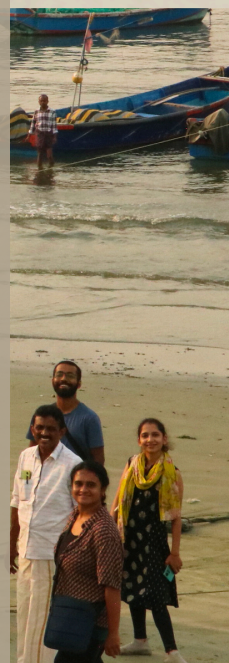




NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ADVOCACY STUDIES

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



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Published by

**NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ADVOCACY STUDIES
ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025**

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VISION & MISSION

The National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) is a leading institution dedicated to advancing social justice and sustainable development in the Indian subcontinent. As we pass into the third decade of public engagements, we reaffirm our commitment to empowering marginalized communities and fostering their active participation in shaping policies and practices that affect their lives.

Vision

NCAS envisions a just and equitable society where individuals and organizations are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to address the concerns and well-being of the most vulnerable populations. We aspire to create transformative social change through evidence-based research, innovative policy interventions, and capacity-building initiatives.

Mission

In pursuit of this vision, the mission of NCAS is to promote inclusive and participatory governance by bridging the gap between grassroots realities and policy deliberations. We aim to empower marginalized communities, foster their active engagement in decision-making processes, and ensure the integration of their perspectives in the formulation and implementation of public policies.

Foreword

The National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) recently marked its 30th anniversary, reaffirming its foundational commitment to empowering communities and fostering a just and equitable society. This report synthesizes the organization's strategic efforts during the 2024-25 period which centers on three core strategies: mainstreaming public policy practice education, enhancing professional capacities, and cultivating an enabling ecosystem for social change leaders.

A central focus of NCAS's work has been the mainstreaming of public policy practice education. This is exemplified by the "Shaping Futures: Public Policy Practice and Natural Resource Governance" workshops, which engaged over 250 participants from various organizations across India. These programs built critical capacity for youth and natural resource-dependent communities, addressing issues from forest rights and coastal communities to water governance. The workshops fostered multi-stakeholder dialogues and strengthened networks dedicated to rights-based initiatives

NCAS has also worked to strengthen the professional capacities of social change leaders. This is evident in the Amplifying Community Voices (ACV) program implemented in the Patharpratima block of the Sundarbans. Through a dynamic fellowship program, NCAS nurtured 30 "Voices of Change" from twenty five villages, equipping them with essential skills in governance, strategic influencing, and digital tools. This initiative has already inspired new community-led actions, such as the "Know Your Sundarban" project and increased engagement with Panchayati Raj institutions.

In addition to its field-based programs, NCAS has also focused on fostering an enabling ecosystem for social change initiators. This includes the launch of a new internship program through an MoU with Shankarrao Chavan Law College, which has strengthened seven young students to contribute insightful research on pressing issues of our times.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all who have made this year of transformative work possible. Our deepest thanks go to our resource organizations for their invaluable partnership and steadfast belief in our mission. Their support has been instrumental in allowing us to implement impactful programs and sustain our commitment to social justice. We are also profoundly thankful to the communities and individuals who have supported NCAS, including our dedicated General Body Members and the visionary leadership of our Executive Committee Members. Your guidance, expertise, and unwavering commitment have been the pillars of our success. Together, we are striving to co-create a more just and equitable society. Thank you for being a vital part of our journey.

Anil Tharayath Varghese
National Coordinator



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Overview of NCAS 2024-25

The programmatic year 2024-25 (April 24 – March 25) has strongly reiterated NCAS' vision and mission and was strongly evident in a series of interventions throughout. The year has also helped expand NCAS' geographical reach, including the north-east. As NCAS has consistently focused on public policy practice education, its capacity building initiatives have broken new grounds by tying with academic institutions and taking the evidence-based transformative social change into constituencies hitherto unexplored, or seldom so.

The Centre has also successfully experimented with reinventing the wheel by reintroducing Internship Programs, which, though, neither match the scale of its previous flagship interventions, nor aspire to, but is an humble beginning calling for short-term internship assignments, specifically focusing on undergraduate students from law, social work, governance & administration. The program got a fillip after the successful signing of an MoU with Pune-based Marathwada Mitra Mandal' Shankar Rao Chavan Law College for 6 years.

NCAS on its Own -

NCAS has made strong forays into building capacities of Natural Resources-Dependent Communities with a strong focus on forests, marine & oceans, and land. To this effect, residential workshops on governance-related themes have been conducted for forests and oceans, and further cohorts are in line continuing with the initiative. The response has been overwhelming with participants, many of whom are students, researchers, mid-career activists and policy practitioners, coming in from different geographical regions of the country, and actively engaging with the experts in their fields.

As the country nears the 20th year of the enactment of the Forest Rights Act, FRA, there are still challenges that need to be navigated, in order for the communities that have either inhabited the lands, or dependent on the same historically to claim their rightful ownership. A two-day consultation on the theme of FRA and its implementation in the state of Maharashtra was held in order to underline the challenges and successful resolution. The FRA not only founds an instrument of empowerment, but is in need of accountability and transparency embedded within the structures ensuring that forest rights translates into tangible benefits for the communities. NCAS is gearing itself by taking steps in order to empower the communities to leverage their forest rights and non-timber forest produce for their sustainable livelihoods.

As regards coastal communities, building intersectional perspectives on gender, climate change, commercialization and commodification of oceanic resources is an indispensable need. In addition, the use of data analysis has become an important ingredient in policy making. Underlining the fact that the intersection is on a national-international scale the socio-economic fabric of the fisher communities, especially those involved in artisanal fisheries takes on a dimension more

holistic in nature. With its firm commitment to support the fisher communities in its resilience against climate change, for gender equity and sustainable development, NCAS organized a workshop in Bengaluru convening members from the community, academicians and legal experts to address the pressing challenges of such intersectionality. Similar workshops were also conducted at Puri, and Goa.

The Amplifying Community Voices (ACV) in the Indian Sundarbans initiative has entered its fifth year and is actively aimed at empowering the marginalized communities in the Patherpratima Block of 24 South Parganas in West Bengal. This people-centered and people-led approach fosters leadership, enhances community participation in governance, and builds resilience against climate change and socio-economic inequalities. The program is especially noteworthy for combining traditional forms of knowledge systems with strategic influencing and amplifying the voices of the communities to engage with local governance structures aimed at collective action to improve the quality of their lives. The initiative is rigorously carried out through structured fellowship programs, skill-building workshops and collaborative engagements. During the programmatic year, seven field visits were undertaken to conduct variously aligned workshops on the theme of ACV with outcomes, including comprehending the localized form of governance, procedures to hold the panchayats accountable, and collaborative civic action.

Collaborative efforts -

NCAS organized a residential capacity building workshop in Bengaluru specifically aimed at deepening the understanding of plastic pollution policies and inspire collective action. It also highlighted the connection between the plastic supply chain, climate change and biodiversity loss, and called for building networks of young leaders advocating for a sustainable future.

NCAS jointly hosted a two-day conference with India Institute of Science, Education and Research (IISER), Pune on the theme of Water Commons, bringing together a variegated mix of practitioners, researches, academicians, civil society members and community representatives, and deliberate on how to reclaim water as a shared concern, and life sustaining resource. Some of the challenges explored were legal gaps, privatization and profit-making policies. The discussions over the two days also felt the need to get back traditional irrigation systems, involvement of the youth and campaigns rooted in justice and equity-equality.

NCAS organised a three-day national workshop titled “Bridging the Gap: Strengthening Sub-Plan Implementation for Inclusive Development” at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. With 55 participants from across India, the workshop focused on deepening understanding of the SC/ST Sub-Plan, budget tracking, and inclusive development strategies.

NCAS, in collaboration with TISS Tuljapur, conducted a one-day workshop on Climate Change and Natural Resource-Based Communities. Attended by 25 MSc students from the Sustainable Livelihoods and Natural Resource Governance program, the workshop offered critical insights into how climate change is disrupting ecosystems and impacting resource-dependent livelihoods. The workshop spotlighted the importance of integrating traditional knowledge, participatory governance, and climate-resilient policies to protect communities and ecosystems in the face of growing environmental challenges.

NCAS is Thirty Years Young

The National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) marked three decades of empowering communities and advocating for justice and peace with a vibrant celebration on October 12, 2024. From engaging discussions to cultural performances, the event reflected on the organization's journey while envisioning its future. Justice Dr. S. Muralidhar delivered a compelling public talk titled "Navigating the Labyrinth: People-Centric Advocacy in a Post-Truth World." Drawing from personal experiences, Dr. Muralidhar emphasized the role of advocacy in countering misinformation and driving societal change. The grand finale was a breathtaking performance by Mumbai's Nirmik Arts and Media Centre. Their theme, "Listening to the Winds of Peace and Justice," blended traditional and contemporary art forms, captivating the audience with powerful expressions of harmony and hope.

As more educative programs are being held across the country, NCAS is renewing its rigor and vigor to strive for creating a just and equitable society, and is unwavering in its commitment to the same.

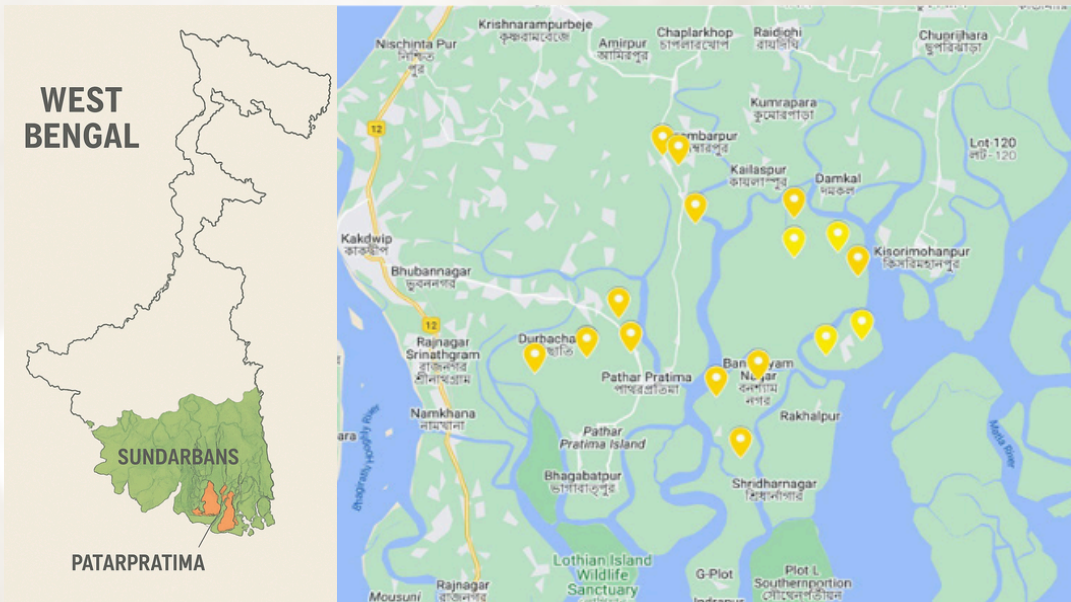
Geographical Reach



Transforming Society, Empowering Communities

As the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) reflects on its work over the past year, we have been consistent in our continued efforts to strengthen the people-centered approach in Patharpratima block of the Sundarbans region. This vulnerable coastal area, which faces a multitude of social, economic, and environmental challenges, has been a focal point of our commitment to elevating community voices and fostering participatory development.

**30 COMMUNITY
FELLOWS ENGAGING
IN 25 VILLAGES IN
THE PATHAR
PRATHIMA BLOCK**



NCAS, in partnership with six consortium organizations, continues its transformative journey with the Amplifying Community Voices (ACV) initiative focused on empowering marginalized communities in the Patharpratima Block of the Indian Sundarbans. Rooted in a community-led and rights-based approach, the initiative prioritizes fostering grassroots leadership, strengthening democratic participation in local governance, and building resilience against social and environmental vulnerabilities such as climate change and systemic inequalities.

Entering its second phase in 2024-25, ACV has advanced through a dynamic fellowship program aimed at nurturing community change initiators —referred to as the “Voices of Change in Sundarbans.” This capacity-building effort was designed to equip fellows with essential knowledge and practical skills in strategic influencing, systems of governance, public policy practice, community mobilization, participatory research, and digital influencing tools.

Throughout the year, NCAS implemented a series of structured workshops and hands-on engagements, conducted within the Sundarbans itself, that addressed critical themes including:

- Participatory governance and enhanced community-centric decision-making
- Strategic evidence-based influencing and policy engagement
- Communication skills and grassroots mobilization techniques
- Use of digital tools for documentation and influencing
- Promotion of sustainable livelihoods including organic farming and climate resilience

Dates	Workshops
18,19 July 2024	Co-Creating Change: An Innovative Convergence towards building grassroots change initiators - Workshop
18,19 September 2024	Community Fellows Introductory Workshop
13-15 November 2024	Strategic Influencing
3- 5 January 2025	Systems of Governance
30 January to 1 February, 2025	Communication Skills and Community Mobilization
27 February-1 March, 2025	Community Participatory Research
22 - 24 March 2025	Empowering Fellows to Address Critical Issues



The program's participatory methodology enabled fellows to document local issues effectively, engage meaningfully with Panchayati Raj institutions, and devise collective actions grounded in the lived realities of the Sundarbans region.

This initiative represents more than a program; it is a growing initiative catalyzing sustainable social change led by local communities themselves. The ACV fellowship model reinforces NCAS's overarching mission to empower vulnerable populations through people-centered advocacy, heightening community leadership for long-term transformation.

Going forward, NCAS remains committed to deepening support for the ACV cohort through ongoing mentoring and strategic interventions, ensuring these frontline leaders are equipped to steer inclusive development and shape accountable governance in the Sundarbans.

Voices of Fellows:

The discussions and activities during the fellowship workshops have inspired the participants to reflect deeply on the challenges confronting the Sundarbans, prompting them to consider actionable solutions. This shift in perspective marks the beginning of their journey as proactive change agents, poised to drive sustainable, community-led transformation.

One such innovative initiative that emerged from the fellowship program is the "Know Your Sundarban" initiative. Recognizing the importance of fostering a holistic understanding of the region's socio-ecological fabric, the fellows formed four thematic groups - agriculture, fishing, health, and

disasters - to develop comprehensive calendars that capture the intricate interrelationships within the Sundarbans.

Moreover, the workshops' emphasis on the Panchayati Raj system has encouraged some fellows to take the crucial first steps towards engaging with local governance structures. They are now preparing to raise community issues with the gram panchayats in a systematic manner, leveraging evidence-based approaches and influencing strategies. This transition from passive observation to active participation in governance is a promising development, demonstrating the fellows' growing agency and commitment to ensuring the responsiveness of public institutions to the needs of their communities.



Enabling Tomorrow's Stewards: Building Skills and Resilience for Youth and Natural Resource-Dependent Communities

The National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) is dedicated to building strategic influencing capabilities and advancing social justice through capacity development and knowledge sharing. In line with this mission, NCAS organized the "Shaping Futures: Public Policy Practice and Natural Resource Governance" workshops. This program was designed to enhance understanding, foster collaboration, and develop actionable strategies for effective public policy engagement within the critical domain of natural resource governance.

The program's relevance is underscored by the urgent need for robust policy interventions in natural resource governance, which involves balancing competing interests, establishing regulations, and promoting inclusive practices. These efforts equipped participants with practical tools to engage effectively in policy processes, fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

Key Workshops and Activities:

NCAS coordinated and co-hosted multiple workshops and consultations with the youth and representatives from the natural resource dependent communities across India, engaging over 250 participants and close to 70 organizations, including researchers, policymakers, grassroots leaders, activists, scholars, and conservation practitioners. These events built on NCAS's expertise in rights-based advocacy and sustainable governance, with a strong emphasis on grassroots and community-centered strategies.

- **Regional Capacity-Building Workshops:** Held in Goa, Assam, and Bangalore, these sessions focused on foundational skills in public policy navigation and natural resource management.
- **Thematic Workshops:**
 - Forest Rights and Livelihood Sustenance (Ranchi): Explored policy frameworks for forest-dependent communities, integrating traditional knowledge with scientific approaches.
 - Coastal Communities (Bengaluru): Addressed intersectional linkages for fishworkers,
 - Public Policy and Natural Resources Governance (Pune): Provided tools for effective policy engagement and sustainable practices.
 - Water Commons Dialogues (IISER Pune): Promoted community-centered governance of water resources through interactive discussions.

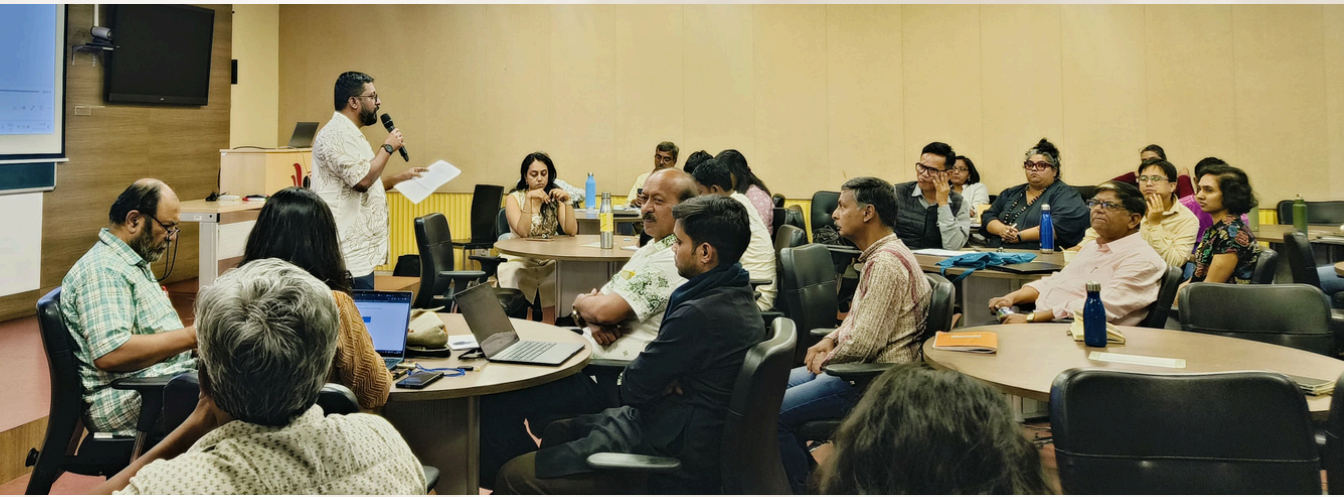


- **Consultations:** NCAS facilitated over 50 organizations in multi-stakeholder dialogues, partnering with civil society groups and educational institutions to empower participants in rights-based advocacy and intersectional community empowerment.

These events created collaborative platforms for knowledge exchange, blending theoretical insights with real-world challenges through participatory learning methods.

Objectives and Outcomes

The primary objectives were to enhance participants' influencing skills, deepen their understanding of governance complexities, and promote actionable strategies for natural resource management. By fostering networks across thematic and geographical contexts, NCAS aimed to bridge gaps between policy theory and practice.



Key outcomes included:

- **Skill Development:** Participants gained practical knowledge in navigating public policy processes, with a focus on grassroots approaches, leading to increased motivation for local and regional applications.
- **Network Building:** Strengthened networks and multi-stakeholder platforms, advancing rights-based approaches to forest management, ocean and water governance.
- **Broader Impacts:** Enhanced social accountability and inclusive governance, with participants reporting improved abilities to address environmental and social inequalities.

Feedback from initiatives, highlighted the value of detailed discussions on policy frameworks, interactive sessions, and peer diversity. Participants particularly appreciated opportunities to exchange lived experiences, understand the interplay of natural resources, public finance, and markets, and integrate traditional and scientific knowledge for effective interventions.

Partnerships and Future Engagement

NCAS collaborated with a wide range of partners, including civil society organizations, educational institutes, and community groups, to amplify the program's reach. These partnerships facilitated over 250 participants in workshops and more than 70 organizations in consultations, demonstrating NCAS's role as a catalyst for collective action.

Looking ahead, these initiatives have laid the groundwork for sustained engagement in natural resource governance at the national level, reinforcing NCAS's commitment to empowering marginalized groups and driving just, sustainable development.

PROGRAMMES AT A GLANCE

11-14 April 2024	Preparatory Meeting For Coastal Community	Goa
21,22 April 2024	Community Level Capacity Building Workshop	Dibrugarh, Assam
11,12 May 2024	Meeting With Community Leaders working on Natural Resource Management	Bangalore, Karnataka
26- 28 August 2024	Forest Rights and Livelihood Sustenance — An Intersectional Approach Capacity Building Workshop	Ranchi, Jharkhand
1- 4 September 2024	Perspective Building For Intersectional Issues of Fishworkers	Bangalore, Karnataka
2 - 4 October 2024	Capacity Building Workshop With Youth to Address Plastic-Related Matters	Bangalore, Karnataka
14, 15 December 2024	Capacity Building Workshop With Coastal Communities	Puri, Odisha
1- 4 February 2025	Capacity Building Workshop on Shaping Public Policy Practice and Natural Resource Governance (Forests and Futures)	Pune, Maharashtra
17,18 February 2025	State Level Consultation on Forest	Pune, Maharashtra
5,6 March 2025	Water Common Dialogues	Pune, Maharashtra
24 March 2025	One -Day Workshop on Climate Change, Natural Resources and Livelihoods	Tuljapur, Maharashtra
25 March 2025	One- Day Consultation on Collaborative Actions For Community Development	Tuljapur, Maharashtra
27-29 March 2025	Workshop on Bridging Gap: Strengthening the Sub-Plan Implementation For Inclusive Development	New Delhi

Organisational Process

30th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: National Consultation on Empowering Communities

The National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) commemorated 30 years of dedicated advocacy and social justice on October 12, 2024, in Pune, Maharashtra. The celebration highlighted NCAS's longstanding commitment to empowering marginalized communities through people-centered advocacy and transparent governance. The event featured an interactive session envisioning NCAS's future directions, emphasizing new thematic areas and the evolving challenges in social and environmental justice.

A keynote public talk by Justice Dr. S. Muralidhar on “People-Centric Advocacy in a Post-Truth World” underscored the critical role of initiatives in combating misinformation and fostering societal change. Reflections by Sandeep Kumar Pattnaik enriched the discourse, inspiring attendees from civil society and academia to reaffirm their commitment to effective advocacy. The gathering also included a nostalgic reflection by founding and longtime members, celebrating three decades of impactful work.

The cultural performance by Nirmik Arts and Media Centre, Mumbai, creatively expressed NCAS's mission of peace and justice, reinforcing the power of art as a catalyst for social change. The milestone event invigorated collective enthusiasm for the continued pursuit of justice, equity, and community empowerment, setting a robust foundation for NCAS's work in the years ahead.



New Initiative

The NCAS signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Shankarrao Chavan Law College, Pune, to advance structured internships and research in public policy advocacy for students. In early 2025, seven second-year law students completed their internship with NCAS, engaging in independent study and contributing six insightful monographs addressing contemporary issues in environmental governance and social justice. Their work demonstrated a strong commitment to current public policy dialogue and academic rigor. This ongoing partnership continues to foster innovative thinking and practical exposure, reinforcing NCAS's dedication to developing young leaders.



Financial Summary

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2025	
Sources of Funds:	Amount
Corpus Fund	2,21,357.00
Asset Fund	2,62,017.00
Staff Welfare Fund	1,00,000.00
Project Funds	17,55,202.00
General Fund	92,97,297.00
Current liabilities	71,112.00
Non-Current liabilities	77,114.00
Total	1,17,84,099.00
Application of Funds	Amount
Fixed Assets	9,12,102.00
Long Term Loans and Advances	10,13,111.00
Investment	73,47,639.00
Current Assets, Loan & Advances	25,11,247.00
Total	1,17,84,099.00

Summary of Receipt & Payment for the year ended on 31st March 2025	
RECEIPTS	
Opening Balance :	
Balances	98,78,369.00
Investment	69,32,377.00
Donation & Grants	20,36,333.00
Other Income	7,49,419.00
Increase in Current Liabilities	71,112.00
Total	1,96,67,610.00
PAYMENT	
Objects of Organization-Program Expenses	96,72,765.47
Expenses	1,96,141.47
Loans and Advances Paid	3,01,497.00
Closing Balance	
Balances	21,49,567.17
Investment	73,47,639.00
Total	1,96,67,610.00

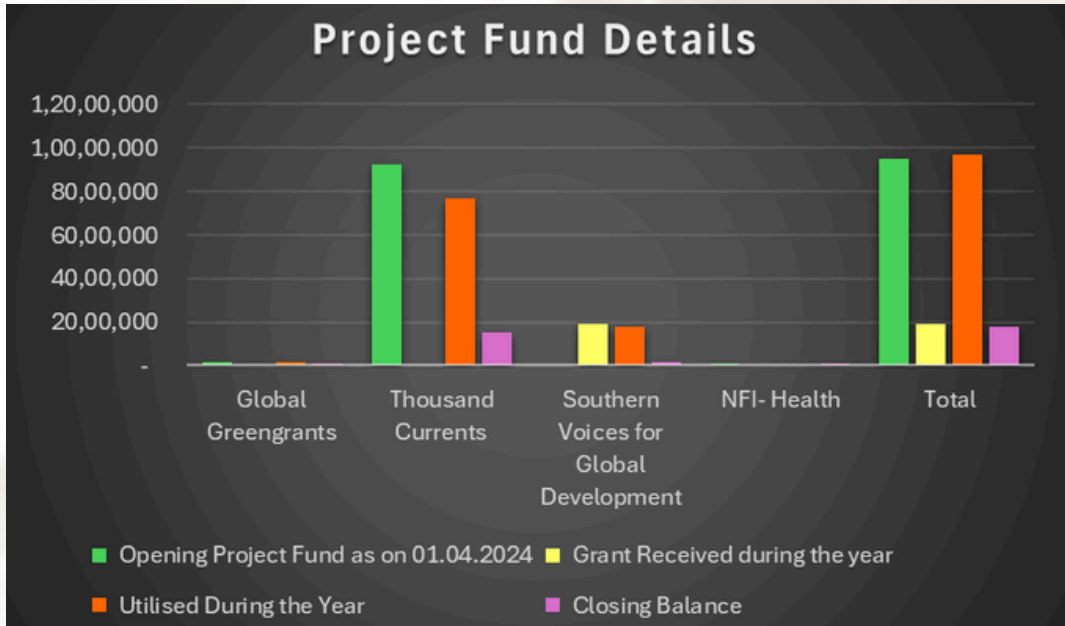
Summary of Income and Expenditure for the year ended on 31st March 2025	
INCOME	
Grant	19,36,333.00
Income from Investment	4,66,943.00
Bank Interest	2,04,330.00
Other	83,130.00
Total	26,90,736.00
EXPENDITURE	
Program Expenses	96,72,765.00
Admin Expenses	1,96,141.00
Depreciation	89,852.00
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-7268022
Total	26,90,736.00

Program Expenses 2024-25	
Particular	Amount
Youth Engagement with Ecological Sustainability: Research and Capacity Building Accompaniment Initiative	1,51,089.00
Capacity Building, Training, Research and Skill Development Initiatives with natural resource dependent communities and youth Amplifying Community Voices	77,15,944.47
	18,05,732.00
Total	96,72,765.47



DETAIL OF PROJECT FUND

<i>Consolidated Projects</i>					
Sr. No.	Name of the Funder/ Name of the Project	Opening Project Fund as on 01.04.2024	Grant Received during the year	Utilised During the Year	Closing Balance
1	Global Greengrants	179,572	-	151,089	28,483
2	Thousand Currents	9,243,957	-	7,715,944	1,528,013
3	Southern Voices for Global Development	-	1,932,833	1,805,732	127,101
4	NFI- Health	71,605.50	-	-	71,605.50
	Total	9,495,134	1,932,833	9,672,765	1,755,202



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



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Mr. Bhanwar Singh Chadana (Vice President)



Mr. Josantony Joseph (Secretary)



Dr. Vaishali Vilas Sonavane (Treasurer)



Ms. Manjula Hotilal Pradeep



Ms. Ifat Hamid



Mr. Santosh Kumar



Mr. Sandeep Kumar Pattnaik



Mr. Milind Tukaram Kokje



NCAS TEAM [2024-25]

Anil T Varghese

Biswaranjan Parichha

Himanshu Damle

Gopal Dubey

Athira Prakash



Photos from the field of engagement







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