tourism	Mr Piyush Goyal Union Minister for Commerce & Industry
Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre (Inaugurated the exhibition)	National Conference on Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape: Strengthening the Aravalli Green Wall (Chief Guest)	National Conference on Tribal arts and India's Conservation Ethos : Living Wisdom (Chief Guest)	National Conference on Safe Tea Production: Policy, Compliance and Sustainable Practices (Chief Guest)
9 October 2025	14 January 2026	10 October 2025	28 November 2025



Justice V Ramasubramanian

Chairperson, NHRC India and
Former Judge, Supreme Court
of India

National Conference on Tribal arts
and India's Conservation Ethos :
Living Wisdom

(Chief Guest - Valedictory Session)

10 October 2025



Mr Rao Narbir Singh

Hon'ble Minister for
Environment, Forests & Wildlife,
Government of Haryana

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

(Guest of Honour)

14 January 2026



Ms Vijaya Bharati Sayani

Hon'ble Member, NHRC

National Conference on Women
Leadership Moonshot: Shaping
the Future

(Key Speaker - Inaugural Session)

2 May 2025



Dr V K Paul

Member, NITI Aayog

National Conference on Women
Leadership Moonshot: Shaping
the Future

(Chair & Keynote Speaker)

2 May 2025



Mr Bharat Lal

Secretary General & CEO,
NHRC India

National Conference on Assured
Clean Piped Water to All: The Road
Ahead

(Keynote Speaker)

12 December 2025



Mr Amitabh Kant

G20 Sherpa & Former CEO,
NITI Aayog

National Conference on Women
Leadership Moonshot: Shaping
the Future

(Chief Guest)

2 May 2025



Dr Kiran Bedi

Former Lieutenant Governor of
Puducherry

National Conference on Women
Leadership Moonshot: Shaping
the Future

(Distinguished Speaker)

2 May 2025



Mr V Srinivas

Secretary, DARPG and
Department of Pensions and
Pensioners Welfare, Govt of India

National Conference on Ageing in
India: Emerging Realities, Evolving
Responses

(Distinguished Speaker)

1 August 2025



Ms Debashree Mukherjee

Secretary, Department of Water Resources,
River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation,
Ministry of Jal Shakti

National Conference on Women
Leadership Moonshot: Shaping
the Future

(Distinguished Speaker)

2 May 2025



Ashok K K Meena

Secretary, Department of
Drinking Water and Sanitation,
Ministry of Jal Shakti

National Conference on Women
Leadership Moonshot: Shaping
the Future

(Distinguished Speaker)

2 May 2025



Mr Rajit Punhani

CEO, Food Safety and Standards
Authority of India (FSSAI)

National Conference on Safe Tea
Production: Policy, Compliance and
Sustainable Practices

(Inaugural Address)

28 November 2025



Mr Sushil Kumar Awasthi

Director General of Forests & Special
Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest
and Climate Change

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

(Session Chair)

14 January 2026



Ms Archana Verma

Additional Secretary & Mission Director,
National Water Mission, Ministry of Jal Shakti

National Conference on Assured
Clean Piped Water to All: The Road
Ahead

(Session Chair)

12 December 2025



Jaipal Singh Saxena

Principal Chief Conservator of
Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden,
Government of Gujarat

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

(Distinguished Speake)

14 January 2026



**H E Mr Rasmus
Abildgaard Kristensen**

Ambassador of Denmark to India

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

(Special Address)

14 January 2026



Dr C N Pandey

Former PCCF, Gujarat State
Forest Department

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

(Session Chair)

14 January 2026



Dr S P Yadav

Director General, International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

National Conference on Tribal arts and India's Conservation Ethos : Living Wisdom

(Distinguished Speaker)

10 October 2025



Prof Amitabh Pande

Director, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, (IGRMS) Bhopal

National Conference on Tribal arts and India's Conservation Ethos : Living Wisdom

(Distinguished Speaker)

10 October 2025



Mr Ramesh Pandey

Additional Director General of Forests (Wildlife), MoEFCC

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

(Distinguished Speaker)

14 January 2026



Mr Lim Sang Woo

Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) and Minister at the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in New Delhi

National Conference on Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses

(Distinguished Speaker)

1 August 2025



Mr Deepak Bagla

Former MD & CEO, Invest India

National Conference on Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future

(Special Address)

2 May 2025



Ms Cynthia McCaffrey

UNICEF India Representative

National Conference on Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future

(Special Address)

2 May 2025



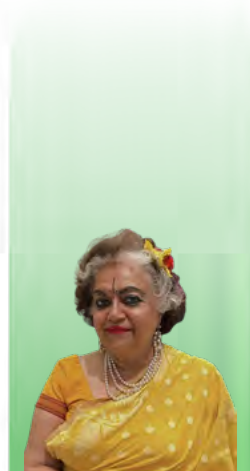
Mamta Saikia

Chief Executive Officer of Bharti Airtel Foundation

National Conference on Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future

(Distinguished Speaker)

2 May 2025



Dr Alka Pande

Art Historian

National Conference on Tribal arts and India's Conservation Ethos : Living Wisdom

(Distinguished Speaker)

10 October 2025

04 Key Highlights / Our Impact

20

State governments engaged

4

Union ministers present

7

National Conferences & Dialogues

Across environment, water, agriculture, eco-restoration, women leadership

200+

Stakeholders Engaged

Policymakers, experts, and practitioners

6

Diverse Thematic Areas Covered

Driving multi-sector sustainability dialogue

100+

Institutions Engaged

Government, academia, industry, and civil society

10+

Publications Released

Books, reports, practitioner handbooks and magazines

1,000+

Strong Audience Presence

Attendees at events

500+

Media mentions

100+

Distinguished speakers

05 Focus Areas / Themes

Environment and Ecosystem Restoration

Aravalli Eco-restoration Project: The Aravalli Range, one of the oldest fold mountain systems in the world, stretches over 670 kms across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi. Formed during the Proterozoic era, this ancient landscape supports a diverse range of ecosystems, including tropical dry deciduous forests, rocky terrains, and semi-arid plains.

Ecologically, the Aravallis play a critical role as a natural barrier and life-support system for the National Capital Region (NCR) and the Indo-Gangetic plains. They provide essential ecosystem services such as groundwater recharge, air purification, soil stabilisation, and carbon sequestration, while also sustaining biodiversity and traditional agro-pastoral livelihoods.

Over the past two decades, several parts of the Aravalli region have experienced significant loss of forest cover, weakening the region's ecological resilience and its ability to support both human and natural systems. In response to these challenges, Sankala Foundation proposed a comprehensive eco-

restoration initiative in the Aravalli belt of Gurugram district, particularly across four villages: Sakatpur, Shikohpur, Naurangpur, and Gairatpur Bas.

This project was undertaken in collaboration with the Embassy of Denmark in India under the India–Denmark Green Strategic Partnership, and with the support of the Haryana Forest Department. It aims to demonstrate how international collaboration, scientific planning, and community participation can come together to restore degraded landscapes and advance climate resilience.

The project adopted an integrated, landscape-based restoration approach that combines ecological science with community-led governance. It began with detailed baseline assessments to understand the ecological and socio-economic conditions of the area, followed by targeted interventions and long-term monitoring. The strategic framework focused on key thematic pillars, including restoration techniques, community participation, capacity building, conservation technologies, and the



Team Sankala conducted on-ground assessments at the Aravalli site, Gurugram

integration of traditional knowledge systems. This ensured that restoration efforts are both context-specific and sustainable. At the implementation level, the initiative combined macro-level planning with detailed micro plans tailored to individual village contexts such as Gairatpur Bas, Shikohpur, Sakatpur, and Naurangpur.

Interventions include soil and water conservation measures like contour trenching and bunding, construction of bioswales, check dams, and percolation ponds to enhance groundwater recharge, and the removal of invasive species followed by reforestation using climate-resilient native flora. Additional efforts focused on restoring traditional water bodies, strengthening wildlife corridors, and developing blue-green infrastructure to improve ecological connectivity.

Equally central to the initiative was community engagement and livelihood enhancement. By promoting nature-based enterprises, pastureland restoration, and eco-tourism initiatives, the project aimed to create sustainable income opportunities while reducing pressure on forest resources.

Saraswati Project: The project focusses on the integrated development and promotion of the various ecological, historical and mythological sites in the districts of Kaithal and Kurukshetra, Haryana as natural and cultural heritage sites. It aims to restore ecologically fragile forest patches while preserving their cultural and historical significance. These areas are important habitats for diverse flora and fauna and also play a key role in groundwater recharge, climate



Team Sankala during a field visit, engaging in site observations and data collection

resilience, and supporting local livelihoods. The project highlighted the need for a unified approach that combines ecological restoration, cultural heritage conservation, and sustainable tourism development.

The project envisions creating a balanced ‘Green-Blue-Cultural’ framework that integrates biodiversity conservation, water ecosystem management, and promotion of heritage linked to the ancient Saraswati River. Overall, the project sought to create a self-sustaining model that promotes conservation, supports local communities, and strengthens ecological and cultural tourism in the region.



Promoting nature-based enterprises, pastureland restoration, and eco-tourism initiatives, the project aimed to create sustainable income opportunities while reducing pressure on forest resources

Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihoods



A tea plucker at work in an Assam tea estate

Sankala strengthened its engagement with sustainable agriculture and livelihoods through a focused intervention in the tea sector. Small Tea Growers form the backbone of India's tea economy, yet they continue to face mounting challenges arising from climate variability, rising pest incidences, and volatile market conditions. In this context, Sankala's work on sustainable tea farming has sought to promote environmentally responsible practices while enhancing the resilience and economic security of smallholders.

Building on the groundwork laid in 2024- 25, it successfully completed its study on Sustainable Tea Growing Systems, with a specific focus on Assam and West Bengal. While India remains a globally significant tea producer and a key source of livelihoods, the sector is increasingly shaped by regulatory, environmental, and market pressures, particularly in relation to pesticide use and compliance with food safety standards.

A study was undertaken in response to persistent concerns around the rejection of tea consignments in the domestic market due to pesticide residues and the absence of clearly defined Maximum Residue Limits for certain compounds. Sankala undertook extensive field research across 11 tea growing districts

in Assam and West Bengal. The study involved detailed engagement with Small Tea Growers, Bought Leaf Factories, Tea Estates, and leading research institutions, including the Tea Research Association, Kolkata, and the Tocklai Tea Research Institute, Jorhat. This multi-stakeholder approach enabled a nuanced understanding of region-specific



Team Sankala in discussion with small tea growers across West Bengal and Assam

pest management practices, pesticide usage patterns, and systemic gaps in extension services and regulatory clarity.

The findings have been consolidated into a comprehensive research report that provides evidence-based insights into the impact of pesticide regulations on Small Tea Growers, alongside practical and scalable policy recommendations.

The report underscores the need for harmonised regulatory frameworks, improved access to approved and safe inputs, and strengthened extension systems to support informed decision-making at the farm level. As a key outcome, Sankala developed and released a handbook on Sustainable Tea Growing

Systems, designed as a practical and user-friendly guide for Small Tea Growers. The handbook translates scientific knowledge into actionable practices, promoting safer pest management approaches while supporting compliance with food safety standards.

To further advance policy dialogue, Sankala convened a national level conference on sustainable tea production, bringing together policymakers, industry leaders, researchers, and practitioners.

The initiative reinforces the importance of aligning sustainability with livelihoods, ensuring that Small Tea Growers are supported in transitioning towards practices that are both economically viable and environmentally responsible.

Tribal Empowerment and Cultural Knowledge

India's tribal communities stand as enduring custodians of the nation's cultural heritage and traditional knowledge systems, with histories that trace back to prehistoric times. Their identities, practices, and belief systems are deeply embedded in the ecological and cultural fabric of the country. Recognising their significance, the Constitution of India guarantees the protection of their fundamental rights and provides special provisions to safeguard their social, cultural, and economic identities.

These measures underscore the importance of

preserving the ethos of tribal communities while ensuring their inclusion in the broader framework of national development.

A significant proportion of India's tribal population resides in and around forested areas, which serve not only as their homes but also as sources of livelihood, culture, and spirituality. With over 1,70,000 villages located near forests and more than 300 million people dependent on forest resources, the relationship between tribal communities and nature is both intimate and indispensable. However,



Overview of the art exhibition titled 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre' on display at the Atrium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi



Sankala Foundation organised a cultural evening during the art exhibition titled 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre' at the Amphitheatre, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The cultural evening featured a mesmerizing traditional performance by the Bastar Band from Chhattisgarh, showcasing the rich heritage of tribal music and folk dance through authentic indigenous instruments.

increasing pressure on natural resources and overlapping human and wildlife habitats have led to challenges, including human-wildlife conflicts and environmental degradation. Sankala Foundation recognises the importance of this ancient wisdom and seeks to preserve and promote it through innovative and inclusive initiatives. One such initiative, *Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre*, an annual art exhibition, brings to light the deep connection between tribal communities and their natural environment.

Organised in collaboration with NTCA, the initiative uses art as a medium to tell stories of coexistence, resilience, and conservation. By supporting tribal artists and artisans, the Foundation enables them to showcase their traditional art forms on wider platforms, like the Venice Biennale, ensuring fair recognition and economic returns. Proceeds from the sale of artworks are directly transferred to the artists, promoting financial independence and dignity.

Furthermore, capacity-building and skill development programmes conducted in collaboration with prominent cultural institutions like the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Center equipped artists with the tools and exposure needed to refine their craft and



Tribal artists engaging in dialogue and exchange during the exhibition

expand their reach. Looking ahead, the Foundation aims to elevate these efforts to an international platform, positioning tribal communities as global ambassadors of India's enduring conservation ethos and cultural richness.

Ageing and Demographic Change

India is at the cusp of a significant demographic transition marked by increasing life expectancy and declining fertility rates. This shift is leading to a rapid rise in the elderly population, with projections indicating that by 2050, nearly 20% of Indians, over 347 million people, will be above the age of 60. While this reflects progress in healthcare and development, it also brings complex challenges related to healthcare access, financial security, social inclusion, and infrastructure preparedness.

Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring that ageing in India is not accompanied by vulnerability but by dignity and well-being. The realities faced by India's elderly population are multifaceted. Many older persons experience financial insecurity due to limited savings, lack of formal pension systems, and high levels of economic dependency.

Healthcare needs are also intensifying, with a growing prevalence of chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and cognitive decline. Sankala Foundation approaches ageing through this balanced lens of challenge and opportunity. Its work focuses on building awareness, generating evidence, and advocating for inclusive policies that support the holistic well-being of older persons.

Drawing insights from sources such as the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI), it provides a data-driven understanding of the needs and realities of senior citizens. In December 2024, Sankala Foundation, in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission, organised a national seminar titled 'Ageing in India: Actionable Solutions' in New Delhi. This platform brought together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to discuss critical gaps and identify actionable strategies.



Active ageing in action, fostering connection, curiosity, and well-being across generations. Photograph from AdobeStock

The deliberations emphasised the need for stronger healthcare systems, expanded social protection measures, and the creation of age-friendly environments that enable independence and participation. Taking the inputs from this seminar, a National Conference on Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses was organised in August 2025, to further develop a policy on ageing.

Through these efforts, Sankala Foundation is contributing to the development of an inclusive ecosystem where older persons are supported, respected, and empowered. By fostering dialogue, strengthening policy frameworks, and promoting innovative solutions, the Foundation seeks to ensure that ageing in India is characterised not by dependency, but by dignity, security, and purpose.

Our work focuses on building awareness, generating evidence, and advocating for inclusive policies that support the holistic well-being of older persons

Women Leadership and Empowerment



Young women employees of KPR Mill Limited on the production floor

Gender empowerment is central to building an inclusive and equitable society. In India, despite progress in education and employment, women's participation in the workforce and their representation in leadership positions remain limited. Addressing this gap requires not only expanding access to opportunities but also creating systems that enable women to grow, lead, and influence decision-making.

Sankala Foundation's work in this area focuses on strengthening pathways for economic empowerment while advancing the broader agenda of women's leadership, in alignment with the priorities outlined in the G20 New Delhi Declaration. A key component of this effort has been the study of the "earn and learn" model implemented in a textile mill of Coimbatore, where a large proportion of the workforce comprises young women from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

This model integrates employment with education and skill development, allowing women to earn a stable income while continuing to build their

knowledge and capabilities. It addresses critical barriers such as financial constraints, limited access to higher education, and socio-cultural restrictions that often hinder women's participation in formal employment.

Through this approach, women gain not only financial independence but also valuable technical and life skills. The structured work environment fosters discipline, confidence, and a sense of agency, enabling them to take greater control over their personal and professional trajectories. Over time, many women are able to transition into more skilled roles, improving their long-term employability and economic security.

The Sankala team conducted field visits to understand its strengths, identify areas for improvement, and explore how such integrated approaches can be adapted and scaled across different sectors. Sankala's approach underscores the strong link between economic empowerment and leadership development. When women have access to income, education, and skills, they are better



Team Sankala at a production unit of KPR Mill Limited, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

positioned to exercise agency and pursue leadership opportunities. At the same time, increasing women's presence in leadership roles helps shape more inclusive institutions and policies, creating a virtuous cycle of empowerment. In pursuance of this, Sankala organised the 'Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future', a national conference in May

2025. Through its work, Sankala Foundation aims to contribute to a future where women are not only active participants in the workforce but also leaders who drive change. By aligning local interventions with global priorities, the Foundation is helping to build a more inclusive, equitable, and forward-looking society.

Integrated Water Management

Water security continued to be a central pillar of Sankala Foundation's work in 2025–26, with a strategic emphasis on addressing emerging urban challenges while advancing equitable and sustainable access to water.

Rapid urbanisation, increasing climate variability, and inadequate drainage infrastructure have significantly heightened flood risks in cities such as Gurugram, Haryana. These evolving vulnerabilities underscore the urgent need for integrated, forward-looking, and climate-responsive approaches to urban water management.

In response, Sankala initiated a comprehensive project on urban flood and rainwater management, aimed at informing resilient and context-specific planning frameworks. Currently underway,



Team Sankala during a field visit to Gurugram with Dr Subhash Yadav, Chief Conservator of Forests, Haryana Forest Department and Ms Frederikke Benche, Counsellor, Water, Environment & Climate, Embassy of Denmark in India



Urban flooding resilience project site featuring the central water body in Gurugram, Haryana

the project adopts a systems-based approach that integrates hydrological analysis, land-use assessments, and multi-stakeholder engagement.

The initial phase has focused on identifying and mapping flood-prone hotspots, analysing the dynamics of urban flooding, and assessing critical gaps in infrastructure design, planning processes, and institutional coordination.

This evidence-based approach is intended to build a deeper understanding of how urban growth patterns and climate pressures interact to exacerbate flood risks.

Complementing its work on urban water systems, Sankala also engaged in advancing the discourse on rural water security. The Foundation convened a national conference titled “Assured Clean Piped Water to All: The Road Ahead,” which brought together policymakers, practitioners, and sector experts to reflect on the future of India’s rural water transition under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

The conference marked an important shift in focus—from expanding infrastructure coverage to ensuring the quality, reliability, and sustainability of water service delivery.

Discussions at the conference highlighted the need for stronger institutional frameworks, enhanced community participation, and the use of technology to improve monitoring and accountability.



Team Sankala at the project site in Najafgarh, Gurugram

Participants emphasised that achieving long-term water security requires moving beyond coverage-driven metrics towards outcomes that prioritise functionality, water quality, and equitable access.

Through these combined efforts, Sankala Foundation is contributing to a more holistic understanding of water security, one that bridges urban and rural contexts, integrates risk management with resource optimisation, and supports sustainable development.

06 Conferences and Exhibition

Gender Leadership and Empowerment

Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future



(Left to right) Distinguished speakers at the inaugural session of National conference on Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future, Ms Cynthia McCaffrey, Country Representative, UNICEF India; Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, Mr Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa & former CEO, NITI Aayog, and Smt Vijaya Bharati Sayani, Hon'ble Member, NHRC India

India is at a pivotal inflection point in its journey of growth and transformation. The nation stands as a beacon of peace, stability, opportunity, sustained progress, and robust economic development.

The Government is committed to ensuring that no one is left behind in this transformative journey. In this endeavour, women are playing a crucial role, with increasing opportunities and an enabling environment being created to empower them to take on leadership positions across all walks of life. India is steadily moving towards the vision of women-led development, where women are not just participants but key drivers of national progress.

On May 2, 2025, Sankala Foundation organised a one-day National Conference on 'Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future.' The event brought together thought leaders from diverse fields, including policymakers, senior government officials,

scientists, entrepreneurs, innovators, academicians, and social leaders, to share their insights and deliberate on a bold 'moonshot' vision for advancing women's leadership. The initiative aimed to inspire, empower, and support women to assume leadership roles while addressing systemic barriers and promoting gender equality in decision-making spaces.

Key Outcomes

- Strengthened dialogue on gender equality and leadership inclusion.
- Increased awareness of challenges and opportunities for women leaders.
- Encouragement of mentorship and networking initiatives.
- Reinforced commitment to advancing women's leadership across sectors.



(Left to right) Ms Chhavi Rajawat, Former Sarpanch, Soda, Rajasthan; Ms Kanta Singh, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women, India; Ms Debashree Mukherjee Secretary, Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti; Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General and CEO, National Human Rights Commission; Mr Ashok K K Meena, Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti and Mr Sanjiv Singh, Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industries and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry



(Left to right) Dr Aarti Gupta, National Head, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), Policy and Advocacy; Ms Gopika Pant, Founder and Managing Director, Indian Law Partners; Ms Seema Arora, Deputy Directory General, Confederation of Indian Industry, and Chief Executive Officer of CII Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development, as well as CII Centre for Women Leadership; Mr Deepak Bagla, Former MD and CEO, Invest India, and Ms Vaishali Nigam Sinha, Co-Founder & Chairperson - Sustainability, ReNew and Founding Chair, ReNew Foundation

Ageing and Demographic Change

National Conference on Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses



Release of the status report 'Ageing in India: Challenges and Opportunities' at the National Conference on Ageing: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses. (Left to right): Mr Devendra Kumar Nim, Director, Programme, Sankala Foundation; Dr Vinod K Paul, Member, Health, Nutrition and Education, NITI Aayog; Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission, India; Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General and Chief Executive Officer, National Human Rights Commission, India and Dr Malvika Kaul, Director, Sankala Foundation

India is witnessing a steady rise in its elderly population due to increased life expectancy and demographic transitions. This shift presents both opportunities and challenges in areas such as healthcare, social protection, and community support systems. Ensuring quality healthcare, financial security, and social inclusion for older persons is essential for building an inclusive and equitable society.

Sankala Foundation organised the “National Conference on Ageing in India: Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses” on 21 November 2025 at India Habitat Centre. The conference brought together policymakers, researchers, healthcare professionals, and civil society organisations to discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with India’s rapidly ageing population.

A status report ‘Ageing in India Challenges and Opportunities’ was released at the conference. This status report highlights global and national trends in population ageing and their growing impact. It examines the economic, health, and social challenges

faced by the elderly in India. It reviews existing laws, policies, and key government initiatives supporting older persons.

It also offers expert recommendations, using LASI data, to build an inclusive and age-friendly ecosystem in India. The event focused on evolving policy responses, strengthening social security systems, and promoting inclusive approaches to ensure the wellbeing, dignity, and active participation of elderly citizens in society.

Key Outcomes

- Strengthened dialogue on ageing-related policy and programme interventions.
- Recognition of the need for integrated healthcare and social support systems.
- Identification of community-based models for elderly care.
- Enhanced collaboration among stakeholders working on ageing and social inclusion.



(Left to right) prof Manoj Yadava, Director General, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India; Dr Kiran Bedi, IPS (Retd.), Former Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry; Mr Amitabh Kant, G2o Sherpa, Government of India and Former CEO, NITI Aayog; Mr V Srinivas, Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India; and Prof T V Sekher, Professor and Head, Department of Population and Development, International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)



(Left to right) Dr Arun S Nair, Director (Research), Sankala Foundation; Mr Amarjeet Sinha, IAS (Retd.), Member, Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) and Former Advisor to the Prime Minister; Mr Amit Yadav, IAS, Chairman, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC); Mr. Vijay Nehra, IAS, Secretary, Science and Technology Department, Government of Gujarat; Mr Mathew Cherian, Chairperson, CARE India and Global Ambassador, HelpAge International; and Mr Jaydeep Biswas, Chief of Policy, UNFPA India



The status report 'Ageing in India Challenges and Opportunities' highlights global and national trends in population ageing and their growing impact

Tribal Empowerment and Cultural Knowledge

Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre



Former Hon'ble President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, being taken on a curatorial walk by Ms Divya Singh Rathore in the presence of Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India and Mr Devendra Kumar Nim, Director, Sankala Foundation

The tribal communities in India are guardians of the country's traditional knowledge and cultural heritage. As ancient as this land they are, their values are deeply interwoven into the country's ecological and cultural fabric.

The imperative of protecting their rights and their social, cultural and economic identities as recognised by the constitution is incumbent upon us. Besides the legal guarantees, the Government of India's commitment to improve the lives of these communities through welfare schemes such as Van

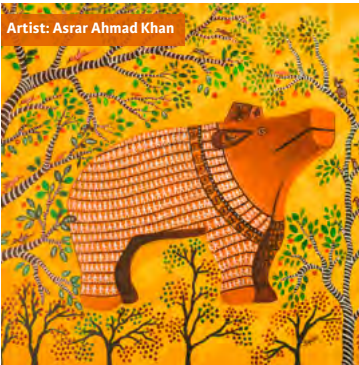
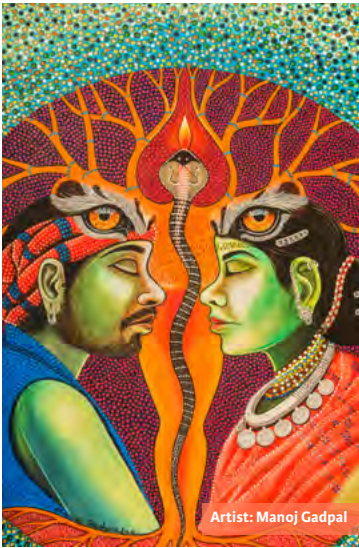
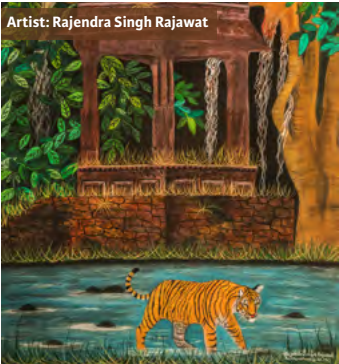
Dhan Yojana and economic empowerment through the establishment of Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) is conspicuous.

As part of this continuing endeavour, the Sankala Foundation and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), with support from the National Human Rights Commission, India, and the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) organise an annual exhibition entitled Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre. Sankala Foundation is



The exhibition brings together tribal artists from across India and showcases their work in celebration of the deep, ancestral connection between tribal communities and nature

Glimpses of the art work displayed at the art exhibition ‘Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre’, (9-12 October,2026)





Group photograph of artists and team Sankala with Former Hon'ble President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind, Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General and CEO, NHRC India, Dr S P Yadav, Director General, IBCA, Mr Amitabh Pande, Director, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, among others

a non- profit organisation dedicated to mitigating the impact of climate change and promoting sustainability.

The exhibition brings together tribal artists from across India and showcases their work in celebration of the deep, ancestral connection between tribal communities and nature. The vibrant paintings and traditional art forms offer the visitors a unique lens into how these communities live in harmony with forests and wildlife.

Key Outcomes

- Showcased diverse tribal art traditions from across India's forest landscapes.
- Created opportunities for direct engagement between tribal artists and the public.
- Promoted cultural heritage, conservation awareness, and sustainable livelihoods.
- Strengthened the platform of Silent Conversation as a national initiative celebrating tribal wisdom.

National Conference on Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos: Living Wisdom

India's tribal communities have historically maintained a close relationship with forests, wildlife, and natural ecosystems. Their art forms, such as painting, storytelling, music, and craft, reflect ecological knowledge that has been preserved across generations.

In the face of biodiversity loss and climate challenges, these traditions provide valuable insights into sustainable living and environmental stewardship.

Recognising and promoting tribal arts, therefore, plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage while reinforcing conservation values.

India's tribal communities have historically maintained a close relationship with forests, wildlife, and natural ecosystems. Their art forms, such as painting, storytelling, music, and craft, reflect ecological knowledge that has been preserved across generations. In the face of biodiversity loss and



climate challenges, these traditions provide valuable insights into sustainable living and environmental stewardship. Recognising and promoting tribal arts, therefore, plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage while reinforcing conservation values.

Shekhawat, Union Cabinet Minister of Culture and Tourism, brought together policymakers, tribal artists, scholars, conservation practitioners, and cultural experts to highlight the deep connection between tribal traditions, cultural heritage, and environmental conservation.

The event served as a platform to recognise the ecological wisdom embedded in tribal art forms and cultural practices. Through dialogue and knowledge exchange, the conference explored how local traditions can contribute to strengthening India's conservation ethos and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Key Outcomes

- Increased recognition of local knowledge systems in conservation discourse.
- Greater awareness about tribal arts as carriers of ecological wisdom.
- Strengthened collaboration between artists, researchers, and conservation institutions.
- Identification of opportunities to support cultural preservation and sustainable livelihoods for tribal communities.



Panelists at the National Conference on Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos: Living Wisdom (A Dialogue on Heritage, Culture and Conservation) (left to right) Dr S P Yadav, Director General, International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA); Shri Justice V Ramasubramanian, Hon'ble Chairperson, NHRC, India; Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, Government of India; Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General and CEO, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India; and Prof Amitabh Pande, Director, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), Ministry of Culture

Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihoods

National Conference on Safe Tea Production: Policy, Compliance and Sustainable Practices

India is one of the world's largest producers and consumers of tea, and the sector plays a vital role in supporting rural livelihoods and agricultural economies. In recent years, the growing role of Small Tea Growers (STGs) has significantly expanded tea production across the country. However, challenges related to pesticide usage, compliance with safety standards, and sustainable farming practices remain key concerns.

Ensuring safe tea production requires stronger coordination among regulatory agencies, industry stakeholders, and producers. Promoting good agricultural practices, improved monitoring systems, and farmer awareness is essential to maintain product quality and protect both consumer health and environmental sustainability.

Sankala Foundation organised the 'National Conference on Safe Tea Production: Policy, Compliance and Sustainable Practices' on 28 November 2025 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The conference brought together policymakers, regulators, tea industry representatives, researchers, and civil society organisations to deliberate

on strategies for ensuring safe, compliant, and sustainable tea production in India.

The 'Safe Tea Production: A Handbook for Small Tea Growers' was also released. It is designed to support safer, more sustainable, and more profitable tea cultivation. This practical guide brings together simple, science-based tips that farmers can easily apply in their own gardens, helping improve yield, reduce costs, and protect the environment.

The conference focused on strengthening regulatory frameworks, promoting responsible pesticide management, improving traceability systems, and supporting sustainable agricultural practices across the tea value chain.

It also highlighted the importance of aligning India's tea production systems with global food safety standards while safeguarding environmental sustainability and farmer livelihoods.

The conference focused on: a) strengthen regulatory frameworks and compliance mechanisms for safe tea production; b) promoting sustainable agricultural practices and responsible pesticide management;



Mr Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Government of India addressing the National Conference on Safe Tea Production: Policy, Compliance, and Sustainable Practices. (Left to right): Dr Malvika Kaul, Director, Sankala Foundation; Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India; Mr Rajit Punhani, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), FSSAI; and Ms Disha Joshi, Director, Sankala Foundation



Sankala Foundation studied the challenges related to pesticide usage, compliance with safety standards, and sustainable farming practices remain key concerns

c) encouraging collaboration among policymakers, tea growers, research institutions, and industry stakeholders; and d) exploring digital solutions and traceability systems to improve transparency and monitoring in the tea sector.

At the conference, key findings of a study on sustainable tea production were also shared by Sankala Foundation. The study provides valuable field-level evidence on compliance risks from climate stress.

Key Outcomes

The conference facilitated meaningful dialogue among policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers, leading to several important outcomes:

- Strengthened policy dialogue on improving regulatory frameworks and compliance systems in the tea sector.
- Recognition of the importance of sustainable farming practices and responsible pesticide management.
- Identification of capacity-building needs for small tea growers, particularly in adopting safe and compliant production methods.
- Enhanced collaboration opportunities among government agencies, research institutions, and industry stakeholders.
- Commitment to promoting safe, sustainable, and globally competitive tea production in India



Launch of 'Safe Tea Production: A Handbook for Small Tea Growers' by Dr Aarti Mahajan, Visiting Fellow, Sankala Foundation; Mr Nitin Kumar Yadav, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India and Chairman, Tea Board of India; Mr Rajit Punhani, CEO, FSSAI; Mr Devendra Kumar Nim, Director, Sankala Foundation and Dr Malvika Kaul, Director, Sankala Foundation

Water Security

National Conference on Assured Clean Piped Water to All: The Road Ahead



Distinguished dignitaries at the inaugural session (Left to right) Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India; Mr Vinod Mishra, Country Manager, UNOPS India; Dr V K Paul, Member (Health & Nutrition), NITI Aayog; Dr Malvika Kaul, Director, Sankala Foundation and Mr Devendra Kumar Nim, Director, Sankala Foundation

Access to clean drinking water is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of national progress. As India advances its vision to be a developed economy by 2047, clean water and sanitation are non-negotiable determinants of public health, gender equality, social equity, and overall quality of life for the 1.45 billion citizens of India.

The government recognises that true development cannot happen till the time assured clean piped water is ensured to every household irrespective of geographical remoteness, area sensitivity, or socio-economic situation. This effort aligns with the broader national agenda of universal provision of essential amenities like safe sanitation, affordable housing, electricity, cooking gas, healthcare, roads, and digital banking, among others, thereby enhancing the ease of living and quality of life for all citizens and leaving no one behind. Sankala Foundation organised a national conference titled

‘National Conference on Assured Clean Piped Water to All: The Road Ahead’ on 12 December 2025 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The conference brought together policymakers, government agencies, water experts, researchers, development partners, and civil society organisations to deliberate on strategies for ensuring universal access to safe and reliable drinking water.

The conference aimed to strengthen dialogue around sustainable water governance and the long-term success of India’s flagship rural water supply initiative, Jal Jeevan Mission. Discussions focused on improving service delivery, strengthening local institutions, and ensuring that piped water systems remain reliable, financially sustainable, and environmentally resilient.

The key objectives of the conference included:

- Identifying strategies to improve long-term sustainability of drinking water infrastructure.

- Highlighting innovative approaches to strengthen the sustainability and governance of piped water systems.
- Share national progress and policy directions related to rural water supply and Jal Jeevan Mission.

Key Outcomes

The conference facilitated meaningful dialogue among stakeholders and helped identify priority actions for ensuring sustainable piped water supply systems. Key outcomes included:

- Strengthened policy dialogue among government agencies, researchers, and development organisations working in the water sector.
- Recognition of the importance of community-led water governance, particularly the role of local institutions in managing water supply systems.
- Identification of sustainable financing and monitoring mechanisms to support long-term

Sankala Foundation's research focuses on identification of sustainable financing and monitoring mechanisms to support long-term functionality of rural water infrastructure. It recognises the importance of community-led water governance

functionality of rural water infrastructure.

- Enhanced collaboration opportunities among government bodies, research institutions, and civil society organisations.
- Commitment to strengthening water security, ensuring reliable access to clean and safe drinking water for all.



A distinguished gathering of experts, policymakers, and stakeholders at the National Conference on Assured Clean Piped Water to All: The Road Ahead

Environment and Ecosystem Restoration

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

The Aravalli range, one of the oldest mountain ecosystems in the world, stretches across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi and forms a vital ecological backbone for northwestern India. Spanning 29 districts and supporting over 50 million people, the Aravallis act as a natural green wall, regulating climate, recharging groundwater, conserving biodiversity, and protecting the Indo-Gangetic Plains from desertification.

Sankala Foundation organised a national conference titled 'Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape: Strengthening the Aravalli Green Wall' on 14 January 2026 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The conference brought together policymakers, government agencies, researchers, practitioners, and civil society organisations to discuss strategies for restoring the Aravalli Range and strengthening ecological resilience across the region.

During the event, 'A report on Eco-restoration of Aravalli Landscape' was released by Mr Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the presence of Mr Rao Narbir Singh, Minister for Environment, Forests & Wildlife, Government of Haryana, Mr Sushil Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Forests & Special Secretary MoEFCC, Mr Tanmay Kumar, Secretary, MoEFCC, H E Mr Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador of Denmark to India and Mr V B Kumar, IFS (Rtd), Distinguished Fellow, Sankala Foundation at the National Conference on Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape: Strengthening the Aravalli Green Wall.

The conference aimed to facilitate dialogue between policy institutions and practitioners working on ecological restoration. Discussions focused on the implementation of the Aravalli Green Wall Project



Release of 'A report on Eco-restoration of Aravalli Landscape' by Mr Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the presence of Mr Rao Narbir Singh, Minister for Environment, Forests & Wildlife, Government of Haryana, Mr Sushil Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Forests & Special Secretary MoEFCC, Mr Tanmay Kumar, Secretary, MoEFCC, H E Mr Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador of Denmark to India and Mr Devendra Kumar Nim, Director, Sankala Foundation

The research study focussed on implementation of the Aravalli Green Wall Project and approaches to scale restoration efforts and strengthen water security



and explored collaborative approaches to scale restoration efforts, conserve biodiversity, strengthen water security, and promote sustainable livelihoods in the Aravalli landscape.

Key Outcomes

The conference facilitated meaningful dialogue among stakeholders and helped identify priority actions for strengthening ecological restoration in the Aravalli Range. Key outcomes included:

- Strengthened policy dialogue between government agencies, researchers, and civil society on the implementation of the Aravalli Green Wall Project.
- Identification of priority restoration strategies, including afforestation, biodiversity conservation, and watershed management across the Aravalli landscape.
- Recognition of community-led restoration models, highlighting the role of local institutions and traditional conservation practices.
- Enhanced collaboration opportunities among state forest departments, research institutions, and non-profit organisations working on ecological restoration.
- Commitment to developing a shared roadmap for scaling eco-restoration efforts and strengthening long-term ecological resilience in the region.



A cross-section of the distinguished audience and participants during the National Conference on Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape: Strengthening the Aravalli Green Wall at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Cultural Heritage

Tourism Leadership Summit 2026



Release of the report titled 'State of Tourism in India 2026' during the Tourism Leadership Summit 2026. (Left to right): Dr Malvika Kaul, Director, Sankala Foundation, and Editor, BigCats magazine; Mr Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, Government of India; Shri C P Radhakrishnan, Hon'ble Vice President of India; Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India; and Ms Nivedita Mehra, Managing Director, India, US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)

Tourism occupies a central place in India's national development journey. Beyond its contribution to GDP and employment, the sector enables regional balance, strengthens cultural exchange, and supports conservation of heritage and biodiversity. It also positions India globally as a destination rooted in sustainability, innovation, and civilisational depth. As India advances toward becoming a leading global tourism economy, the sector is undergoing a structural shift, from volume-led growth to experience-led, sustainable, and investment-driven models. This transition requires sustained dialogue between government, industry, investors, and institutions to align policy priorities with capital, capability, and global best practices.

Sankala Foundation, in partnership with the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), organised the Tourism Leadership Summit on 24th February 2026 in New Delhi. The Summit brought together Cabinet Ministers, senior government officials, and leaders from the Indian and global tourism, hospitality,

aviation, and investment sectors to deliberate on strategies to position India as a leading global tourism destination.

The Summit aimed to move beyond broad advocacy and focus on actionable pathways, partnerships, and policy alignment that can unlock responsible growth across destinations, ecosystems, and communities.

Purpose of the Summit

The Tourism Leadership Summit was convened as a high-level platform to facilitate candid, forward-looking discussions on the future of India's tourism and hospitality sector, with a specific focus on:

- Strengthening the US-India economic corridor in travel, tourism, and hospitality
- Scaling inbound tourism from the United States and other developed markets
- Mobilising long-term investment into destination infrastructure, hospitality assets, and experiential tourism

- Promoting sustainable, community-centric, and conservation-led tourism models

Integrating global best practices in governance, skilling, destination management, and digital enablement

Key Outcomes

The Summit facilitated meaningful dialogue among stakeholders and helped identify priority actions for strengthening India's position as a leading global

tourism destination. Key outcomes included:

- Identification of priority areas to strengthen India's global tourism positioning
- Enhanced alignment between government policy objectives and private sector investment
- Deeper US–India collaboration in tourism, hospitality, and destination development
- Action-oriented recommendations on sustainability, skilling, and infrastructure



(Left to right) Ms Nivedita Mehra, Managing Director, India, USISPF; Mr Amitabh Kant, Senior Advisor, Fairfax Holdings, and former India's G20 Sherpa and NITI Aayog CEO; Mr Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; and Ms Mahima Kaul, Head of Global Affairs, Netflix India, during Session IV of the Tourism Leadership Summit 2026



During Session I: Wildlife Tourism in India: Balancing Conservation and Economic Value at the Tourism Leadership Summit 2026, the audience actively engaged with the speakers, posing several insightful questions focused on sustainable tourism and biodiversity conservation across the country's wildlife and ecotourism sectors

07 Insights from Experts



Tourism is a driver of economic opportunity, and a powerful instrument of soft diplomacy

Shri C P Radhakrishnan, Hon'ble Vice President of India, at the Tourism Summit 2026

Aravalli restoration is essential for balancing development and ecology, preserving biodiversity, and meeting global environmental goals

Mr Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, at the National Conference on Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape: Strengthening the Aravalli Green Wall



Indian tea continues to serve as an important symbol of the nation's cultural and culinary heritage. To maintain India's position as the tea capital of the world, every part of the value chain must meet the highest standards

Mr Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Minister for Commerce and Industry, at the National Conference on Safe Tea Production: Policy Compliance and Sustainable Practice

Our tribal communities do not see nature as a resource to be consumed but as a relationship to be nurtured. In order to sustain any form of cultural and artistic heritage, there is a need to link it to livelihood and economic opportunity

Mr Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India at the National Conference on 'Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos: Living Wisdom'



While ageing is often viewed through the lens of numbers, life expectancy, dependency ratios, and demographic curves, it is crucial to focus equally on the quality of those additional years

Dr Vinod K Paul, Member (Health, Nutrition and Education), NITI Aayog at the National Conference on Ageing in India Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses

Water and sanitation are basic human rights, not merely formal declarations, but lived realities that people experience every moment, in every place, through the fulfilment or denial of these rights

Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC, India at the National Conference on Assured Clean Piped Water to All The Road Ahead



Achieving significant parity within 15 to 20 years would require bold moonshots and ambitious, transformative efforts. Nations which have succeeded economically did so by aiming for moonshot ambitions, and without such ambitions focused on women, India's quantum leap forward would remain incomplete

Mr Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa of India at the National Conference on Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future

Children and young adults must be sensitised from an early age to view ageing not as a decline but as a natural and valuable phase of life

Dr Kiran Bedi, Former Lt Governor of Puducherry at the National Conference on Ageing in India Emerging Realities, Evolving Responses



The achievements of the Jal Jeevan Mission cannot be overstated. Access to clean drinking water and sanitation is a basic human right, and the fact that around 81% of rural households now have tap-water connections is a result that is probably unique in world history

H E Mr Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador of Denmark to India at the National Conference on Assured Clean Piped Water to All: The Road Ahead

National and state-level initiatives are positively impacting over 100 million rural women through financial literacy, access to credit, and livelihood opportunities

Ms Cynthia McCaffrey, UNICEF India Representative, at the National Conference on Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future



08 Partnerships and Collaborations



**EMBASSY
OF DENMARK**
New Delhi

Embassy of Denmark in India

National Conference on Assured Clean Piped
Water to All: The Road Ahead



FSSAI

National Conference on Safe Tea Production: Policy,
Compliance & Sustainable Practices



Confederation of Indian Industry

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

National Conference on Tribal arts and India's
Conservation Ethos : Living Wisdom



US India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)

Tourism Leadership Summit &
Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future



UNOPS India

National Conference on Assured Clean Piped
Water to All: The Road Ahead



**Bharti Airtel
Foundation**

Bharti Airtel Foundation

Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future



National Human Rights Commission

National Conference on Ageing in India: Emerging
Realities, Evolving Responses & Women Leadership
Moonshot: Shaping the Future



MoEFCC & Haryana Forest Department

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



सत्यमेव जयते
**Ministry of Social Justice
and Empowerment**

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

National Conference on Ageing in India: Emerging
Realities, Evolving Responses



Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sanghralaya

Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre &
National Conference on Tribal arts and India's
Conservation Ethos : Living Wisdom



Indian National Science Academy (INSA)

Women Leadership Moonshot: Shaping the Future



NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog

National Conference on Ageing in India: Emerging
Realities, Evolving Responses



International Big Cat Alliance

Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre and
Big Cats Magazine

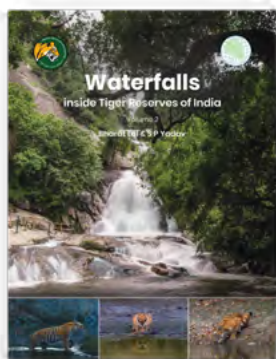


NTCA

Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre

09 Publications

Books

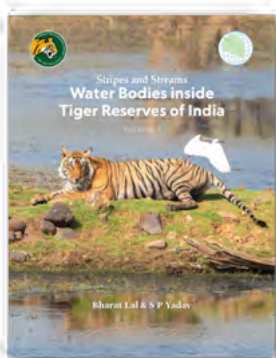


Waterfalls Inside Tiger Reserves of India offers a unique perspective on the ecological importance of waterfalls within the country's protected forest landscapes. As the second volume in a series on India's tiger reserves, the publication goes beyond the visual beauty of these natural formations to highlight their vital role in sustaining biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance.

Often regarded as scenic attractions, waterfalls are in fact critical components of forest ecosystems. They serve as sources of freshwater, contribute to water purification, and support climate regulation. Within tiger reserves, waterfalls play a key role in aerating rivers and streams, thereby enhancing aquatic biodiversity. They also create microhabitats that support a range of species, including orchids, mosses, ferns, and amphibians. In dry seasons, especially in deciduous forests, these water sources become essential lifelines for wildlife.

The publication documents 140 waterfalls across 36 tiger reserves in 16 states of India, showcasing their diversity in geographical features and ecological significance. Each site reflects a unique interaction between landscape, water systems, and biodiversity.

The publication also acknowledges the cultural and spiritual importance of these waterfalls for forest-dwelling communities, underscoring the deep connection between nature and local traditions. By bringing attention to these often-overlooked ecological assets, *Waterfalls Inside Tiger Reserves of India* encourages a more holistic understanding of conservation. It highlights the interconnectedness of water, forests, and wildlife and reinforces the need to protect these ecosystems as integrated and dynamic landscapes.



Stripes and Streams: Water Bodies Inside India's Tiger Reserves, is a significant contribution to the discourse on conservation, authored by Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, and Dr S P Yadav, Director General, IBCA.

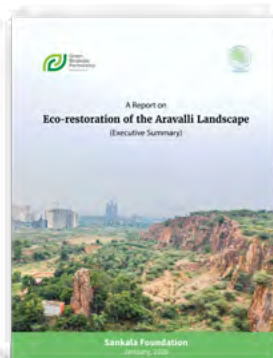
India's 58 tiger reserves, home to nearly 70% of the world's tigers, are not merely wildlife habitats but complex ecological systems that sustain forests, biodiversity, and water resources. This book highlights the critical role of water bodies within these reserves and their broader impact on ecological balance and human livelihoods.

It explores how forest ecosystems within tiger reserves function as vital watersheds, supporting water security across large regions of the country. As the third and concluding volume in a series exploring India's tiger reserves, it builds on earlier works that focused on cultural heritage and waterfalls within these landscapes. Drawing on case studies, policy analysis, and primary

mapping of surface water across 53 tiger reserves, the book presents a comprehensive understanding of the interdependence between wildlife conservation and water systems. These forested landscapes collectively support water access for over 340 million people and irrigate nearly 19 million hectares of farmland, while sustaining diverse flora and fauna. Organised into three chapters, the publication provides detailed insights into the river basins that support life within tiger reserves. It is enriched with maps of water bodies and rare photographs, making it both an informative and visually engaging resource.

By establishing the link between healthy ecosystems and sustainable water cycles, *Stripes and Streams* underscores the importance of integrated conservation strategies. It serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, while also reinforcing the need to protect India's tiger reserves as critical ecological and water security assets.

Reports



Eco-Restoration of the Aravalli Landscape

This report by the Sankala Foundation focuses on the ecological restoration of the Aravalli landscape, one of India's oldest mountain ranges, which has faced significant degradation due to urbanization, mining, deforestation, and unplanned development. The study brings together field-based observations and secondary research to assess the current condition of the landscape and identify key areas requiring restoration interventions.

The report examines the ecological importance of the Aravallis in maintaining regional environmental stability, including their role in supporting biodiversity, regulating microclimates, preventing desertification, and contributing to groundwater recharge. Through its analysis, the publication outlines strategies for ecological restoration, including afforestation, soil and water conservation measures, and community participation.



Safe Tea Production: A Handbook for Small Tea Growers

This handbook by the Sankala Foundation serves as a practical guide for small tea growers, focusing on promoting safe, sustainable, and responsible tea production practices. Developed through research and field engagement, the publication addresses key challenges faced by smallholders, including the use of agrochemicals, soil health management, and compliance with safety and quality standards.

The handbook provides step-by-step guidance on good agricultural practices, emphasizing the importance of reducing chemical inputs, ensuring worker safety, and maintaining environmental sustainability. It also highlights the need for awareness and capacity building among tea growers to align production methods with national and international standards.



Ageing in India: Challenges and Opportunities – A Status Report

The world is experiencing a major demographic shift, with people living longer and fertility rates declining. Ageing has emerged as a critical global issue with far-reaching social and economic implications. By 2050, the global elderly population will reach 2.1 billion, representing 21.1% of the world's population.

This transition demands stronger healthcare systems, robust social protection, and innovative policy approaches to address the complex needs of senior citizens. India is at the heart of this transformation. In 2022, 149 million Indians were aged 60 and above, a figure projected to rise to 347 million by 2050, making up 20.8% of the total population. Southern states such as Kerala, Goa, and Tamil Nadu already report the highest elderly proportions and old-age dependency ratios. The report draws insights from the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI, Wave 1)

for socio-economic and health indicators. It also reflects expert consultations and recommendations from the National Seminar on 'Ageing in India: Actionable Solutions' organised by Sankala Foundation in collaboration with National Human Rights Commission (December 2024, New Delhi).

Big Cats Magazine

Big Cats is a bi-monthly magazine published by Sankala Foundation in partnership with the International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA). It is the first global magazine dedicated exclusively to the seven big cats — Cheetah, Jaguar, Lion, Leopard, Puma, Snow Leopard, and Tiger. This year, six magazines were published.

The BigCats magazine, launched in September 2024, aims to be a reputed source of knowledge and a global platform to amplify efforts for big cat conservation. The primary objective of the magazine is to build discourse around wildlife conservation.

Several prominent conservation experts, thought leaders and distinguished personalities have contributed to the magazine. These include the Prime Minister of India Mr Narendra Modi, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) Mr Bhupender Yadav, President World Bank Group Mr Ajay Banga and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan Hon'ble Tshering Tobgay.

The May-June 2025 issue of the magazine, that featured Mr Banga's article which he co-authored, along with Mr Robert B Zoellick (former president of World Bank). A copy of the May-June 2025 issue was presented to Mr Banga in New Delhi on 10 May 2025. Mr Banga congratulated Sankala Foundation and IBCA for the publication and the remarkable efforts being made for wildlife preservation. He particularly appreciated the art work Baagh Beej (Tiger Seed) that was used as a visual for his article in the magazine. The image was a painting by tribal artist Rohit Shukla, who shared his work during the art exhibition Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre.



A copy of the May-June 2025 Big Cats issue was presented to Mr Ajay Banga, World Bank President (second from right), in New Delhi on 10 May 2025. Mr Banga co-authored, along with Mr Robert B Zoellick (former president of World Bank), a special article for the magazine. Also in the picture are (left to right) Dr Malvika Kaul, Director, Sankala Foundation, and Editor, BigCats magazine; Mr Bharat Lal Secretary General and CEO, NHRC, India; and Dr S P Yadav Director General, International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)



10 Sankala Foundation in the News

Holistic Restoration Needed for Degraded Aravallis: Study

Geo-spatial assessment flags land-use change, vegetation loss and heat-island effects



Urmil Gswami

New Delhi: India's oldest mountain range, the Aravalli, is among the worst affected by land degradation. It has been severely impacted by intensive mining, deforestation, illegal mining, urban expansion, and agricultural lands, eroding and common land, water bodies, and habitat areas—and relying on restoration and integrated problem-solving to deliver rural, sustainable land use practices for large-scale restoration.

The study advocates targeted ecological interventions over generic plantation-based approaches. Over the past decades, the area has registered a 30% loss of water bodies—open earthen ponds have disappeared, and the remaining water bodies too are in poor condition, limiting their groundwater recharge potential. Community identity, water scarcity, forest stress, and related tree cover are the most immediate environmental challenges. Despite their willingness to participate in restoration, the study points to the need for technical guidance, institutional support, and mechanisms to ensure sustained community involvement. Government departments and agencies also need to coordinate restoration efforts. The study advocates targeted ecological interventions over generic plantation-based approaches.

there has been limited livelihood diversification in the villages, and consumption continues to be heavily dependent on forests and nearby lands for fodder, fuelwood, and other biomass needs. Over the past decades, the area has registered a 30% loss of water bodies—open earthen ponds have disappeared, and the remaining water bodies too are in poor condition, limiting their groundwater recharge potential. Community identity, water scarcity, forest stress, and related tree cover are the most immediate environmental challenges. Despite their willingness to participate in restoration, the study points to the need for technical guidance, institutional support, and mechanisms to ensure sustained community involvement. Government departments and agencies also need to coordinate restoration efforts. The study advocates targeted ecological interventions over generic plantation-based approaches.

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Centre Pushes for Sustainable, Traceable Tea Production at National Conference in New Delhi

Pratidin Time November 30, 2025 7:09 pm



ThePrint

70 per cent of India's elderly financially dependent: Report

New Delhi, Aug 1 (PTI) Nearly 70 per cent of India's elderly population remains financially dependent, with many continuing to work post-retirement to survive, according to a new report. The study, "Ageing in India: Challenges and Opportunities," was released by the Sankala Foundation in partnership with NITI Aayog, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Former President Ram Nath Kovind Inaugurates Tribal Art Exhibition At India Habitat Centre



National Conference on Women Leadership Moonshot: Leaders & Experts Draw Vision for Women-led Development in India



New Delhi, May 8, 2025: At the National Conference on Women Leadership Moonshot, Sankala Foundation, supported by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Government of India, and the Indian National Science Academy, brought together leaders and experts to discuss the vision for women-led development in India.

Bhupender Yadav Reiterates Centre's Strong Commitment For Preservation Of Aravalli

Bhupender Yadav emphasised his profound personal connection to the Aravalli region and reiterated the Centre's unwavering commitment to its preservation.



Venice Biennale 2026 to Spotlight India's Tribal Art and Culture

Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat announced on Friday that tribal artists will be part of India's contingent at the prestigious Venice Biennale 2026.



वेनिस में बजेगी भारत की जनजातीय कला की धुन

ज्योति सिंह

जनजातीय कला प्रदर्शनी में दिखा वन और संस्कृति

नई दिल्ली। भारत की जनजातीय कला अब दुनिया के सबसे बड़े मंच पर गुंजन गा रही है। केन्द्रीय संस्कृति और पर्यटन मंत्री गजेंद्र सिंह तेलंग ने शुक्रवार को भारत के जनजातीय कलाकारों की प्रतिष्ठित वेनिस बिennale 2026 में हिस्सा लेने की घोषणा की। यह घोषणा नई दिल्ली में आयोजित राष्ट्रीय जनजातीय कला और भारत का संरक्षण दुष्टकीर्ण सम्मेलन में दी गई थी। उन्होंने कहा, 'जनजातीय कलाकार भारत की संस्कृति के असली वाहक हैं और अब उनकी कला को अंतरराष्ट्रीय पहचान दिलाने का समय आ गया है।' सम्मेलन का आयोजन संस्कृति, पर्यटन और ग्रामीण विकास, संरक्षण, योगा और भारतीय उद्योग परिषद के साथ मिलकर किया था। सम्मेलन स्थल पर लगी प्रदर्शनी

'मार्गरेट कनामसन फॉर्म द सेक्टर' ने संयुक्त मंत्रालय पर सभी गैरमंच जैसे की कहानियां सुना रही थी। वेनिस की पीछे छिपा बाघ का, वेनिस की गोट में सिमटी प्रकृति। बस आया गुलाब सिंह बघेल की वेनिस मन रणक की झलक दिखी।

गजेंद्र सिंह तेलंग ने कहा, 'राष्ट्र के जंगलों की गहराई और रम्य झलकते रहे थे। वहीं, राशिनी की कला प्रकृति के गुंजन और बघेल की गोट कला के रंगों से मा और भारत की अदृष्ट संघर्ष की खुशमस्ती से उकेरा गया। छत्तीसगढ़ की कलाकार प्रेम नाग की पेंटिंग फीमलेस में आधुनिक स्त्री की निद्रा और प्रकृति के प्रति उनकी जुड़ाव की झलक दिखती है।'



Encroachments, illegal mining in Aravallis severely impacted air quality, climate regulation: Report

The research, Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape, was undertaken by Senkula Foundation with support from the Embassy of Denmark in India and the Haryana State Forest Department

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Key Points

NEW DELHI: Encroachments, illegal mining and forest degradation in the Aravalli region have severely impacted air quality and climate regulation, according to a new report by Senkula Foundation and the Haryana State Forest Department.

The study, titled 'Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape', was undertaken by Senkula Foundation with support from the Embassy of Denmark in India and the Haryana State Forest Department.

The report highlights the severe impact of encroachments and illegal mining on the Aravalli region's air quality and climate regulation. It calls for immediate action to restore the landscape and protect the environment.

The study found that the Aravalli region is facing a severe decline in air quality and climate regulation due to encroachments and illegal mining. The report calls for immediate action to restore the landscape and protect the environment.

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'Centre strengthened Aravalli restoration with Green Wall push'

The report, Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape, was undertaken by Senkula Foundation with support from the Embassy of Denmark in India and the Haryana State Forest Department

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The Centre has strengthened its commitment to the restoration of the Aravalli region by launching a 'Green Wall' push. This initiative aims to create a continuous belt of greenery along the Aravalli range, which is a critical part of the region's ecological and climate regulation.

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Number 1 India

With rise in India's elderly population, experts suggest a review of financial policies

These are some of the recommendations of a report by Senkula Foundation that gets support from NITI Aayog, National Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Ministry of Health. The report was released here on Friday.

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The Statesman

Thursday, 20 August, 2025

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India's Vice President Inaugurates USISPF Tourism Leadership Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Highlights U.S.-India Travel Ties

By SAH Special Correspondent • February 25, 2025 • 2 comments • 1 minute read



NHRC chairperson advocates integration of ancient Indian values into modern policies for dignity of senior citizens

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairperson, Justice V Ramasubramanian, has said that India has a rich cultural traditions that advocates care and reverence for the elderly as a fundamental societal value.

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Journey so Far: The Sankala Foundation Timeline

2022 | Foundation

Sankala Foundation was established with a vision to advance evidence-based solutions across conservation, sustainability, and inclusive development. Beginning with a small, dedicated team, the Foundation set out to bridge research, policy, and implementation.

2023 | Building Programmes

- Launched the 1st edition of 'Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre', graced by Smt Droupadi Murmu, Hon'ble President of India. The exhibition was curated by Dr Alka Pande, Museum Curator. Special guests were Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Mr Bhupender Yadav, Mr Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General & CEO, NHRC India, Mr C P Goyal, Director General of Forests & Special Secretary (DGF&SS).
- The 2023 exhibition displayed 134 artworks created by 102 artists from approximately 30 tiger reserves of India.
- The exhibition was a success with 76 of the total artworks displayed being sold and the proceeds of each sale were directly credited to the respective artisan's account.
- Tribal artists were also taken to the Rashtrapathi Bhavan to meet the Hon'ble President of India.
- Established key partnerships with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), and the Embassy of Denmark.



2024 | Expanding Reach

- Initiated research in public health and water and sanitation, marking an expansion into critical development sectors.
- Released the first publication, *'Tiger and Tribes,'* on Global Tiger Day, highlighting the intersection of conservation and local knowledge.
- Released two policy-focused reports: Leveraging Digital Solutions for Universal Health Coverage, Jal Jeevan Mission – Har Ghar Jal: A Study of Access to Clean Tap Water in Every Rural Home in India. Launched the Big Cat Magazines, strengthening focus on wildlife conservation.
- Hosted the 2nd edition of Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre, inaugurated by Dr Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, continuing to elevate tribal and cultural narratives in conservation. The cultural evening was graced by Mr Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism.
- Published *Hidden Treasures: India's Heritage in Tiger Reserves*, further deepening work at the intersection of ecology and heritage.
- Hosted the 3rd edition of Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre at the Rashtrapati



Bhavan Cultural Centre, after the completion of the Artists-in-Residence programme.

- First international research study in Rwanda on sustainability of water and irrigation systems.

2025 | Consolidation and Scale-up

- Continued to scale programmes across conservation, water, ageing, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable livelihoods.
- Expanded from a team of 3 to over 30 professionals within three years, reflecting rapid organizational growth and increased programmatic depth.
- Undertook in-depth studies focussed on Eco-restoration of the Aravallis; Water Security; Sustainable and Safe Tea Production; and Dignity and Inclusion in an Ageing India.
- Sankala contributed to creating an environment where women can participate, progress, and lead across sectors through the Women's Leadership summit.



12 Way Forward

As Sankala Foundation enters its next phase, the focus is on building depth within existing programmes while expanding into emerging areas that require urgent and sustained attention. Sankala proposes to transition into long-term, systemic, and scalable national models focused on environmental restoration, sustainable agriculture, tribal economy, and social welfare. We aim to make the Foundation a premier catalyst for climate-responsive ecosystems and inclusive human development by bridging community wisdom with national policy architecture over the next few years.

In wildlife conservation, Sankala will serve as a Knowledge Partner for IBCA in its various endeavours, contributing to global dialogue on big cat conservation and reinforcing India's leadership in this space. The Foundation will also convene a Tourism Summit, examining the balance between conservation, biodiversity protection, and sustainable tourism-led economic development.

Building on the success of Silent Conversation, the 5th edition of the exhibition is planned for the coming year, with an expanded scope and wider institutional engagement. The initiative will continue to position cultural narratives as an integral part of conservation thinking.

In the Aravalli landscape, Sankala will deepen its engagement in restoration and policy-aligned implementation. In the future, we propose to scale the 4-village Gurugram pilot into a multi-state 'Aravalli Climate Corridor' stretching across Rajasthan and Haryana. Sankala also envisions restoration of local johads (traditional ponds) and construct continuous contour trenches to build localised drought resilience and recharge groundwater tables in the Aravallis. The next phase will include a focused effort on sacred groves, recognising their ecological value as micro-conservation zones and their cultural significance as traditional systems of environmental stewardship.

In water security, the Foundation will continue to align its work with the evolving priorities of JJM 2.0, with a stronger emphasis on system sustainability, monitoring, and governance frameworks that ensure long-term functionality. Sankala's research shall attempt to address challenges of Urban and Rural Climate-Resilient Water Systems in the future. We propose to convert data from urban flood-mapping into actionable design for sponge cities. The Foundation shall also focus on decentralised water governance, transitioning Jal Jeevan Mission from infrastructure delivery to climate-proofing water sources, community-managed solar-powered water purification and recycling loops.

The programme on Ageing will move into a more focused and intervention-driven phase. Sankala will expand its work on productive ageing and the silver economy, while also initiating focused efforts on dementia and age-related health challenges—areas that remain under-addressed in India's policy and healthcare landscape. The aim will be to contribute to more responsive and inclusive frameworks that support the dignity, health, and continued participation of older populations.

Work on women's leadership will also be taken forward with greater emphasis on scalable models and sector-specific pathways, building on insights from the textile sector and expanding into other domains.

Internally, Sankala will continue to strengthen its institutional capacity, with a growing team and expanding partnerships across government, industry, and knowledge institutions. This phase of growth is aimed at enabling the Foundation to operate at greater scale while maintaining the depth and quality of its interventions.

As we move ahead, the focus remains clear: to build on what has been established, to enter areas that demand attention, and to continue advancing solutions that are grounded, relevant, and capable of lasting impact.



In the future, Sankala Foundation proposes to document traditional climate adaptation practices of forest-dwelling tribal communities to support modern climate resilience strategies. Our Silent Conversation art exhibition will in the future leverage high-value platforms (like the Venice Biennale) to secure international adaptation of the conservation ethos of the communities.

13 Our Team



Name	Designation
Vidya Bhushan Kumar	Distinguished Fellow
Amitabh Agnihotri	Distinguished Fellow
Umakant	Distinguished Fellow
Vivek Kapadia	Distinguished Fellow
Devendra Kumar Nim	Director (Programmes)
Dr Malvika Kaul	Director (Research and Communications)
Disha Joshi	Director
Dr Abha Jaiswal	Visiting Fellow
Dr Aarti Mahajan	Senior Fellow
Dr Dibyendu Mandal	Programme Lead (Forest & Wildlife)
R K Srinivasan	Programme Lead (Water Resource Management & Governance)

Name	Designation
Dr Pramod K Yadav	Programme Associate
Divya Singh Rathore	Consultant
Deepna Kaveriappa	Consultant
Dr Adeeba Parveen	Senior Research Associate
Dr Deepesh Goyal	Senior Research Associate
Dinesh Kumar	Senior Research Associate
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
Shikhar Mohan	Research Associate
Vani Sehgal	Research Associate



Sankala Foundation team members and interns with Mr Bharat Lal, Secretary General and CEO of National Human Rights Commission, India, at the Women's Leadership Summit in New Delhi

Name	Designation
Ishani Nangia	Communication and Outreach Associate
Jyoti Sharma	Communication and Outreach Associate
Narender Kumar	Associate (Designer)
Satish Chopra	Administrative Officer
Mohammed Khalid	Deputy Director (Admin, and Finance)
Akash Sikdar	Deputy Manager (Administration)
Vibha Mukati	Research Associate
Interns	
S. Pooja Devi	Intern
Kirtika Swami	Intern
Abigail Vanessa Simmons	Intern

Name	Designation
Shruti Chaurasia	Intern
Rituja Joshi	Intern
Mehak Vishwakarma	Intern
Deepti Narain	Intern
Diya Mandal	Intern
Nupur Singh	Intern
Ankush Kumar	Intern
Abhishek Kumar Jha	Intern
Aditi Mishra	Intern
Rashid Ali	Intern
Subhana Nazif	Intern
Nityamani Brahma	Intern

Whatsoever I dig of thee, O Earth, may that of thee have quick growth again! O Purifier, may we not injure thy vitals or thy heart!

Atharva Veda (12.1.35), Bhumi Sukta (Hymn to the Earth)



Sankala Foundation

Voice for a Sustainable Planet

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