



ROHINI  
NILEKANI  
*philanthropies*

**Annual Report**  
2023-2024

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This annual report was published by the Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies Foundation in August 2024




# I. Letters from Our Leadership

Researchers Radhika Nair and Siddhi Jaishankar collect data on the structural complexity of reefs in Bangaram island, Lakshadweep. Working with their feet up, they tread carefully to steer clear of damaging the delicate branching corals along the transect.  
Photo Credit: Wenzel Pinto,  
Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF)

# LETTER FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Dear Friends,

The journey of philanthropy is ever-evolving, and as I reflect on our collective path, I'm struck by the untapped potential that lies before us. We stand at a pivotal moment, at a precarious time in human history. I truly believe that the convergence of wealth, innovation, and social consciousness can reshape the future that we fear into a future we can look forward to.



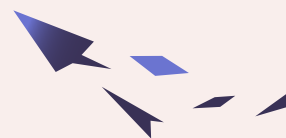
Imagine a philanthropy landscape where boundaries blur, where resources flow freely towards impact rather than being constrained by individual mandates.

But are we truly harnessing this potential? Are we, as a community of philanthropists, pushing ourselves far enough?

I've been grappling with these questions, and I believe the answer lies in reimagining how we travel together. It's not just about occasional collaborations or sharing best practices. It's about fundamentally rethinking the ecosystem of giving.

Imagine a philanthropy landscape where boundaries blur, where resources flow freely towards impact rather than being constrained

**It demands that we view our wealth not as personal capital but as a collective resource for societal transformation.**



by individual mandates. Picture a network of givers, not just sharing funds but pooling knowledge, influence, and even failure stories to accelerate learning and innovation.

This vision requires us to shed our egos, to move beyond the comfort of our individual foundations and pet projects. It demands that we view our wealth not as personal capital but as a collective resource for societal transformation. After all, in modern societies, private wealth has to be believed to be and seen to be a force for public good.

I'm excited by the possibilities this approach could unlock. What if we created a shared platform for risk-taking, where multiple philanthropists could jointly fund bold, experimental initiatives? Or a collective brain trust, where we combine our networks and expertise to tackle complex, systemic issues?

The challenges we face—climate crisis, growing inequality, threats to civic issues—are too interconnected and urgent for siloed approaches. They demand a new paradigm of collaborative giving that matches the scale and complexity of these issues.

This shift won't be easy. It requires vulnerability, a willingness to cede control, and a fundamental reimagining of what "success" looks like in philanthropy. The rewards to come at a personal and public level, would counter these discomforts.

We have been experimenting with various forms of collaboration over the years and hope to continue on this journey with other philanthropists. When the societal mission becomes bigger than the individual ambition, everything is possible.

I hope Indian philanthropy will create a new model for the world, travelling together towards new horizons.

Warmly,

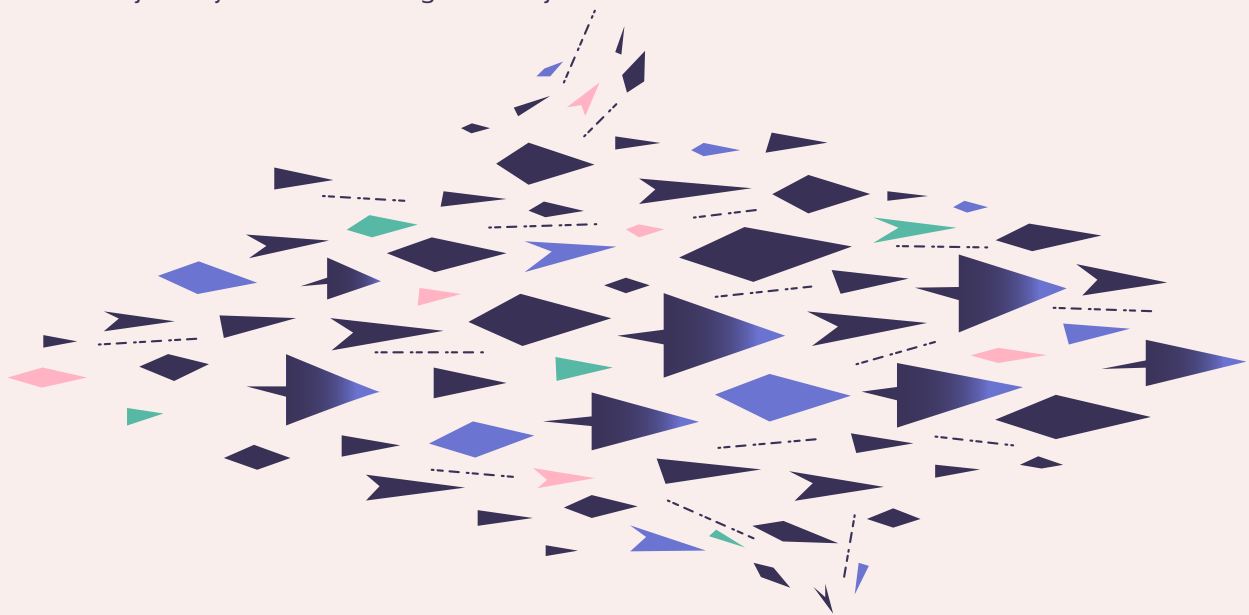
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rohini Nilekani". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

**Rohini Nilekani**

# LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friends,

Looking back on the past year at Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies (RNP), conversations with young changemakers during our Active Citizenship gathering on a train journey keep coming back to me. Their passion and commitment to driving change left a lasting impact on me. It was a gentle reminder that our role as a philanthropy is not just to fund, but to be co-travellers on a shared journey towards a stronger samaaj.



It was a gentle reminder that our role as a philanthropy is not just to fund, but to be *co-travellers* on a shared journey towards a stronger samaaj.



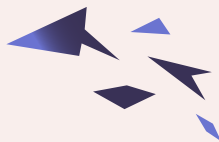
RNP's Active Citizenship Gathering

The past year, with our team firing on all cylinders, we've been able to go deeper with our partners, bring people together in meaningful ways, and amplify the voices that often go unheard. From the Active Citizenship gathering on the train to the well-being event for philanthropies in December, these get-togethers have sparked collaboration, learning, and a sense that we're all in this together.

One of the things I'm most proud of this year is the amount of time we've spent in the field, seeing our partners' work up close. Whether it was visiting the Zenith team in Madhya Pradesh, engaging with the Wildlife Conservation Trust, or meeting with Keystone Foundation, Shola Trust, ACCORD, and Kotagiri Medical Hospital in Tamil Nadu, these visits have given us a much richer understanding of the ground realities.



Time and again, we've seen how flexible, trust-based funding allows organisations to pivot, innovate, and respond to emerging needs.



Our partners never cease to amaze me with their resilience, innovation, and sheer dedication to their communities. Time and again, we've seen how flexible, trust-based funding allows organisations to pivot, innovate, and respond to emerging needs. One of our partners put it best: "RNP's support has allowed us to invest in our people, processes, and partnerships in ways that would not have been possible with project-based funding alone."

We've also doubled down on our commitment to learning, recognising that as a philanthropy, our job isn't to sit in judgment of our partners but to learn alongside them in the pursuit of social change. This has meant investing in our own capacity to learn, reflect, and adapt, as well as creating spaces for shared learning and knowledge exchange.



Through it all, the strength and resilience of our partners and the communities they serve have been a constant source of inspiration.

Of course, the past year hasn't been without its challenges. The lingering effects of the pandemic and the shrinking space for civil society in India have tested us all. But these challenges have only underscored the importance of collaboration, solidarity, and sticking to our values. Through it all, the strength and resilience of our partners and the communities they serve have been a constant source of inspiration.

**In FY 23-24, we gave INR ~81 Crores in grants across all our portfolios.** Our key portfolios are Access to Justice, Active Citizenship, Climate & Environment, Laayak (Gender), and Mental Health, alongside other areas of work. We've seen some really exciting progress and impact in each of these areas, from pushing

criminal justice reforms to accelerating climate action, from promoting gender equality to expanding access to mental health services.

Beyond the grants, we've also tried to use our voice, influence, and convening power to change the narrative around critical issues and amplify the perspectives of the communities we serve. We commissioned research on vital topics like the state of fatherhood in India, improving the effectiveness of government schemes, and reform at the intersection of crime and justice. We also supported our partners in conducting their own research to inform their strategies and interventions.

Recognising the importance of strong, resilient organisations, we invested heavily in capacity building for our partners, offering support in areas like finance & compliance, storytelling, technology, and fundraising.

From attending global forums like the World Economic Forum to launching campaigns like #HumLog (Active Citizenship portfolio), we've sought to illuminate the urgent challenges of our time and catalyse collective action.

As we look ahead, we're excited to build on the lessons and momentum of the past year. We're particularly pumped about two big gatherings in October 2024 – one focused on our mental health work with partners at NCBS and NIMHANS, and another bringing together folks working on Environment and Climate. These get-togethers will be incredible opportunities for learning, collaboration, and collective strategising.

**Let's keep learning from each other,  
pushing the boundaries of what's  
possible, and working towards a future  
where every individual can thrive and  
every community can flourish.**



We're also committed to keeping the conversation going within the philanthropic ecosystem. Building on the success of last year's mixers and gatherings for people working in philanthropy and grantmaking, we plan to keep fostering these connections and conversations in the year ahead.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the tireless efforts and commitment of our partners and our team. Your dedication, resilience, and belief in the possibility of change continue to inspire us every day. And to Rohini, thank you for your visionary leadership, your trust in the power of people and communities, and your relentless pursuit of a more just and equitable world.

As we embark on this next leg of our journey, I invite you to join us in the collective work of building a stronger samaaj. Let's keep learning from each other, pushing the boundaries of what's possible, and working towards a future where every individual can thrive and every community can flourish.

With gratitude, hope, and renewed commitment,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gautam John', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Gautam John**

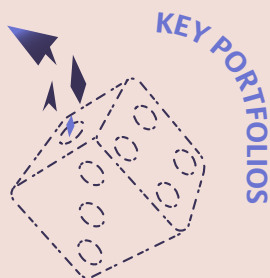


## II. About Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies Foundation (RNPF)

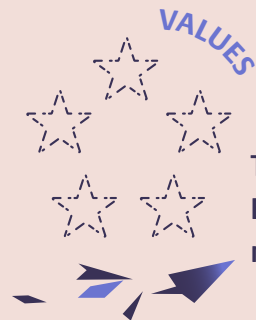
WELL Labs researchers take measurements  
of water levels in Jakkur lake.  
Photo Credit: Shashank Palur, WELL Labs

# ABOUT RNPF: FY 23-24 SNAPSHOT

A quest for  
a strong samaaj



Access to Justice, Active Citizenship,  
Climate & Environment,  
Laayak (Gender), Mental Health



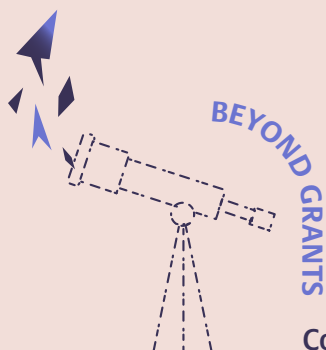
Trust, Curiosity, Empathy,  
Embracing Failure, Humble-  
not modest



Unrestricted Funds,  
Multi-year Grants,  
A Learning Partner



**118** Partners

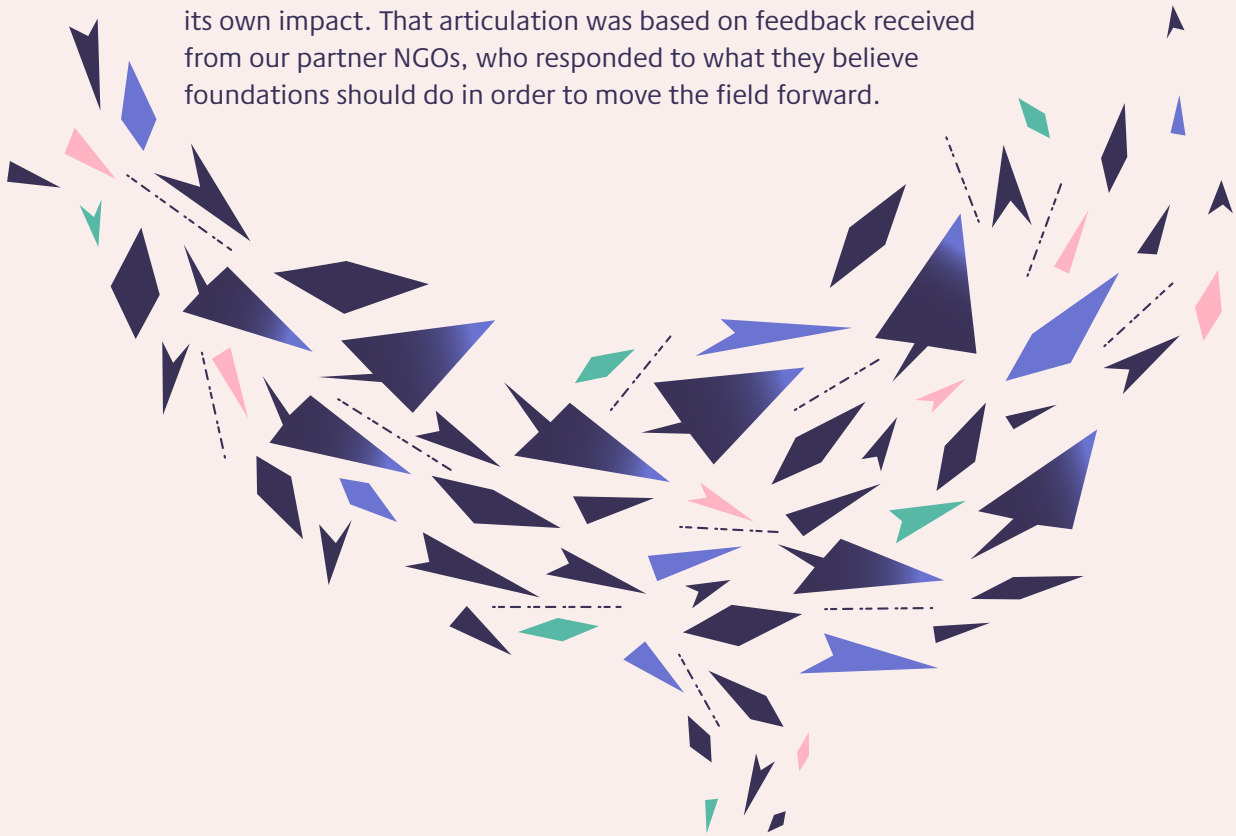


Collaborative Philanthropy, Research,  
Convenings, Content, Capacity Building



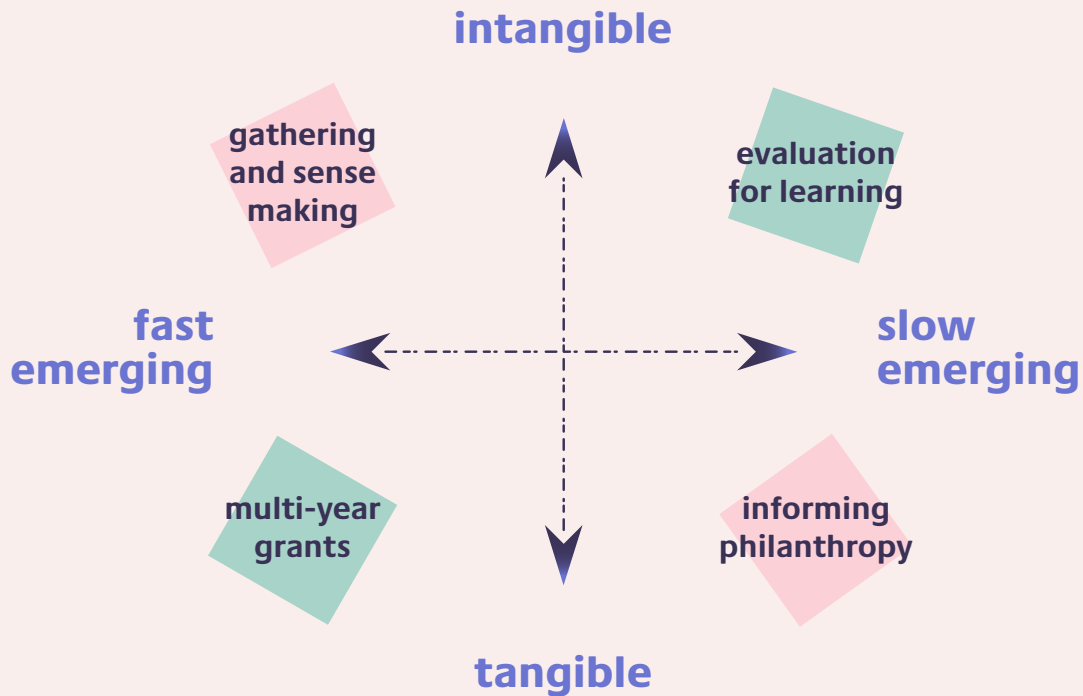
# THE YEAR THAT WAS: RNP'S IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Two years ago, we shared our framework for understanding the impact of our partner organisations in an article titled, [Plotting Impact Beyond Simple Metrics](#) <sup>2</sup>, in SSIR. In that piece, we also articulated how Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies (RNP) could assess its own impact. That articulation was based on feedback received from our partner NGOs, who responded to what they believe foundations should do in order to move the field forward.



This year, we are attempting to report our impact in that framework. In it, we are not including the field-level impact of our grantees – as we believe that is a result of their toil and to their credit.

This year, we are attempting to report our impact in that framework. In it, we are not including the field-level impact of our grantees - as we believe that is a result of their toil and to their credit. By laying down our unique contributions, we hope to learn and understand our role in the ecosystem better.



### **Tangible, fast emerging: multi-year grants**

In 2023-24, we had 118 active grantee partners, of which 42.7% received multi-year grants with a majority of them being unrestricted. We also launched a new portfolio - Mental Health - with a large outlay of INR 100 Crores (across 5 years) along with an additional annual allocation for mental health grants. We have

**In 2023-24, we had 118 active grantee partners, of which 42.7% received multi-year grants with a majority of them being unrestricted.**





also increased our allocations towards Small Grants, allowing us to bring new organisations into our ecosystem. One part of the increase in Small Grants was deployed towards capacity-building grants made out to RNP partners, with the objective of learning more about the capacity-building needs of our partner organisations. A direct result of this effort is a separate head for capacity-building grants in the FY 24-25 budget.

**In 2023-24, we gathered our Active Citizenship portfolio and learned several things about the opportunities and challenges of operating in this space.**

### **Intangible, fast emerging: gatherings and sense-making**

For our areas of interest, we take a portfolio approach, where the cumulative efforts of multiple partners as well as RNP in any thematic area need to be understood alongside the broader, higher trends for that domain. One way in which we do this is through portfolio gathering where partners working in a similar domain convene, and see the whole system together. In 2023-24, we gathered our Active Citizenship portfolio and learned several things about the opportunities and challenges of operating in this space. By creating public assets - a civic engagement campaign in partnership with Civic Studios and insights from portfolio partners - we hope to continue learning and informing the space of civic engagement and active citizenship in India.

**Outside of our events, we also supported seven partner organisations in holding events of their own.**





Outside of our events, we also supported seven partner organisations in holding events of their own. By bringing their stakeholders together, NGO partners get the opportunity to engage in sense-making at the level that feels relevant to them.

## **Slow emerging, intangible: evaluations for learning**

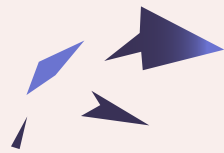
We commissioned and participated in several research and learning partnerships this year. Some key ones are highlighted below:

- **The State of India's Father report;** in partnership with Equipundo and ICRW: A first fatherhood survey in India aimed at understanding the perception, joys and constraints of fatherhood in India.
- **The State of Schemes<sup>[1]</sup> report;** in partnership with Haqdarshaq: This report hopes to look at the longer arc of social protection in India, with a deeper dive into the current status of last-mile delivery of welfare schemes and entitlements.
- **Civil Society and the State in India:** A two-part book looking at the history of leading civil society organisations and their interactions with the State. The series hopes to archive the vibrant legacy of civil society efforts in India, while also proffering learnings and models for the future.
- **Reimagining Crime & Punishment in India:** A research by the Criminal Justice team at [Vidhi Center for Legal Policy](#) <sup>↗</sup> to understand the impact of criminal laws, both on the criminal justice system and the citizens of India.
- **Community Driven Change,** a learning agenda, in [partnership with Bridgespan](#) <sup>↗</sup>: The report spotlights emerging evidence of the potential and impact of Community-driven Change (CDC), and identifies the factors that enable CDC to take hold. It also shares ideas for funders and implementing organisations eager to get started or to get more deeply involved in CDC.

## Slow emerging, tangible: informing philanthropy

A consistent feedback we get from NGO partners is that, aside from giving grants, donor organisations should find ways to bring better, creative funding practices into the ecosystem. As a domestic foundation, we take that role seriously. We take part and create avenues that allow us to interact and exchange ideas with peer foundations as well as HNIs. In 2023, we fronted or co-created four such interactions:

- **Women Givers meet-up:** Last July, several women philanthropists met up in Mumbai to share their experiences and insights about shaping and sharing the power of giving. Important questions were raised about women's relationship with money, the purpose and effectiveness of corpus funds, and strategies for involving the next-generation in philanthropy.
- **Philanthropy mixer:** 70 grantmakers representing 40-odd grant-making organisations attended the mixer held in Bengaluru. This event highlighted the increasing interest in integrating well-being into philanthropic practices to nurture a healthier, more collaborative philanthropic ecosystem built for the long term.



**A consistent feedback we get from NGO partners is that, aside from giving grants, donor organisations should find ways to bring better, creative funding practices into the ecosystem.**

- **Gender Huddle;** hosted by Bridgespan and co-created with RNP: The objective was to convene key domestic and foreign foundations that currently support gender programs in India, and understand how funding for this space can be increased.

➤ **Rohini Nilekani's speaking events:** Our Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani, spoke at over 25 events during the last financial year and interacted with philanthropists, students, our NGO partners and policy-makers. While the keynote addresses at IIMB and National Law School of India University (NLSIU) gave her an opportunity to hear from young minds, her participation in global panels at WEF and panels organised by Asia Philanthropy Circle, Co-Impact, Bridgespan and Alliance Magazine allowed her to share & learn with fellow-funders. She also participated in events organised by our partners and through field visits.

In Rohini Nilekani's words, *'a mirror is a must in the philanthropist's hand'*. We hope this attempt at self-reflection pushes us to deepen our journey of learning and impact alongside our dedicated partners and stakeholders.

# OUR BOARD



**Rohini Nilekani**  
Chairperson,  
Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies



**Nihar Nilekani**  
Director,  
Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies

# OUR TEAM

**Standing, left to right**

**Srinidhi K**, Lead – Finance

**Suresh Ponappa**, Chief Financial Officer

**Sahana Jose**, Associate Director – Communications

**Rohini Nilekani**, Chairperson

**Mable Roy**, Executive Assistant & Office Manager

**Abhishek Das**, Portfolio Lead



**Sitting, right to left**

**Tanya Kak**, Portfolio Lead

**Natasha Joshi**, Associate Director – Portfolio

**Shruti Sundaresan**, Lead – Communications

**Gautam John**, Chief Executive Officer

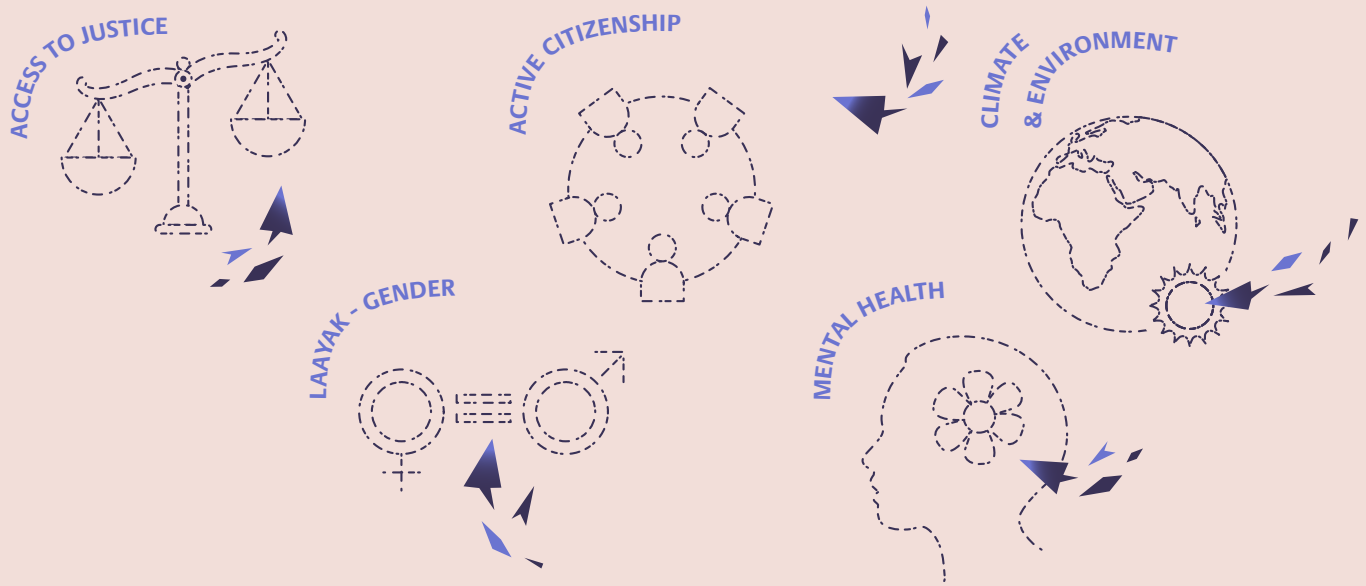
A group of men are gathered outdoors in a grassy field. One man in a green and blue plaid shirt is holding a professional camera with a large lens, showing it to several men in olive green uniforms. The men in uniforms are looking at the camera with interest. The background shows some trees and a clear sky.

Tallo Anthony, Green Hub Fellow, sharing footage with forest frontline staff of Manas National Park during a shoot. Tallo belongs to the Apatani tribe and grew up in Shergaon, Arunachal Pradesh.  
Photo Credit: Dusty Foot Foundation

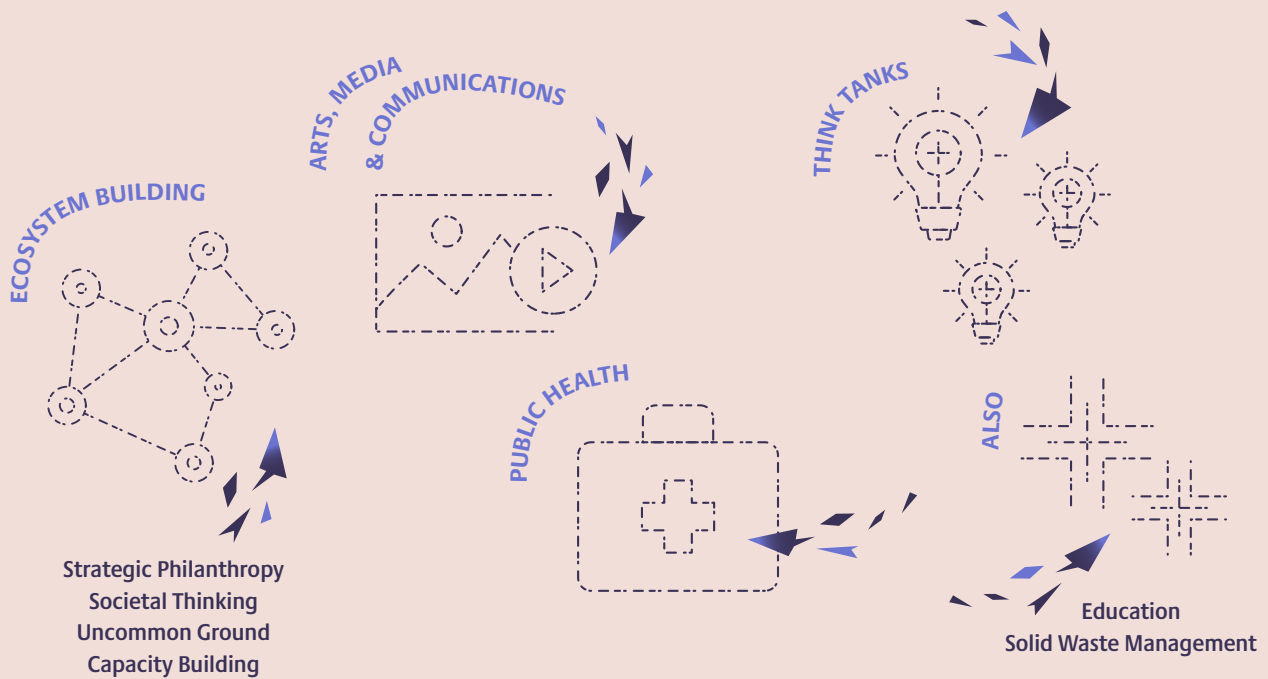
### III. Our Portfolios & Partners

# OUR PORTFOLIOS

## Key Portfolios



## Other Fields of Work



# OUR PARTNERS

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE



Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives Trust  
Daksh Society  
Dhwani Legal Trust  
IDIA Charitable Trust  
India Justice Report Project  
Justice Initiative Foundation  
Migration and Asylum Project  
Neev Siksha Jankalyan Samiti Gwalior  
Project 39A  
Project Second Chance  
South Asia Women Foundation India  
The Yuva Ekta Foundation  
Vayam Forum for Citizenship (Agami)  
Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy  
Zenith Society For Socio Legal Empower

## ARTS, MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS



Actors Ensemble India Forum  
Ahum Trust  
ALT EFF  
Artfirst Foundation  
Bangalore Literature Festival  
Elephant Corridor Films  
Forum for Knowledge and Social Impact (IDR)  
INTACH  
Kalakeri Sangeet Vidyalaya  
Kumar Gandharva Pratishtan Dewas  
Manzil Mystics  
Ooty Literary Festival  
Sameera Jain (*Independent Filmmaker*)  
Somaiya Kala Vidya Somaiya Vidyavihar  
The Sanket Trust - Rangashankara

## ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



Aadivasi Lives Matter  
ACCORD  
Anubhuti Charitable Trust  
Commutiny - The Youth Collective  
DemTech.ai  
Foundation For Social Transformation  
Goonj  
Haiyya Foundation  
Haqdarshak  
Indus Action Initiatives  
Jhatkaa.org  
Make A Difference  
Nagrika Policy Research Foundation  
Praja Foundation  
Pravah  
Project Potential Trust  
Reap Benefit Foundation  
Sahjani Siksha Kendra  
Synergy Sansthan  
The Magic Key  
UNICEF  
Vikasanvesh Foundation  
We The People Abhiyan  
Youth Ki Awaaz  
Yugantar

## ECOSYSTEM BUILDING



Accelerating India Philanthropy (AIP)  
Aikyam Fellows  
Ashoka Innovators for the Public India  
Asian Venture Philanthropy Network India Foundation (AVPN)  
Co.Labx  
Danamojo  
India Cares Foundation  
T4G Technology for Good Foundation  
The Shola Trust



# OUR PARTNERS

## CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT



Council of Philanthropies for Climate Action (ICC)  
Dusty Foot Foundation  
Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Tirupati  
Keystone Foundation  
Koshish  
Krishi Avam Paristhitiki Vikas Sansthan  
Living Labs Collaboration (Dusty Foot Foundation)  
National Centre for Biological Sciences  
(Indian Wildlife Ecology Conference)  
Nature Conservation Foundation  
Sahjeevan  
Spudnik Farms  
Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society  
The Coexistence Consortium (The Shola Trust)  
WELL LABS  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
Wildlife Conservation Trust  
Wildlife SOS  
YouCAN

## MENTAL HEALTH



Apni Shala Foundation  
Can Youth  
Indian Association for Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (IACBT)  
Mithra Trust  
National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS)  
The National Institute of Mental Health  
and Neurosciences (NIMHANS)

## PUBLIC HEALTH



The University of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences  
and Technology

## LAAYAK - GENDER



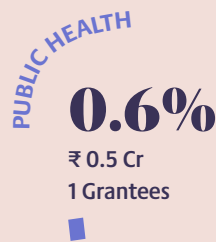
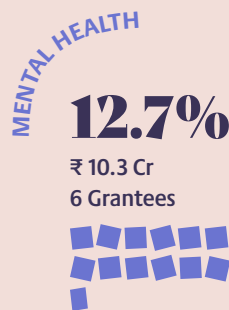
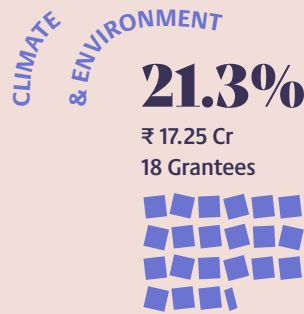
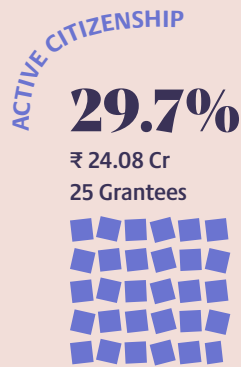
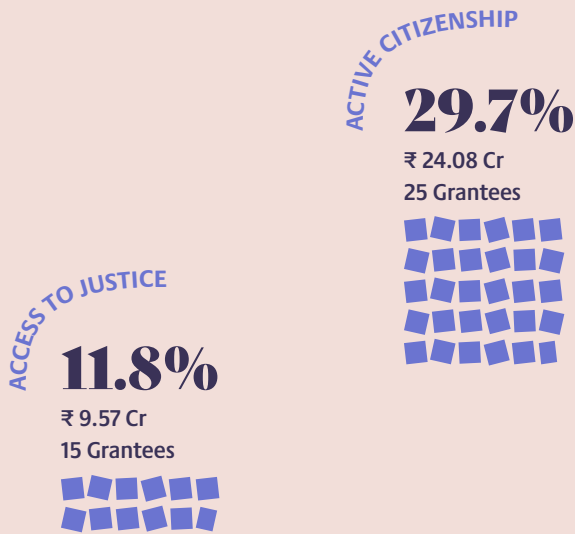
Breakthrough Trust  
Centre for Equity and Inclusion (CEQUIN)  
Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ)  
Equal Community Foundation (ECF)  
Equidiversity Foundation  
I'm Every Woman (Durga)  
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)  
Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA)  
Milaan Be The Change NGO  
Nirantar Trust  
Patang  
Project Khel  
Pukar  
Swayam  
The YP Foundation  
Uninhibited  
Welive Foundation

## ALSO



Awaaz E Niswaan  
Clean Coonoor  
Elicit Foundation  
Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research  
Mylos Foundation  
Sadbhavna Trust  
Savelife Foundation  
Social Work and Resesarch Centre (Barefoot College)  
Society for Aid in Development  
The ANT (Action North East) Trust  
Udbhav Vision Foundation  
Waste Warriors Society

# GRANTS GIVEN



Total amount of grant made  
**INR ~ 81 Crs**

Total number of grants

**118**



## TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR PARTNERS

RNP’s partnership emboldened us to advocate tirelessly for systemic change, engaging with prison leadership, governmental agencies, and advocacy organizations to ensure the scalability and adaptability of our models at a national level. Through investments in communication strategies and outreach efforts, RNP amplified our voice, enabling us to reach new heights of influence and impact. The ripple effects of RNP’s funding have been profound - catalyzing exponential growth and fostering a spirit of collaboration and innovation that transcends boundaries.

**Project Second Chance**



## TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR PARTNERS



“ RNP’s support through various research and communications-linked activities has helped us tremendously to build awareness about Active Citizenship. This has enabled us to strengthen our mass media outreach, and reach donors who are interested to fund the domain but were having difficulties understanding the benchmarks of a successful intervention. RNP’s passion for this portfolio has also greatly helped us in illustrating to funders that there is exciting innovation to support.”

CIVIS



Nagrika

As an organization, we leverage knowledge creation to enable dialogues that help generate action. With RNP’s support, we have been able to convert our knowledge into conversations and also build the groundwork for citizen-led action in small cities. For example, we built our initiative - Nagrika Connect. This initiative helps connect with actors across smaller cities on diverse issues including climate.”



## TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR PARTNERS




RNP has been a constant in our efforts to go deeper in the Nilgiris. The support from RNP for the hosting of the NilgiriScapes conference was a big morale booster. A group of local people decided to bring the world to the Nilgiris through a conference and at that time, we didn't even know what we were headed for. The conference was well attended and instantly owned by the local people of the Nilgiris. The interest to continue the conference as a space to dialogue about this landscape has captured the imagination of the local people and interested-groups alike.

**Keystone Foundation**

## TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR PARTNERS

**National Centre for  
Biological Sciences**



“ 2023-24 was the 1st full year of support from RNP for the Rohini Nilekani Centre for Brain and Mind (CBM). During this period, we were able to seamlessly transfer the human mental health research project (ADBS program) from previous Government of India funding (ended April 2024) to RNP-CBM funding. The mental health cohort is a challenging prospective cohort and we were satisfied that we could transition this without losing staff that had previously been trained by us; this would not have been possible without timely RNP support. The mental health cohort is a unique and important national and international research resource and we believe RNP’s support has helped secure its future for the good of society.”

“ RNP’s funding has enabled us to build relationships with government bodies such as Karnataka State Legal Services Authority, the Department of Women and Child Development Karnataka, and Prasar Bharati. It gave us the flexibility to allocate resources to essential institutional expenses for nurturing these collaborations, without being rigidly tied to specific outcomes. Through these partnerships, we have been able to engage with communities and demographics that were previously inaccessible, thus broadening the scope and impact of our initiatives.”

**Nyaaya**



## TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR PARTNERS

“ For last financial year, a big chunk of the grant from RNP was utilised in the production of our chat show on positive masculinity, Be a Man, Yaar, which turned out to be one of our highlights of the year. The show reached a lot of people, opened up conversations around masculinity and also led to more discoverability for Yuva.

Yuva



## TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR PARTNERS



“ Good work conditions, regular pay, and good outcomes in the program, have attracted men and women from different walks of life. We have on our rolls, erstwhile plantation and agricultural labourers, construction worker, and others, who would have otherwise shunned this job. In short we seem to have added dignity to what is considered a dirty job.”

Clean Coonoor



National Institute  
of Mental Health &  
Neurosciences  
(NIMHANS)

“ The funding from RNP has allowed us to maintain and expand the prospective clinical cohort of families with major psychiatric disorders. In terms of capacity building, we have been able to establish a great team of clinicians and scientists, including students, who will take up academic and research activities related to mental health in the next few years.

In terms of scientific outreach, we have conducted different kinds of public outreach events - informative booths, art exhibition, film screening, panel discussions, interactive art and science workshops, webinars - on mental health awareness. This has led to increased awareness and support for patients, caregivers, and families, while also advancing knowledge in the field.”





## TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR PARTNERS



**Centre for Catalyzing  
Change (C3)**

“RNP’s funding has been critical for C3 in deepening its work with boys and demonstrating pathways to redefine masculinity as part of our larger gender work. This project has helped us create a model that challenges traditional notions of masculinity and ‘masculine’ traits like dominance, aggression, and emotional stoicism. To deliver the project, we leveraged an at-scale government program, the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram, and we now have evidence that such programs that redefine masculinity and reject harmful stereotypes can be delivered at scale.”

## IV. Between Grants



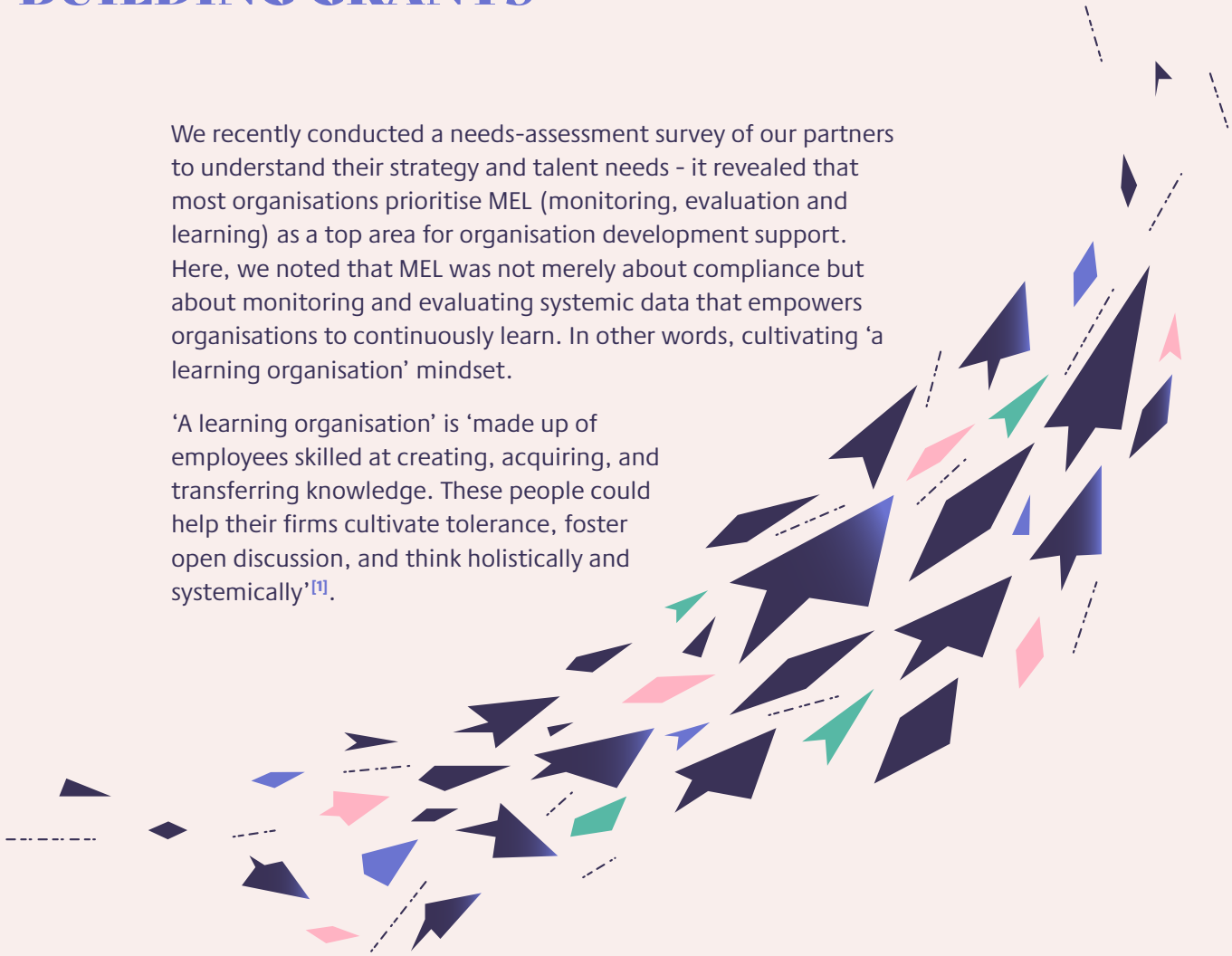
WCT's conservation dogs are an essential part of several ongoing projects - linear infrastructure mitigation, pangolin and otter ecology, detection of illegal use of dolphin oil, etc. They are also commissioned by the state Forest Departments for snare detection and human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

Photo Credit: Wildlife Conservation Trust

# CULTIVATING LEARNING ORGANISATIONS: RNP'S CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS

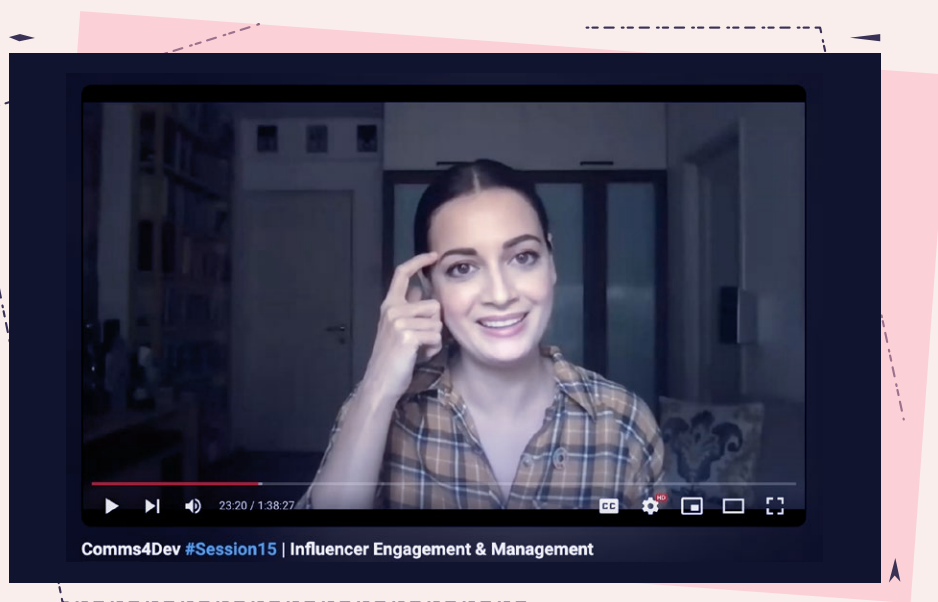
We recently conducted a needs-assessment survey of our partners to understand their strategy and talent needs - it revealed that most organisations prioritise MEL (monitoring, evaluation and learning) as a top area for organisation development support. Here, we noted that MEL was not merely about compliance but about monitoring and evaluating systemic data that empowers organisations to continuously learn. In other words, cultivating 'a learning organisation' mindset.

'A learning organisation' is 'made up of employees skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge. These people could help their firms cultivate tolerance, foster open discussion, and think holistically and systemically'<sup>[1]</sup>.



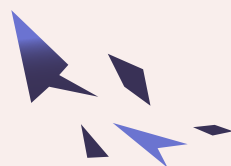
Supporting our partners to be 'a learning organisation' is at the heart of our approach to Capacity-Building (CB) grants.

Supporting our partners to be ‘a learning organisation’ is at the heart of our approach to Capacity-Building (CB) grants. This resonates with RNP’s commitment to fostering curiosity, embracing failure, and thinking systemically about social change.



Comms4Dev workshop by TerreGeneration

**Last FY, RNP invested INR 1.73 Crores through 19 CB grants, reaching 111 NGOs**



## **Our approach**

Over the last two years, we’ve experimented with several formats of capacity-building programs. These included expert-led learning sessions, module-based learning, working with intermediaries, storytelling grants and underwriting the fees for learning programs and offerings such as counselling costs and event expenses.

Our approach can be broadly categorised as direct grants and grants made to intermediaries who train/consult NGOs.

Last FY, RNP invested INR 1.73 Crores through 19 CB grants, reaching 111 NGOs<sup>[2]</sup>:

- **6 direct grants to our partners:** these included participation fees for conferences and learning programs, and partial salary costs for key resources.
- **10 grants to intermediaries (who have reached 105 NGOs):** we commissioned organisations such as Chambal Academy, TerreGeneration, and Saathi Development for module-based programs in storytelling, communications, and finance, respectively. We also absorbed the costs for participation in courses organised by BNDP (strategy), ILSS (fundraising), First Edition Arts (writing) and Tech4Good Community (technology).

## Our learnings

Through our grant-making process and conversations with partners, we have identified several key insights and challenges related to capacity building and cultivating learning organisations.

At the broadest level, we have found that the core domains requiring focus are consistent across the sector: Leadership, Organisation Strategy, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning, Fundraising, Communications, Finance and Compliance, and HR and Talent Development. However, each organisation's readiness levels vary significantly across these domains, and a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient.

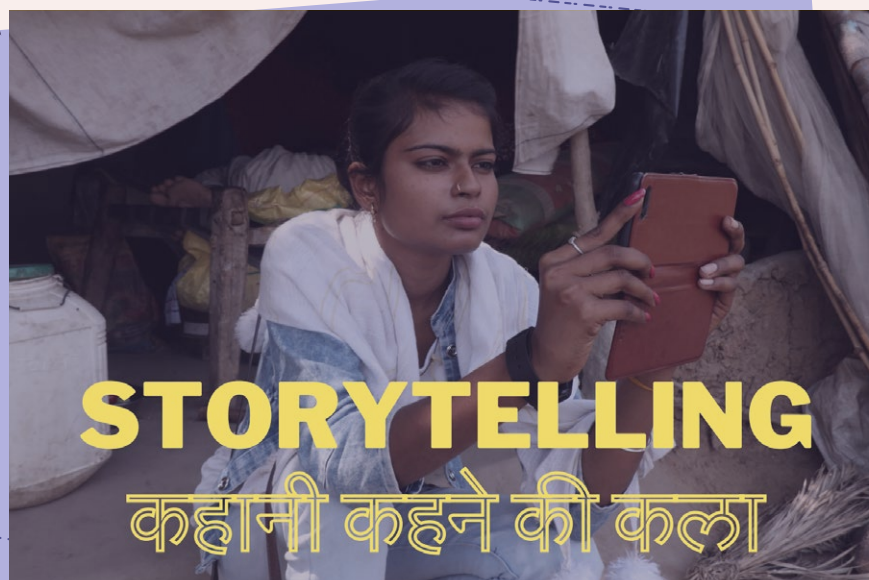


**Perhaps most importantly, our learnings have underscored the vital role of nurturing honest, open relationships between funders and their partners.**

This challenge is particularly acute for non-profits whose primary language is not English and those serving minority communities. In these cases, it is crucial to question conventional capacity-building offerings and press for customised, culturally relevant approaches that speak to the needs and context of local communities.

Another major challenge that has emerged is talent acquisition and retention, especially for organisations in rural and remote areas. Traditional learning and development offerings often fail to address this concern adequately. Tackling this issue may require innovative solutions, such as shared resources or partnerships with local institutions to develop talent pipelines.

In addition to these specific challenges, our experience has highlighted the importance of funding both programmatic work and capacity building in parallel rather than pitting them against each other. To this end, we believe funders should create dedicated funding streams for capacity building, recognising its critical role in driving long-term impact.



Storytelling workshop in Hindi by Chambal Academy

Perhaps most importantly, our learnings have underscored the vital role of nurturing honest, open relationships between funders and their partners. By creating a safe space for feedback and dialogue, funders can gain valuable insights to facilitate more meaningful and impactful capacity-building engagements.

Waste Warriors <sup>1</sup>, a partner supported by a storytelling grant from RNP, shares, “This grant aimed to enhance the organisation’s storytelling capabilities, ultimately enabling us to engage the masses effectively, influence positive behavioural change, garner support from media, government, and funders, and strengthen the organisation’s overall capabilities.” As we look ahead, RNP remains committed to investing in our partners’ capacity to learn, innovate, and drive change. By cultivating a culture of learning and adaptation, we believe we can collectively achieve our vision of a stronger and more equitable samaaj.

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1. <https://hbr.org/2008/03/is-yours-a-learning-organization> <sup>2</sup>  
2. Some might be counted twice as they have attended multiple offerings

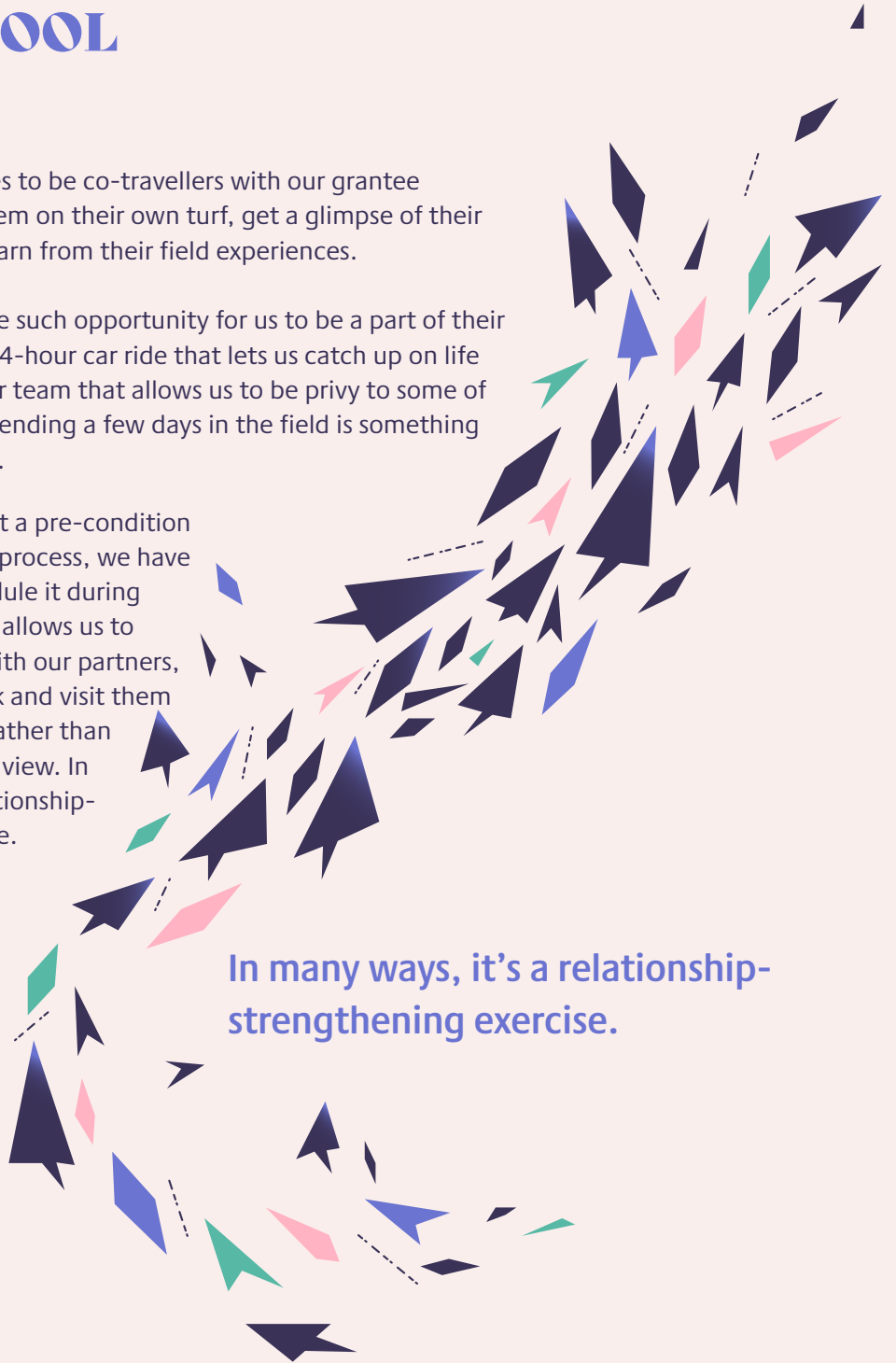
# GROUND TRUTH: FIELD VISITS AS A LEARNING TOOL

We often seek avenues to be co-travellers with our grantee partners – to meet them on their own turf, get a glimpse of their day-to-day life and learn from their field experiences.

Field visits provide one such opportunity for us to be a part of their world. Be it that long 4-hour car ride that lets us catch up on life or the lunch with their team that allows us to be privy to some of their little secrets - spending a few days in the field is something we eagerly anticipate.

Since a field visit is not a pre-condition for our grant-making process, we have the flexibility to schedule it during the grant period. This allows us to build a relationship with our partners, understand their work and visit them from a learning lens rather than a monitoring point of view. In many ways, it's a relationship-strengthening exercise.

**In many ways, it's a relationship-strengthening exercise.**





Our field notes are a powerful sense-making tool that informs our strategy and grant-making practices. They nudge us to reaccess our grant-making approach from both a critical and creative lens – it has primed the questions we ask during our proposal conversations & annual learning reports and has led to the emergence of newer offerings such as capacity-building grants. Field notes provide first-hand accounts of the challenges our partners face, like the lack of funds for organisational development or their efforts to form youth groups in minority localities, and the incredible work they do, such as liaising with Forest Officers or ensuring program influence on state policy.



**Our field notes are a powerful sense making tool that informs our strategy and grant-making practices.**

Looking back at the visits made through the last financial year, here are some highlights that stand out as we connect the dots:

- **People power:** Activating the agency of people is fundamental to most norm change journeys. Whether it's CORO working to change gender norms in low-income settlements in Mumbai or Keystone Foundation working with tribals in Kotagiri, solutions and knowledge reside within communities. These solutions need to be harnessed by ceding space to the affected people and creating an enabling environment for their voices and leadership to emerge.
- **Wicked problems defy straightforward answers:** Rather than approaching a problem with a specific solution, we advocate for listening, learning, and adapting. This ethos of curiosity over certainty, a value central to RNP, guided us during our visit to Acumen's Northeast India Collective. The fellows there grapple with balancing cultural preservation among tribals with advancing development (as commonly understood) in the region. A similar conundrum confronts ACCORD, where Adivasi youth, now educated and accessing healthcare, migrate to cities for livelihoods, risking the loss

of their cultural heritage cherished by previous generations.

➤ **Social change work is hard:** Despite challenges, it is deeply gratifying to witness the profound sense of ownership and fulfilment among our partners' ground teams. A standout experience was our visit to the Zenith Society in Shivpuri. Its team of all women in Malanpur, despite facing resistance at home to keep their jobs, take immense pride in their work and the opportunities it has afforded them. These intangible transformations, unmeasurable by numbers alone, underscore the value of our field visits.




Field visit to Malanpur, MP, with the NGO, Zenith

At our partner, Haiyya's Community Organising Festival, Prof. Marshall Ganz of the Kennedy School of Government remarked, "Power cannot be balanced if one party continues to have more of what the other party needs". Here, he was referring to funds being the cause of the power imbalance that exists between funders and NGOs. Field visits, in our experience, help level this imbalance by revealing that NGO partners possess much more of what funders need!



Field visit to Dehradun, Uttarakhand with the NGO, Waste Warriors

A photograph of a woman in a red sari operating a sewing machine in a workshop. She is focused on her work, stitching together green leaves. In the background, other women are also working at sewing machines. The workshop is simple, with a white wall and a blue door. The floor is concrete, and there are some green leaves scattered around. The overall scene depicts a small-scale manufacturing or craft production environment.

Members of the Ghummar Mahila Producer Company Limited (GMPCL), a farmer producer organisation with support from SRIJAN, stitch together palash leaves to make plates and bowls. Photo Credit: The Form Co. and India Climate Collaborative

## V. Financials

# FINANCIALS

## BALANCE SHEET

Particulars (All amounts in 'Lakhs' unless otherwise stated)	Note	As at March 31, 2024	As at March 31, 2023
<b>Equity and Liabilities</b>			
<b>Shareholders' funds</b>		<b>Shareholders' funds</b>	
Share capital	3	1.00	1.00
Reserves and surplus	4	208.20	163.51
		<b>209.20</b>	<b>164.51</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Trade payables	5	-	-
Total outstanding dues of micro enterprises and small enterprises		5.23	-
Total outstanding dues of creditors other than micro and small enterprises		7.30	16.37
Other current liabilities	6	22.00	25.09
		<b>34.53</b>	<b>41.46</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>243.73</b>	<b>205.97</b>
<b>Assets</b>			
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Property, Plant, Equipment and Intangible Assets		-	-
Property, Plant, Equipment	7	7.08	4.69
Other non-current assets	8	6.25	-
		<b>13.33</b>	<b>4.69</b>
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	9	224.68	200.26
Other current assets	10	5.73	1.02
		<b>230.41</b>	<b>201.28</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>243.73</b>	<b>205.97</b>

# FINANCIALS

## STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Particulars (All amounts in 'Lakhs' unless otherwise stated)	Note	As at March 31, 2024	As at March 31, 2023
<b>Income</b>			
Donation	11	8,900.00	3,810.00
Other income	12	29.25	9.46
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>8,929.25</b>	<b>3,819.46</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Programme expenses	13	8,333.14	3,296.43
Employee benefits expense	14	372.89	229.89
Depreciation and amortisation expense	15	5.49	2.34
Other expenses	16	173.04	127.29
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		<b>8,884.56</b>	<b>3,655.94</b>
<b>Surplus/ (Deficit)</b>		<b>44.69</b>	<b>163.51</b>
<b>Tax Expense</b>			
Current tax		-	-
Deferred tax		-	-
<b>Surplus/ (Deficit)</b>		<b>44.69</b>	<b>163.51</b>
<b>Earnings per equity share</b>			
[Nominal value per share: Rs. 10]			
Basic/Diluted (in Rs.)	25	446.89	1,635.11

# FINANCIALS

## CASH FLOW STATEMENT

**Particulars**  
(All amounts in 'Lakhs' unless otherwise stated)

**As at**  
**March 31, 2024**

**As at**  
**March 31, 2023**

### A. Cash flow from operating activities

<b>Surplus over expenses</b>	<b>44.69</b>	<b>163.51</b>
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation and amortisation	5.49	2.34
Interest received	-29.25	-9.46
<b>Operating surplus before working capital changes</b>	<b>20.93</b>	<b>156.39</b>

#### Adjustments for changes in working capital

##### Adjustments for (increase) / decrease in operating assets:

Other current assets	-8.04	-0.07
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##### Adjustments for increase / (decrease) in operating liabilities:

Short term provisions excluding provision for taxes	-	-
Trade payables	-3.84	16.37
Other current liabilities	-3.09	25.09

<b>Operating surplus after working capital changes</b>	<b>5.97</b>	<b>197.78</b>
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Direct taxes paid	-2.93	-0.95
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<b>Net cash generated from operating activities</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>196.83</b>
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### B. Cash flow from investing activities

Purchase of fixed assets	-7.88	-7.03
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Interest received	29.25	9.46
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<b>Net cash generated used in investing activities</b>	<b>21.37</b>	<b>2.43</b>
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# FINANCIALS

## CASH FLOW STATEMENT

Particulars (All amounts in 'Lakhs' unless otherwise stated)	As at March 31, 2024	As at March 31, 2023
<b>C. Cash flow from financing activities</b>		
Proceeds from issuance of share capital	-	1.00
<b>Net cash generated from financing activities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<b>D. Net (decrease) / increase in cash and cash equivalents</b>		
<b>A + B + C</b>	<b>24.41</b>	<b>200.26</b>
<b>E. Cash and cash equivalentss</b>		
<b>Opening balance</b>	<b>200.26</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>F. Cash and cash equivalentss</b>		
<b>Closing balance (D+E)</b>	<b>224.67</b>	<b>200.26</b>

### NOTES

- The above cash flow statement has been prepared under the "Indirect Method" as set out in Accounting Standard - 3 Cash flow statements prescribed in the Companies (Accounts) Rules, 2014.
- The above cash flow statement has been compiled from and is based on the Balance Sheet as at March 31, 2024 and the related Statement of Income & Expenditure for the year ended on that date.
- [Financial Statements with Schedules can be accessed here](#) ↗

#### 4. Components of Cash and cash equivalents

Cash on hand	-	-
Balances with banks:		
In current account	2.02	170.96
In deposits accounts	222.65	29.22
Kodo Virtual account	-	0.08
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>224.67</b>	<b>200.26</b>





Sassi and Nandini, Lantana Elephant Artisans  
cleaning Lantana Camara sticks in Thorappally Unit.  
Photo Credit: The Shola Trust

## DESIGN NOTE

### TRAVELLING TOGETHER

“ Inspired by the fluid, coordinated movements of school of fish, the design theme for this year’s annual report—Travelling Together—embodies collective motion and trust-based collaboration.

Abstract shapes resembling arrows, pointers, paper planes, and kites merge to represent unity and collective progress. These visuals, not only capture the essence of resilience and unified action, but also draw upon the thematic richness of literature on shared visions, risk-taking, and the power of collaborative efforts.

The design system has been crafted to encapsulate the transformative journey of RNP and its partners, highlighting their growth and deeper engagement over the past year.”

#### Email

[community@rohininilekaniphilanthropies.org](mailto:community@rohininilekaniphilanthropies.org)

#### Website

[www.rohininilekaniphilanthropies.org](http://www.rohininilekaniphilanthropies.org)

#### Social Media

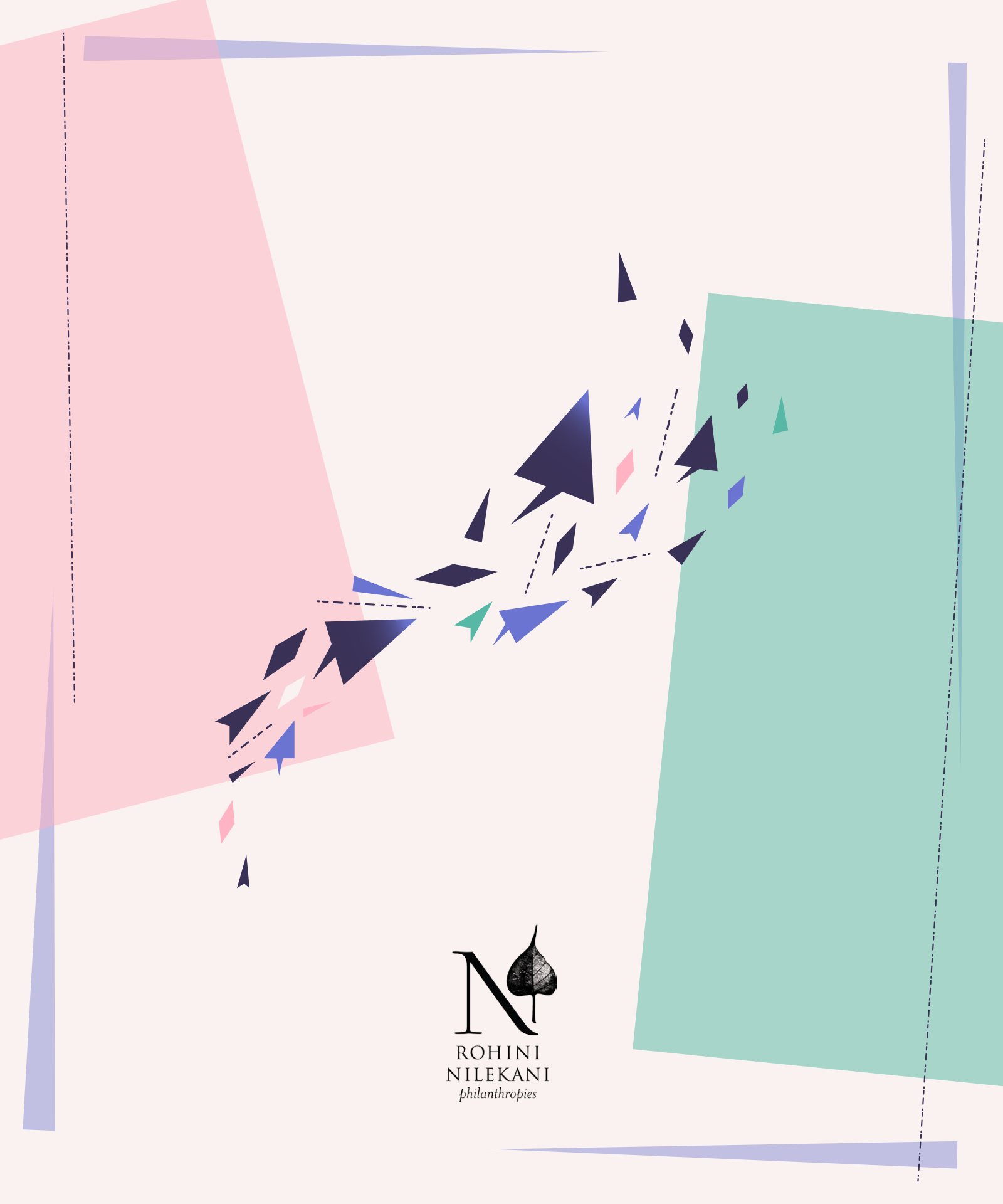
Instagram: [@rnp\\_foundation](https://www.instagram.com/rnp_foundation)

Twitter: [@RNP\\_Foundation](https://twitter.com/RNP_Foundation)

LinkedIn: [@rmpf](https://www.linkedin.com/company/rmpf)

#### Design

Anoopa John | [www.anoopajohn.com](http://www.anoopajohn.com)



ROHINI  
NILEKANI  
*philanthropies*