



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT  
2024-2025

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# INTRODUCTION





## ICON FELLOWSHIP IS THE WORLD'S MOST PRACTICAL FELLOWSHIP — BUILT FOR YOUNG LEADERS, DRIVEN BY REAL WORK, AND FOCUSED ON PROTECTING COMMUNITIES AND ECOSYSTEMS

“What this past year has reaffirmed for us at IBTI is that youth mean serious business. They are ready to work hard, stay grounded in the community, and lead transformative climate action with integrity....”



**Sweetilana Ranjan**  
Founder & CEO, IBTI

As the CEO of I-Behind The Ink (IBTI), I write with immense gratitude as we reflect on the transformational journey of the ICON Fellowship—a journey that has uplifted our organization and ignited the leadership of young changemakers at its core.

In the past year, the Fellowship has grown into a living, breathing movement shaped by the energy and vision of young people—youth who have shown up every single day with commitment, courage, and clarity of purpose. Through their leadership, we have seen that young people are not waiting for permission to act. They are already in motion—restoring degraded landscapes, reimagining community-based solutions, and reclaiming a future that centers both people and planet.

The ICON Fellowship experience has been both rigorous and deeply personal for our 10 fellows. With support from our technical and knowledge partners, they have restored 363 hectares of land, planted 350,000 saplings, and introduced 17 hectares of agroforestry. These efforts have reached over 1,000 community members. Each number holds a deeper story of listening to the land, engaging with people, and learning through hands-on experience. Six fellows have now launched their own restoration initiatives, each aiming to restore more than 100 hectares of land.

This work is grounded in knowledge, systems thinking, and deep relationships with communities. It is also guided by traditional wisdom and a commitment to long-term impact.

At IBTI, we carry a clear vision to restore 21,000 hectares of land across South Asia by 2030 through youth-led action.

The ICON Fellowship continues to serve as the foundation for this vision, preparing young leaders to take bold steps in designing and scaling climate solutions.

Beyond the Fellowship, our Rewilding Projects initiative continues to support alumni in growing their impact. These ongoing efforts are forming the roots of a resilient and interconnected ecosystem of changemakers. Each fellow represents a spark of potential that is now part of a larger, expanding network working toward environmental renewal and social transformation.

What this past year has reaffirmed for us at IBTI is that youth mean serious business. They are ready to work hard, stay grounded in community, and lead with integrity. Our role—as an organization—is to support, equip, and elevate them. The ICON Fellowship will continue to be a launchpad for young changemakers across India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, ensuring they have the tools, mentorship, and networks they need to lead with strength and sustainability.

To our fellows, partners, and communities: thank you. Your belief in this mission has laid the groundwork for something far greater than any single initiative. Together, we are not only restoring ecosystems—we are restoring hope, courage, and belief in what's possible.

Let this be our call to action—for the planet, for the people, and for the generations yet to come.

A handwritten signature in cursive script.

**Sweetilana Ranjan**







# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

## Successful Completion of Pilot Fellowship Batch

Equipping 10 emerging climate leaders with essential skills in ecological restoration and laying a strong foundation for future cohorts

## 09 fellows completed their transformational journey

Emerging as future environmental leaders committed to driving change within their communities and local ecosystems.

## Launch of 06 Environmental Enterprises

Initiating rewilding and restoration ventures aimed at large-scale, community-led ecological impact



“This fellowship significantly enhanced my leadership and restoration skills. Working with Indigenous communities in Assam challenged me to adapt and grow, especially as someone from Nepal. **It strengthened my cross-cultural communication and provided valuable ecological insights.** It’s been a powerful journey of personal and professional growth.”

- **NABIN BHATTARAI**  
*BATCH 1 FELLOW*





# THE FELLOWSHIP JOURNEY

The ICON Fellowship is a 16-month residential program structured across five semesters. It equips young environmental leaders with the skills to tackle urgent ecological challenges through rewilding, regenerative agriculture, and community-led conservation. Graduates emerge with both technical and entrepreneurial capacities to lead transformative change across the Eastern Himalayas.





# FELLOWSHIP CURRICULUM AND TIMELINE



## SEMESTER 1

Induction, Indigenous Hub, Location Induction, Knowledge, Symposium, Self Consciousness



## SEMESTER 3

Stakeholder Management, Community Resource Group, Live Action Project, Nursery instalment, Decoding Systematic Change



## SEMESTER 5

Internships/Public Systems, Projects, Entrepreneurial Track, Fundraising & Financial management, Funding - pitching & applying for grants, Communication Platforms

## SEMESTER 2

Community Immersion, Indigenous Hub, Research, Methodologies, Indigenous Knowledge, Symposium



## SEMESTER 4

Live Action Project, Field Finances, Impact Monitoring, Agroforestry & Forestation, Analyzing the ecosystem





“The Fellowship sparked both personal and professional growth. Learning from indigenous communities reshaped my view of climate resilience, while working on land restoration deepened my understanding of the link between ecosystems and livelihoods. It gave me the skills and confidence to lead meaningful restoration and conservation efforts.”

- **RENU KUMARI**  
BATCH 1 FELLOW





# LEADERSHIP TRACK

Leadership Track focuses on the transformative journey to build self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making. Through immersive workshops, mentorship, and experiential learning, they cultivate systems thinking, collaborative leadership, and the confidence to lead grassroots and policy-level change.

## Building Resilience

The Leadership Track nurtures inner resilience by cultivating self-awareness, emotional agility, and adaptive thinking. Through reflective practices, peer learning, and real-world challenges, fellows develop the capacity to navigate uncertainty, manage stress, and stay rooted in their values.

## Awareness and Introspection

Structured frameworks and tools like, Cognitive Based Compassion Training (CBCT), Daily Debrief Circles, and Reflection Journals are integrated into the curriculum to strengthen inner wellbeing, enabling fellows not only to sustain themselves but also to inspire and mobilize communities amidst climate and ecological adversity.

## Learning and Problem Solving

The SAMVAAD Series offers direct engagement with thought leaders and practitioners, exposing fellows to diverse worldviews and ethical leadership. These interactions help build clarity, empathy, and the courage to lead in complex social-ecological systems.





“The fellowship taught me that combining agroecology with traditional practices makes farming sustainable and regenerative. Working with indigenous communities showed me that habitat restoration also restores hope and dignity. This experience helped me recognize the power of shared knowledge and community-led change. **Most importantly, it strengthened my confidence to lead with empathy and commit to building a more resilient and equitable rural future.**”

- **RITUSMITA MAZUMDAR**  
BATCH 1 FELLOW



# TECHNICAL TRACK

Technical Track is a rigorous, field-based learning engaged on field towards habitat restoration, rewilding science, climate resilience, and nature-based solutions. Fellows gain hands-on skills through on-ground projects, guided by ecologists, scientists, and practitioners, ensuring they can apply cutting-edge knowledge in real-world contexts

## Integrating Science with Traditional Wisdom

The Technical Track is designed to equip fellows with a comprehensive understanding of ecological restoration by blending modern scientific research with traditional, community-based practices. This fusion allows for the development of context-specific, inclusive, and sustainable solutions that are both innovative and deeply rooted in region-based knowledge.

Fellows engage in hands-on learning through expert-led modules and field-based immersions, building skills in biodiversity mapping, soil and water conservation, native species regeneration, and climate-resilient land-use planning. These practical experiences are complemented by analytical frameworks, helping fellows interpret and apply data effectively in complex ecological settings.

## Applied Knowledge

As a culmination of their learning in the Technical Track, each fellow applies their knowledge through a Live Action Project—a field-based initiative focused on restoring 16 hectares of degraded land.

These projects serve as real-time demonstrations of ecological regeneration and agroforestry practices, where fellows design and implement context-sensitive models in collaboration with local communities.

Rooted in both scientific principles and traditional wisdom, the Live Action Projects provide fellows with critical experience in translating theory into practice, while fostering community ownership and long-term ecological stewardship.





# SCIENCE AND TRADITIONS

A critical component of the track is the immersion with indigenous communities, where fellows spend over 304 hours learning directly from custodians of local ecosystems. This deep engagement with traditional knowledge systems fosters humility, respect, and a systems-thinking approach. Fellows learn how time-tested practices—often overlooked in mainstream conservation—can enhance the design and impact of restoration efforts.





“This Fellowship has been a transformative journey. It helped me grow into a more compassionate and environmentally conscious individual. From working on habitat restoration and Agroforestry to engaging with communities, every experience has shaped my perspective on sustainability and resilience.”

- **SHEFALI**  
*BATCH 1 FELLOW*





# TECHNICAL JOURNEY FLOW



## Habitat Restoration & Agroforestry

Land Scouting, Land Identification, Technical Workshops, Community Mobilization, Community Immersion, Land Preparation, Plantation



## Live Action Project

16 Hectares of habitat restoration per fellow, 1 Hectare of agroforestry per fellow, Community Immersion, Nursery Set Up & Management

## Indigenous Hub

16 Fishermen from Mishing community registered in GIAS. Traditional knowledge compilation, Ethnobotanical knowledge repository, Climate resilience plan



## Community Capacity Building

Community Engagement, Capacity Building Workshop, Environment Awareness Workshop, Plantation Safety Workshop





“I learned modern farming techniques that blend science and traditional wisdom, making farming sustainable, while restoring habitats. I also discovered how to create opportunities and uplift communities by sharing knowledge and building skills together. The fellowship also helped me connect with my inner potential, giving me confidence and a deeper sense of purpose to contribute meaningfully to the rural progress of our country.”

- **DIPANKAR SUNDI**  
*BATCH 1 FELLOW*





# IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASURING FELLOWSHIP OUTCOMES

Measuring fellowship outcomes is a holistic system that supports individual growth and program effectiveness each semester. Through **360-degree assessments—self, peer, and mentor reviews—fellows receive feedback to advance personal goals**, while the team gathers insights to refine interventions. Consolidation Exhibitions showcase learning, and peer learning and mentoring strengthen Individual Development Plans. A consolidated rating informs strategic planning, ensuring continuous improvement.





## Consolidation Exhibition

It is a semester-wise event where fellows present their learning journeys through interactive displays, storytelling, and creative showcases for scholars, local communities, and stakeholders.

This platform not only showcases fellows' progress but also fosters networking with conservation experts, encourages deep introspection, and strengthens their connection with both the community and fellow participants.

## Peer-to-Peer Learning

It is as part of a process that celebrates diversity, the fellowship actively fosters peer-to-peer learning, where fellows exchange knowledge, skills, and experiences through collaboration, group projects, and community engagement.

This horizontal learning model emphasizes collaboration over competition, promoting empathy, mutual growth, and shared responsibility, and creating an inclusive ecosystem that supports personal development, professional growth, and a strong sense of community.



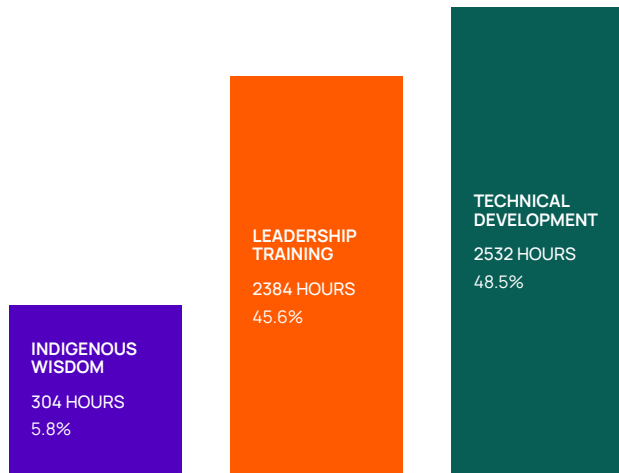


## Measured Impact

This fellowship is a thoughtfully crafted learning journey that blends technical training, leadership development, and indigenous community engagement—a rare fusion shaped by deep strategic intent. Instead of overwhelming fellows with theory, it strikes a precise balance between scientific rigor, human-centered leadership, and lived indigenous wisdom. This intentional design makes the fellowship both grounded and innovative—uniquely relevant in preparing fellows to lead on the ground, with communities, for ecology, and for a future that calls for bold, integrated youth-led solutions.

## Fellowship Learning Journey

18 Months      430 Days      5220 Hours





# ECOLOGICAL OUTCOMES

## 400,000+

Sapling capacity across 4 nurseries

## ₹12,650

Additional revenue generated  
in agroforestry yield

## 363ha

Degraded land restored

## 350+

Degraded land restored

## 17ha

Agroforestry initiated

## 24

Workshops  
Conducted

## 10

Trained as future  
environment leaders

## 6

Environmental  
enterprises launched





# RAPID SCALING PORTFOLIO

The Rapid Scaling Portfolio reflects ICON Fellowship's long-term impact—demonstrating how strategic investment in leadership drives exponential ecosystem restoration and equips fellows to lead high-impact rewilding efforts.

Graduating fellows become field leaders, scaling their projects and mentoring new cohorts. With support and rewilding grants, over 60% of alumni continue independently or as project managers—advancing the Mountains to Mangroves goal of restoring 1 million hectares.

This fellow-led, community-based model ensures restoration is scalable, technically sound, and sustainable. Structured training, hands-on experience, and continued support turn each fellow into a multiplier for environmental regeneration.





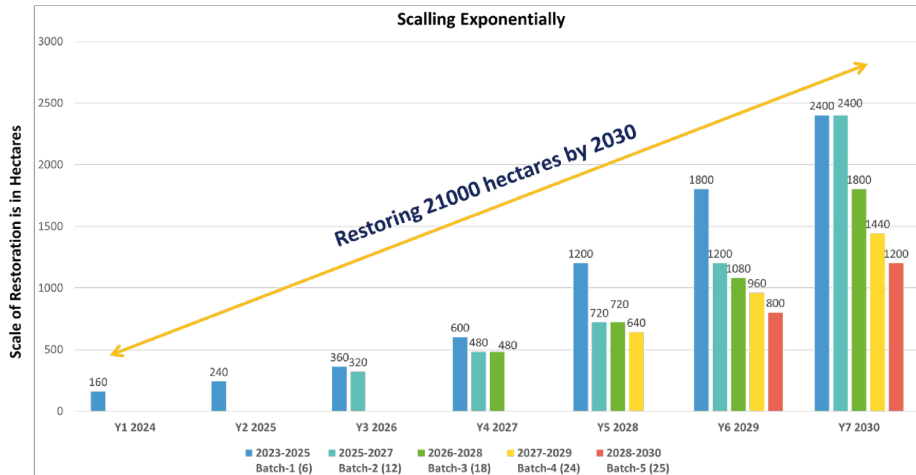
## The “Scaling Exponentially” graph shows land restoration from 2024 to 2030 across five fellowship batches.

Batch-1 (2023–2025) starts with 160 ha in Y1 and scales up to 1,200 ha by Y5, with compounding impact.

Each new batch begins small but scales quickly:

- Batch-2 grows from 320 hectares in Y3 to 2,400 ha by Y7
- Batch-3 from 480 ha in Y4 to 1,800 ha by Y7
- Batch-4 from 640 ha in Y5 to 1,440 ha by Y7
- Batch-5 adds 800 ha in Y6 and 1,200 ha in Y7

By 2030, the cumulative restoration projects across cohorts exceed 3,000+ units, showcasing layered growth and sustained local action. The total impact reaches 9,240 hectares by 2030.





# REWILDING PROJECTS





# ENTREPRENEURS PROFILE



## Kamal Nagate, Assam

Kamal Ngate, 35-year-old, from the Mising community in Sonitpur, Assam, is the founder of Jarsang EcoVision Pvt. Ltd., an initiative launched during the ICON Fellowship's rewilding project. Although Kamal initially migrated to the city for a career in sales and marketing, his deep-rooted family legacy of tribal upliftment eventually drew him back to his community.

Through Jarsang EcoVision, Kamal blends traditional ecological knowledge with modern conservation tools to restore degraded landscapes and strengthen indigenous livelihoods. His work engages Mishing, Adivasi, and Nepali communities in sustainable practices—promoting natural regeneration, biodiversity, food security, and soil preservation, while safeguarding tribal heritage.

Supported through the ICON rewilding program, the project is restoring over 100 hectares of land over two years. Kamal's vision is to build self-sustaining ecosystems where indigenous wisdom and science coexist—empowering communities to protect both their environment and cultural identity for generations to come.



## Dayal Kant Munda, Jharkhand

Dayal Kant Munda, a 34-year-old from the Munda tribe in Jharkhand and an ICON Fellow, is the Founder and CEO of VANGRAM HABITATREE PRIVATE LIMITED. After years in the fashion industry, he left his career to serve his tribal community through sustainable solutions and agroforestry.

Now based in Assam, Dayal works with Bodo communities in Sonitpur to restore 100 hectares of degraded land by planting 100,000 native trees over two years—benefiting 150 households and 750 people, while nurturing youth climate stewards. His model combines rewilding, sustainable livelihoods, and indigenous leadership.

His collaborative approach engages farmers, women, and youth, alongside partnerships with government, NGOs, academia, and the private sector. Dayal envisions resilient ecosystems where empowered communities protect nature and preserve their cultural heritage.



## Birendra Bisht, Nepal

Birendra Bist, 27, is an international ICON Fellow from Sudurpaschim Province, Nepal, and the founder of Nature Nexus Nepal (NNN)—a non-profit focused on ecological restoration and community empowerment.

Through NNN, Birendra works to restore degraded land and conserve biodiversity in the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL). His efforts include sustainable forest management, climate change mitigation, and controlling floods and erosion. He actively supports livelihoods through agroforestry, sustainable agriculture, and capacity building.

A strong advocate for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), Birendra partners with government bodies, NGOs, and local communities to share knowledge and best practices. His vision is a Nepal with thriving ecosystems and resilient, inclusive communities, where cultural heritage and sustainable development go hand in hand.



# ENTREPRENEURS PROFILE



## Shahif Ali, West Bengal

Shahif Ali, 26, youth from West Bengal, India, is the founder of Haloflora Restoration Pvt. Ltd. Through his rewilding initiative under the ICON Fellowship, he is leading mangrove restoration efforts in the Sundarbans, addressing issues like embankment erosion, saline intrusion, and the decline of the endangered Sundari tree.

With support from the ICON rewilding project, Shahif is restoring over 100 hectares of degraded mangroves while improving livelihoods for tiger widows—women who lost spouses to tiger attacks—by involving them in Sundari plantation and sustainable agriculture. Through training and income-generation, he promotes dignity, inclusion, and economic resilience.

His short-term goal is to build climate-resilient livelihoods by converting barren land through agroforestry. Informed by global exposure, including a mangrove internship at Konservasi Indonesia, Shahif collaborates with farmers, youth, local leaders, and NGOs to create a replicable model of community-led conservation.



## Dipankar Sundi, Assam

Dipankar Sundi, 35, an indigenous youth from the Sundi Tribe in Assam, India, joined the fellowship with over eight years of corporate experience as an engineer. Moved by climate concerns and the disappearance of the indigenous Keheru tuber fruit, he left his career to address the link between biodiversity loss and youth migration.

With the support of the ICON rewilding project, Dipankar leads Kuhipaati NatureWorks Pvt. Ltd., working to restore 100 hectares of degraded land in Sonitpur and Udalguri by planting 100,000 saplings. His work empowers over 150 local youth and women through environmental education and capacity building, setting the stage for wider ecosystem recovery.

His long-term goal is to restore 500+ hectares across the Eastern Himalayan Region, revive native biodiversity like Keheru, and build self-sustaining, eco-conscious communities. Dipankar collaborates with local committees, panchayats, NGOs, scientists, and farmers to scale and sustain these conservation efforts.



## Nabin Bhattarai, Nepal

Nabin Bhattarai, 24, from Koshi Province, Nepal, leads Vision Green Organization Nepal (VGO Nepal), a youth-led initiative launched through the ICON Fellowship's rewilding project to drive decentralized environmental movements across the country.

Through VGO Nepal, Nabin empowers youth and local communities to engage in habitat restoration, agroforestry, and environmental advocacy. His grassroots model emphasizes the leadership of marginalized groups in advancing long-term ecological and social change.

With support from the ICON rewilding program, Nabin is leading efforts to restore 100 hectares of degraded land in the region. His vision is to create resilient ecosystems that regenerate landscapes while supporting sustainable livelihoods for indigenous communities, farmers, and youth—blending ecological restoration with cultural preservation and inclusive development.



# INTRAPRENEURS PROFILE



## Ritusmita, Assam

Ritusmita, 25, a youth from Assam, holds a Master's in Environmental Science from Tezpur University. She works as a Research Associate at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in Guwahati, focusing on Restoration and Carbon Finance projects.

At TERI, she collaborates with the Sumi community in Nagaland's Zunheboto district, promoting sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and nature-based solutions through community-led, participatory approaches.

Rooted in Assam and her ICON Fellowship experience, Ritusmita integrates ecological science with traditional knowledge to build resilient ecosystems and adaptive livelihoods. She envisions a climate-conscious future where rural communities across Northeast India lead conservation alongside cultural stewardship.



## Shefali Yadav, Chattisgarh

Shefali Yadav, 24, from Chhattisgarh, India, is an ICON Fellow with a Master's degree in Chemistry. She works with the Environment and Social Intelligence team at NatureDots Pvt. Ltd., a New Delhi-based organization active across multiple states.

Shefali is part of AquaNurch Champions, a water quality monitoring initiative that builds data-driven systems to tackle water-related health, social, and economic challenges. Her goal is to develop a community-led framework to protect water resources and reduce losses caused by poor quality.

Through the ICON Fellowship, Shefali has strengthened her environmental commitment. She leads stakeholder engagement and training programs in Chhattisgarh and Bihar, empowering communities to monitor and manage water quality using scientific tools and data.



## Renu, Jharkhand

Renu, 23, from Jharkhand, is a Communication Designer at Pratigya, a grassroots organization supporting marginalized rural and urban communities. She is a recent ICON Fellow and completed an internship with PLUC TV, where she harnessed storytelling and digital media for social change.

At Pratigya, Renu creates newsletters, reports, pitch decks, and project narratives, collaborating closely with children, women, government agencies, and schools. Her work focuses on making development communication impactful, accessible, and engaging.

Through the ICON Fellowship and practical experience, Renu continues to grow as a creative communicator, using visual storytelling to amplify grassroots voices and strengthen social impact by blending traditional design with modern digital media.



# LOOKING FORWARD

## Welcome a New Cohort

Induct 22 dynamic youth into the 2025–2027 ICON Fellowship, strengthening the movement for ecological and cultural regeneration.

## Expand Regional Reach

Deepen engagement across South Asia —including India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, through localized partnerships and community-driven initiatives.

## Scale Rewilding Efforts

Support 06 pioneering rewilding ventures aimed at restoring over 600 hectares of biodiverse landscapes in India and Nepal.

## Empower Local Voices

Launch youth hubs rooted in indigenous and rural communities to cultivate leadership and steward place-based knowledge.

## Build Strong Alliances

Forge strategic partnerships to scale impact, enhance knowledge exchange, and catalyze systemic change.





# THANK YOU

We are deeply thankful to our partners whose collaboration, expertise, and support have been instrumental in shaping meaningful fellowship experiences and impactful outcomes.







# ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2024-2025

FINANCIAL AND IMPLEMENTATION PARTNER



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TO MANGROVES**

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