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Wetlands for **LiFE**

FILM FESTIVAL & FORUM

FEBRUARY 3 – 5, 2024 | INDORE, MADHYA PRADESH

FESTIVAL REPORT



THE NATURE VOLUNTEERS
An Informal Pressure Group of Environmentally Restless People



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Executive Summary:

The Centre for Media Studies (CMS) successfully organized the '**Wetlands for LiFE**' Film Festival & Forum in Indore from 3 to 5 February, 2024. This event was part of a larger effort, supported by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GOI, and GIZ as part of BMUV-IKI Project on Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection. This festival is part of the broader 'Wetlands for LiFE' program, which includes four regional and a national film festival, media consultation and workshops for the journalism and media students across India, to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands for biodiversity, climate protection, and human well-being.

The festival featured a variety of activities, including screenings of national and international films on wetlands, water, and climate change. These films provided both education and entertainment, highlighting the critical role of wetlands. An Impact Filmmaking Workshop, led by an expert from the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), offered guidance to 60 enthusiasts on creating conservation films.

To engage younger audiences, the festival also included painting and quiz competitions for school students, fostering creativity and environmental awareness. The establishment of a network of **WetlandMitras** and the recognition of Wetland Ambassadors emphasized the community's role in conservation efforts.

Distinguished guests at the inauguration included **Her Excellency Dr. Musonda Mumba**, Secretary General for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, along with notable participants such as **Ms. Harshika Singh, IAS**, Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Indore, **Mr. Beom-sik Yoo**, Senior Advisor (Asia/Oceania) of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, **Ms. Barkha Tamrakar**, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of India to UN, **Mr. Kirtiman Awasthi**, Senior Advisor & Team Leader of Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection at GIZ, **Mr Lokendra Thakkar**, Officer In-charge, MP State Wetland Authority, EPCO, **Mr. Abhilash Khandekar**, Senior Journalist and President of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA), **Mr. Arvind Tiwari**, Senior Journalist and President of the Indore Press Club and **Mr Sabyesachi Bharti**, Deputy Director for CMS VATAVARAN. The event also featured a photo exhibition on Sirpur Lake and a panel discussion on "Wetlands and Our Traditions", which prompted thought-provoking conversations.

The festival successfully screened 30 national and international award-winning films, focusing on diverse issues about the wetlands, water, and climate change. Alongside the screenings, a drawing and poster making competition for the school children, the "**Social Impact Filmmaking**" workshop and a panel discussion on '**How Wetlands Shape Our Culture: The Impact on Our Culture and Traditions**' were key components of the festival, drawing significant participation and engagement.

A highlight of the festival was awarding the Wetlands Ambassador Award to **Padmshri Bhalchandra Dattatray Mondhe**, in recognition of his outstanding work in conservation. The closing ceremony was memorable, showcasing the 11 films created in the filmmaking

workshop, celebrating the efforts of those who participated in the filmmaking workshops, and acknowledging the winners of the painting competition.

Particularly noteworthy was the commitment made by **59 local WetlandMitras**, who took a pledge to safeguard the wetlands of Indore, emphasizing the community's dedication to wetland conservation.

Although there was significant interest in the festival, we encountered some challenges in achieving the desired turnout. Despite this, we received a total of 550 registered participants for the film screenings, along with 50 youth participated in the painting competition and 73 participants for the Impact Filmmaking Workshop.

However, the lower than expected attendance was primarily due to the scheduling of secondary and senior secondary exams in the district during the festival dates. While this presented a hurdle, it also underscores the immense potential for future events with more strategic planning and coordination to ensure maximum participation and engagement.

The festival succeeded in creating a platform for meaningful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and networking among various stakeholders. It highlighted the importance of collective action and the role of diverse sectors in addressing challenges regarding the water and Wetlands conservation.

In summary, the 'Wetlands for LiFE Film Festival & Forum' was a comprehensive event that successfully raised awareness about the value of wetlands, engaged various community members in conservation discussions, and celebrated contributions to wetland preservation.



Planning

The 'Wetlands for LiFE Film Festival & Forum' started to take shape in December 2023, after the Centre for Media Studies received an award to organize it.

The planning really kicked off in January when we settled on the dates and the main parts of the program. We chose to hold the first festival in Indore, timing it with World Wetlands Day from February 3rd to 5th, 2024. To make sure everything would run smoothly, we arranged for Mr. Sabyesachi Bharti and Mr. Kencho Dorji to visit Indore from January 15th to 19th, 2024.

During their visit, they met with many important people and groups, including Ms. Harshika Singh (IAS), Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation, Indore, Padmshri Bhalchandra Dattatray Mondhe and representatives from the School of Journalism & Mass Communication at Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Devi Ahilya Arts And Commerce Jagdale College, Sage University Indore Campus, Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya, Malwanchal University, The Natures Volunteers (TNV), and various media personalities. These meetings were crucial in organizing the festival quickly.

Additionally, a total of 40 schools, 58 colleges and universities, and 14 civil society members were contacted, further enriching the collaborative network for the event. The list can be found in the **Annexure 1**

After checking the availability of possible locations, it was decided to hold the festival at the Indore Press Club auditorium. The festival's planning phase was marked by a blend of strategic discussions, collaborative decision-making with GIZ representatives, and on-ground assessments. These efforts were driven by a shared vision among all partners to create an impactful platform for discussing wetlands conservation.



Feb 2nd, 2024: World Wetlands Day- Exhibition & Official Announcement of the Indore Program

On World Wetlands Day, February 2nd, the Government of India held a celebration at Sirpur Lake in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Government and non-government organizations from across the country attended. With support from GIZ, the Centre for Media Studies (CMS) displayed the schedule for the upcoming 3-day LiFE film festival & forum, which focuses on wetlands. The CMS stall attracted many visitors, including Her Excellency Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands



Honourable Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Mohan Yadav Ji, launched the "Wetlands For Life" film festival teaser, calling for community involvement in the presence of **Her Excellency Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** and the **Honourable Cabinet Minister for the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Kailash Vijayvargiya Ji**. The celebration at Sirpur Lake aimed to increase awareness about the significance of this wetland ecosystem and the forthcoming film festival.

Feb 3rd, 2024: Festival, Day 1

The Wetlands for LIFE Film Festival & Forum kicked off in Indore with lots of excitement and enthusiasm. The opening day brought together respected people who are passionate about protecting wetlands and promoting environmental causes.



Inaugural Ceremony

The event started when **Her Excellency Dr. Musonda Mumba**, the Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, arrived. After her, we introduced other important guests. These included **Ms. Harshika Singh IAS**, Commissioner of the Indore Municipal Corporation, **Mr. Beom-sik Yoo**, Senior Advisor (Asia/Oceania) of The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, **Mr Lokendra Thakkar**, Officer Incharge, MP State Wetland Authority, EPCO, **Mr. Arvind Tiwari**, senior journalist and the President of the Indore Press Club, **Mr. Kirtiman Awasthi**, Senior Advisor & Team Leader of Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection at GIZ, **Ms. Barkha Tamrakar** First Secretary, Permanent Mission of India to UN, **Mr. Abhilash Khandekar**, a senior journalist and the President of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA), and **Mr Sabyesachi Bharti**, the Deputy Director of the Centre For Media Studies (CMS)-VATAVARAN.



A special part of the opening ceremony was when everyone took part in watering a plant. This wasn't just for show. It was a strong sign of the festival's goal to encourage ideas and actions for a greener future and the protection of wetlands.

Mr. Sabyesachi Bharti, Deputy Director at the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), welcomed everyone to the Wetlands for LiFE Film Festival & Forum. In his context setting speech, he talked about how important this festival is for increasing awareness about the environment and protecting wetlands.

He emphasized that events like this are crucial for educating people about environmental issues and encouraging them to take steps toward a sustainable future. "Working together is key to conservation, and through film, we aim to motivate everyone to join in protecting our valuable natural areas," he said. He also gave an overview of the various activities and programs planned for the three days of the festival.



Ms. Harshika Singh (IAS), Commissioner of the Indore Municipal Corporation, graced the event as the Guest of Honour. In her address, she emphasized the crucial role of local initiatives in the protection of wetlands and the achievement of sustainable development within our communities.



She highlighted that community involvement and grassroots actions are essential for the preservation and management of wetlands, which are vital for biodiversity, climate regulation, and the well-being of local populations. Her speech underlined the importance of collaboration between government authorities, local communities, and environmental organizations in working towards the conservation of these critical ecosystems for future generations.

Mr. Kirtiman Awasthi, Senior Advisor and Team Leader for Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection at GIZ, shared insights into the collaborative efforts between GIZ and the Government of India aimed at wetland conservation across the nation. He elaborated on the strategic initiatives and projects that are being implemented to safeguard these critical habitats, emphasizing their importance for biodiversity, climate mitigation, and the sustenance of local communities.



Mr. Awasthi also provided a comprehensive overview of the various activities and programs that are scheduled to take place during the "Wetlands for LiFE" festival and forum series. These events are designed to educate, engage, and mobilize stakeholders from diverse sectors towards the collective goal of wetland preservation and sustainable management. His speech highlighted the commitment of both GIZ and the Indian government towards enhancing wetland conservation efforts and fostering an environment of collaboration and knowledge sharing among all participants involved.

Ms. Barkha Tamrakar, the First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, expressed her gratitude in her speech to Her Excellency Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, for visiting India. She warmly thanked Dr. Mumba for her presence and contributions, highlighting the significance of her visit in strengthening international collaboration for wetland conservation.



Ms. Tamrakar then delved into a detailed discussion on India's dedication to environmental preservation, biodiversity, and specifically, the conservation of wetlands. She outlined India's various initiatives and commitments at both national and international levels, demonstrating the country's proactive approach to tackling environmental challenges.

Mr. Lokendra Thakkar, the Officer Incharge at the Madhya Pradesh State Wetland Authority (EPCO), began his speech by expressing his heartfelt thanks to all the distinguished guests present. He highlighted EPCO's dedication to wetland conservation, emphasizing the organization's ongoing efforts to preserve these critical ecosystems across the state of Madhya Pradesh. He spoke about the state's diverse wetlands and the combined efforts of the government and EPCO to protect them.



Mr. Thakkar shared his hope for Indore to soon be recognized as a 'Wetland City', a significant milestone for conservation efforts. He also noted the increase of Ramsar sites in India to 80, thanking Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, for her support in this achievement. His speech emphasized the importance of collective action in safeguarding wetlands for future generations.

During her keynote address at the Wetlands for LiFE festival, Chief Guest Her Excellency Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, expressed her profound appreciation for the invitation and the opportunity to participate in such a pivotal event. She articulated her deep respect and honor in being part of the festival, emphasizing the integral role of water not only as a resource but as a foundational element that interweaves through the fabric of India's diverse culture, rich history, and the vast biodiversity it nurtures.



Dr. Mumba highlighted the power of filmmaking as a dynamic medium for storytelling, capable of capturing the essence of these stories and broadcasting their critical significance to a global audience. She noted that films about wetlands do more than educate; they resonate with viewers on an emotional level, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for these ecosystems.

Reflecting on her visit to Indore, Dr. Mumba shared her personal joy and gratitude for the warm hospitality and affection extended to her by the local community. This experience, she noted, was a testament to the city's vibrant spirit and commitment to environmental conservation.

Moreover, Dr. Mumba commended the dedicated efforts of the Madhya Pradesh government and the Government of India in their ongoing endeavors to protect and preserve wetland habitats. She acknowledged the significance of such initiatives in safeguarding the environmental heritage and promoting sustainable development, underscoring the importance of collective action and international cooperation in achieving these goals. Her speech, rich in appreciation and foresight, called for continued collaboration and innovation in the stewardship of the world's precious wetlands.

Other Special guests who graced the occasion including **Mr. Beom-sik Yoo, Senior Advisor (Asia/Oceania) of The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**, **Mr. Arvind Tiwari, Senior Journalist and President of the Indore Press Club** and **Mr. Abhilash Khandekar, Senior Journalist and President of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA)**, also lent their support to the festival.



The opening session of the festival wrapped up with a heartfelt vote of thanks from Mr. Sabyesachi Bharti, Deputy Director of CMS VATAVARAN, marking the official start of the film screenings.

The Opening Film

The first film to grace the screen, "Sirpur - Lifeline of Indore," offered viewers a deep dive into the essential role that local wetlands play within urban environments. Highlighting Sirpur Lake in Madhya Pradesh, recognized as a Ramsar Site, the documentary showcased its critical importance as a habitat for migratory birds and its contribution to the ecological and aesthetic value of Indore.

The film emphasized the pressing need to acknowledge and preserve the invaluable functions of wetlands, especially in light of the increasing threats they face today. It called for collective action and a commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of these vital ecosystems.

Produced by Biont and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, "Sirpur - Lifeline of Indore" was part of the Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection project. This initiative seeks to highlight the intertwined nature of wetlands with biodiversity and climate resilience, urging viewers and stakeholders alike to pledge their support for the wise use and protection of wetlands globally.

Photo Exhibition

During the festival, on day one, a captivating photo exhibition featuring Sirpur Lake and Yashwant Sagar lake were presented, receiving widespread admiration from all dignitaries, especially Her Excellency Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, who expressed significant appreciation for the display. Curated by esteemed photographer, conservationist, and visiting professor Shri Bhalchandra Dattatray Mondhe in collaboration with the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at DAVV Indore, the exhibition offered a profound visual exploration of the lake's beauty and ecological significance, highlighting the importance of wetland conservation to an engaged and influential audience.



Film Screening and Other Programs

The Wetland for LiFE Film Festival & Forum, held over three days, spread its activities between two venues at the Indore Press Club. The Rajendra Mathur Auditorium served as the main hub for film screenings, panel discussions, and the opening and closing ceremonies. Meanwhile, the Seminar Hall was dedicated to a pivotal part of the festival, the "Social Impact Filmmaking" workshop. Additionally, the photo exhibition and the painting competition took place on the second day in the club's lawn.

From February 3rd to 4th, 2024, between 11 AM and 5:00 PM, the festival presented a collection of 30 exceptional films, all either awarded or nominated by GIZ and CMS VATAVARAN. These films covered a range of important environmental issues, including the conservation of wetlands, climate change, water conservation, and sustainable livelihoods. This diverse film selection provided attendees with a deep and varied perspective on environmental challenges and the ways to address them.

Panel Discussion on "Wetlands Unveiled: Exploring Conservation and Challenges."

Following the inaugural ceremony, the festival hosted an insightful discussion titled **"Wetlands Unveiled: Exploring Conservation and Challenges."** This session featured Mr. **Navneet Wadkar, Project Officer, Centre for Environment Education**, along with his team. They delved into a variety of topics concerning wetland conservation, highlighting the critical issues affecting these ecosystems and the communities that rely on them for their livelihoods.

During the talk, Mr. Wadkar and his team addressed the multiple challenges wetlands face, from pollution and habitat destruction to the impacts of climate change. They stressed the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of wetlands with the well-being of local communities, emphasizing how these ecosystems provide essential services such as water purification, flood control, and habitats for biodiversity.

Additionally, the team offered valuable insights into potential themes and issues that participants of the Social Impact Filmmaking Workshop, organized as part of the festival, could explore in their projects. They suggested focusing on stories that not only highlight the problems wetlands are facing but also celebrate the efforts of communities and individuals working towards their conservation. The aim was to equip the workshop participants with ideas that could help raise awareness about wetland conservation through compelling storytelling and filmmaking.

This session was instrumental in setting the tone for the festival, encouraging a deeper engagement with the complexities of wetland conservation and inspiring participants to use their creative skills to advocate for these vital ecosystems.

The day one ended with the screening of ten award winning and nominated films.



DAY 1 - FEBRUARY 03, 2024 | SATURDAY

	Rajendra Mathur Auditorium	Indore Press Club Seminar Hall
10:30 - 11:00 am	INAUGURAL CEREMONY	
11:00 - 11:30 am	Wetlands Unveiled: Exploring Challenges and Conservation: A talk by Satish Awate, Programme Director, Centre for Environment Education	
11:30 am - 01:30 pm	Sirpur - Lifeline of Indore 00:06:00 English Biont Indo-German Cultural Significance of Haripur Village 00:05:17 Hindi Aman Thakur, Saksham Bala, Shivani India The Rebirth of Mangalajodi 00:05:54 English Biont and RoundGlass Sustain India Women Leadership in Pond Conservation 00:09:46 Marathi and English CEE India Global Warning - Kashmir Chapter 00:28:42 English Jalal Ud Din Baba India	SOCIAL IMPACT FILMMAKING WORKSHOP
01:30 pm - 02:00 pm	LUNCH BREAK	
02:00 pm - 05:00 pm	Sundarbans: Rising Water, Ebbing Life 00:47:33 Dheeraj Sarthak Bangali and English India Cultural Significance of Renuka wetland 00:05:54 Satish Sharma, Dhanveer Sharma, Rohit Kumar and GIZ Hindi India Arsenic- The Creeping Killer 00:29:00 Andreas Ewels, Norbert Porta English GERMANY Holy (un) Holy River 00:59:52 Jake Norton, Pete McBride English USA The Story of Mangalajodi 00:25:54 S. Pattanaiak English India	SOCIAL IMPACT FILMMAKING WORKSHOP

DAY 2 - FEBRUARY 04, 2024 | SUNDAY

	Rajendra Mathur Auditorium	Indore Press Club Seminar Hall
11:00 am - 1:00 pm	Saving the Saviour 00:27:03 English and Kashmiri Jalal Ud Din Baba India Waste Management at Renuka Wetland 00:06:29 Hindi Vimlesh Sharma, Deepak Sharma, Narendra Sharma & GIZ India Pong Dam: A Safe Haven for Migratory Birds 00:04:53 Hindi Ankush, Diksha, Anvesha and GIZ India Kokota-The Islet of Hope 00:29:02 English, Swahili Craig Norris Canada UseLess # 00:50:00 Rakel Gardarsdottir, Agusta M. Olafsdottir English Iceland	SOCIAL IMPACT FILMMAKING WORKSHOP
01:00 pm - 01:30 pm	LUNCH BREAK	
01:30 pm - 05:00 pm	Nagar aur Paani, Phir Wah! Kahani 00:03:53 Hindi and Marathi Iqbal Hussain and Aajad Singh Khichi India PANJE- The Last Wetland 00:22:15 English and Hindi Aishwarya Sridhar India Anthropogenic Pressures on Renuka Wetland 00:05:40 Hindi Navraj Thakur, Mehul Thakur & GIZ India A Glimpse of Pong's Fisher Community 00:07:08 English and Hindi Sonika Sharma, Puran Chand, Anju Bala, Bandana India MISSION AHSAAS' Wetland Ecosystem Restoration (A way Forward) 00:15:08 English and Kashmiri Abdul Rashid Bhat India Lakshman-Rekha (The lines that Lakshman drew) 00:59:15 Hindi Nandan Saxena, Kavita Babi India	SOCIAL IMPACT FILMMAKING WORKSHOP

DAY 3 - FEBRUARY 05, 2024 | MONDAY

	Rajendra Mathur Auditorium	Indore Press Club Seminar Hall
11:00 am - 01:00 pm	Overgrazing putting Livelihoods at Stake in Pong 00:05:22 Hindi Surinder Kumar, Anu Choudhury, Dev Raj India Renuka Wetland: A Step Towards Organic Farming 00:06:54 Hindi Kartik Sharma, Anshul Thakur, Nitin Thakur, Ritu Chauhan, Pooja Devi, Himanshu, Rohit Kumar India Paani Police 00:14:31 Hindi Nitish Seth India Waste Management in Pong Dam Lake: Need of the Hour 00:06:54 Sourya, Rohan Jasrota, Sahil Rana, Shubham, Rahul, Sanjeev Kumar India Whisper's of Warning 00:58:02 English Anoop Khajuria India Water Warrior 00:14:02 English Rajesh Meena India	SOCIAL IMPACT FILMMAKING WORKSHOP
01:05 pm - 01:30 pm	A Conversation on "Climate Crossroads: Understanding the Impact of Climate Change on Wildlife"	
01:30 pm - 02:30 pm	Rewild 00:59:00 Alexis Breton, Cyprien d'Haese, Thomas Zribi English, French, Portuguese and Russian France	
02:45 pm - 04:15 pm	Panel Discussion: How Wetlands Shape Our Culture: The Impact on Our Culture and Traditions	
04:30 pm - 05:00 pm	Certificate Distributions and Closing Ceremony	
05:00 pm - 05:30 pm	HIGH TEA	



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Feb 4th, 2024: Festival Day 2

On its second day, the Wetlands for LIFE Film Festival & Forum featured a series of compelling film screenings that aimed to raise awareness about the significance of wetland conservation and the impacts of climate change. The day's lineup included 11 films, each carefully selected to address urgent environmental issues such as global warming while also showcasing community-driven solutions. The screenings captivated a dedicated audience, highlighting both global challenges and localized efforts towards sustainability.

Despite it being a Sunday and with the anticipation of school examinations for secondary and senior secondary students starting the following Monday, the festival witnessed remarkable attendance from school students. This enthusiastic participation underscored the keen interest of the younger generation in environmental issues.



In the afternoon, a painting competition provided a creative outlet for students to express the crucial role of wetlands. With 50 participants from various schools and colleges, the event showcased a wide array of artistic talent, with each artwork delivering a powerful message about the need for conservation efforts. The paintings not only reflected the students' understanding of wetlands but also their commitment to preserving these vital ecosystems.

Additionally, an open quiz competition further engaged students, challenging their knowledge of wetland-related facts and trivia. Despite some difficult questions, the participants demonstrated an impressive understanding of essential information, indicating a successful educational aspect of the festival's programming.



Simultaneously, participants of the "Social Impact Filmmaking" workshop took to local lakes to commence their fieldwork, capturing footage that would later contribute to their environmental documentaries. This hands-on experience was integral to the workshop's objective of harnessing filmmaking as a tool for environmental advocacy.

The activities of the festival's second day perfectly encapsulated its mission to educate and mobilize the community around the conservation of wetlands in Indore, blending film screenings, artistic expression, and interactive learning to inspire action and awareness.



Feb 5th, 2024: Festival Day 3

On the final day of the festival, the momentum continued with the screening of 11 impactful conservation films, along with 11 films crafted by participants during the Impact Filmmaking workshop. Additionally, an insightful panel discussion enriched the day's program.

Panel Discussion: How Wetlands Shape Our Culture: The Impact on Our Culture and Traditions

On the final day of the festival, a thought-provoking panel discussion centred on the theme "How Wetlands Shape Our Culture: The Impact on Our Culture and Traditions" took place, offering valuable insights from distinguished panellists.

Panellist:

1. Padmshree Mr Bhalchandra Dattatray Mondhe: is an Indian artist, photographer, sculptor and painter from Madhya Pradesh. In 2016, the President of India bestowed upon him the Padma Shri award for his lifetime work in photography. He has authored two books, including Birds of Sirpur, which he co-authored. Mondhe co-founded an NGO to save the Sirpur Lake, The Nature Volunteers, which is credited with reviving the Sirpur Lake.

2. Sudhindra Mohan Sharma is an acclaimed Geologist with expertise in Groundwater, Water Resource Management, and Drinking Water Security. He holds advanced degrees in Geology and Applied Geology, focusing on groundwater and mineral exploration. Sharma has played a pivotal role as the National Nodal Officer for India's National Drinking Water Security Pilot Projects and has designed over 400 significant rainwater harvesting projects nationwide. A celebrated TedX speaker on environmental issues, Sharma's contributions have been recognized with awards such as the Best Biodiversity Conservation award from the Government of MP and the "Awaz-e-Indore" social award.

3. Prof. Dr. Shankar Lal GARG: is a renowned figure in the field of environmental science, recognized for his extensive expertise in research, teaching, administration, and international cooperation. His leadership is marked by integrity, vision, and the ability to drive both qualitative and quantitative growth in institutions. Dr. Garg has earned national and international acclaim, receiving several prestigious awards for his contributions. These include the Anak Sarawak Award in Malaysia (2010), the Mahatma Gandhi Leadership Award from the NRI Society of India (2019) during the 150th celebration of Gandhi's birth, the International Business and Academic Excellence Awards 2019 by the GISR Foundation in Dubai, and the Global Education and Corporate Leadership Award (2019) in Jaipur.

4. Dr. Lakhan Raghuvanshi: is an Assistant Professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Devi Ahilya Viswavidyalaya, Indore. His research interest includes media and society, film studies and digital humanities. He is a contributing writer for various newspapers and news sites in India and has published in national and international journals.

Moderated by **Mr. Sabyesachi Bharti, Deputy Director of CMS VATAVARAN**, the discussion covered various aspects, including the socio-economic impact of wetlands, conservation efforts, and the future of cultural traditions linked to wetlands. The panellists emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to preserve wetlands and stressed the importance of raising awareness among communities and future generations.



Padmashree Mr Bhalchandra Dattatray Mondhe, a highly respected artist and photographer, delved into his personal journey during the discussion, shedding light on his extensive experience in preserving the Sirpur Lake and its cultural heritage. Drawing from his own life experiences, he narrated the challenges he faced and the dedication he exhibited in capturing the essence of wetlands through his photography.

With a profound understanding of the intricate relationship between wetlands and local traditions, Mr. Mondhe emphasized the profound cultural significance of Sirpur Lake and similar ecosystems. He underscored the vital role of community-driven conservation initiatives, reflecting on the collective struggle to safeguard the Sirpur Wetland. Through his poignant narrative, Mr. Mondhe not only celebrated the beauty of wetlands but also advocated for their protection, inspiring others to join the cause of environmental preservation.

Dr. Shankar Lal Garg, a respected environmental scientist, offered valuable insights into the historical importance of wetlands during the panel discussion. With expertise in the field, he discussed how wetlands have been depicted in folklore over generations, illustrating their deep-rooted cultural significance. Dr. Garg emphasized how these narratives reflect the values cherished by communities and highlighted the need for cultural revival through

conservation endeavors. By exploring the connections between folklore, cultural values, and wetland conservation, he underscored the importance of preserving these vital ecosystems for future generations. Through his engaging discourse, Dr. Garg encouraged attendees to recognize the cultural heritage embedded within wetlands and to actively participate in their protection and restoration efforts.

Dr. Sudhindra Mohan Sharma, a highly respected expert in groundwater management, provided insightful perspectives on the socio-economic impact of wetlands during the panel discussion. Alongside his discussion, he presented a PowerPoint presentation showcasing the hydrological pathways responsible for recharging the Sirpur Lake in Indore.

Dr. Sharma highlighted the crucial role of wetlands in supporting local communities' livelihoods, including agriculture and fishing. He emphasized the need for sustainable practices to prevent degradation, especially in the face of urbanization-related challenges. By elucidating on the intricate connections between wetlands, water resources, and community well-being, Dr. Sharma underscored the importance of holistic conservation approaches for preserving these invaluable ecosystems. Through his comprehensive analysis and compelling presentation, he urged attendees to recognize the significance of wetlands and actively engage in their protection and sustainable management.



Dr. Lakhan Raghuvanshi, an Assistant Professor with expertise in media and society, emphasized the pivotal role of education in building a strong bond with wetlands. During the discussion, he underscored how the degradation of wetlands can adversely affect cultural practices and traditions.

Dr. Raghuvarshi stressed the importance of community engagement in conservation efforts to mitigate these impacts. By advocating for increased awareness and involvement at the grassroots level, he highlighted the significance of empowering local communities to take ownership of wetland conservation. Through his insightful remarks, Dr. Raghuvarshi emphasized the critical need for collaborative action to preserve these vital ecosystems for future generations.

Facilitated by Mr. Sabyesachi Bharti, Deputy Director of CMS VATAVARAN, the panel discussion was marked by interactive sessions that engaged the general public in meaningful discourse. Mr. Bharti adeptly moderated the conversation, ensuring diverse viewpoints were heard and fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas. Attendees had the opportunity to participate actively, posing questions and sharing insights on various topics, including the socio-economic impact of wetlands and ongoing conservation efforts.

Wetlands Mitras Engagement

The day was marked by a momentous occasion as 59 enthusiastic individuals pledged to become WetlandsMitra, joining hands in the noble endeavor of safeguarding the wetlands in Indore. This initiative signifies a strong commitment to preserving these vital ecosystems for future generations. Wetland Mitra serves as a voluntary network comprising dedicated citizens who are passionate about environmental conservation. Their involvement fosters community engagement and empowers individuals to actively participate in wetland conservation and management endeavors. Through their collective efforts, these new WetlandsMitra volunteers exemplify the spirit of environmental stewardship, promising to play a crucial role in protecting and nurturing the wetlands of Indore.



The festival also honoured outstanding individuals for their dedication and remarkable contributions to wetland conservation with the prestigious Wetlands Ambassador Award. This esteemed recognition was bestowed upon photographer-conservationist Padmshri Bhalchandra Dattatray Mondhe, celebrating his tireless efforts in preserving and promoting the importance of wetlands. Culminating with a closing ceremony, the final day encapsulated the festival's spirit of education, engagement, and action towards the preservation of wetlands in Indore.



Social Impact Filmmaking Workshop

The "Social Impact Filmmaking" workshop, held during the festival from February 3 to 5, 2024, at the seminar hall of the Indore Press Club, was a significant part of the event. This three-day workshop focused on the importance of using films and photographs to raise awareness about Wetlands Conservation issues.

Films and photographs have a unique ability to connect with people emotionally. By incorporating environmental themes into these mediums, complex scientific ideas become more understandable and relatable to a broader audience. In today's digital age, where social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are prevalent, short videos and photo stories are highly effective in quickly sharing information in an engaging manner.

The workshop aimed to train participants in creating impactful films that promote environmental awareness. It attracted around 73 participants from the 101 registrations received, including students and members from various universities, colleges, and conservation organizations like Wildlife & Nature Conservation Society India, TNV, Devi Ahilya

Vishwavidyalaya Indore, Sage University, and Educational Multimedia Research Center Indore. The sessions covered different aspects of filmmaking, such as generating ideas, conducting research, writing scripts, cinematography, sound, and editing, covering the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production.



A unique feature of the workshop was the hands-on experience it offered. Participants were divided into groups and given the task of creating a "180-second Impact film." They were challenged to come up with ideas, write scripts, shoot footage, and edit their short environmental films, providing them with a comprehensive filmmaking experience. As a result, a total of 11 films were produced and screened during the closing ceremony of the festival.

The workshop was led by Mr. Ritesh (Devidas) Taksande, who won the prestigious ASCRS Scientific Film Festival USA award in 2016. He is widely regarded as one of the leading Mojo Educators in the country and currently serves as the Course Director for Film Orientation Courses and Mobile Journalism Courses at SKIFT Initiative by Film and Television Institute of India.



Overall, the workshop aimed to inspire and equip aspiring filmmakers to explore and excel in the field of environmental photography and filmmaking.

The closing ceremony of the festival was a moment to celebrate the talent and efforts of participants across various events. Winners of the student painting competition were recognized for their exceptional creativity, with the top 15 students receiving certificates of merit for their outstanding artwork.

Additionally, all participants of the filmmaking workshop were acknowledged for their dedication and enthusiasm. Each participant received a participation certificate, acknowledging their contribution to the workshop and their commitment to environmental storytelling through film.

The festival concluded on a delightful note with a high tea session, providing attendees with an opportunity to mingle, share experiences, and reflect on the enriching three days of the Wetlands for LiFE Film Festival & Forum.



Challenges and Insights

In the challenges and learning section, it's important to note that while there was significant interest in the festival, the turnout was lower than expected due to ongoing examinations in schools and colleges. Despite receiving a total of 101 registrations for the filmmaking workshop, and 550 registrations in total for the film screening, approximately 150 to 170 registrations for each day of the film screenings, the overall participation was affected.

The primary reason for this lower turnout was the scheduling of secondary and senior secondary exams across the state during the festival dates. This resulted in fewer attendees than anticipated, impacting the overall engagement and participation levels. However, this challenge provided a valuable learning experience for future event planning, highlighting the need for careful consideration of external factors such as academic calendars when scheduling similar festivals or workshops in the future.

Conclusion

The Wetlands for LiFE Film Festival & Forum was a resounding success, bringing together stakeholders, experts, and enthusiasts to celebrate and advocate for wetlands conservation. Through engaging film screenings, insightful panel discussions, interactive workshops, and meaningful ceremonies, the festival provided a platform for dialogue, learning, and action.

Despite the challenges posed by concurrent examinations in schools and colleges, the festival saw commendable participation, reflecting the growing awareness and commitment to environmental conservation. The diverse range of attendees, including students, professionals, and community members, underscored the broad appeal and relevance of the festival's themes.

The festival's impact extended beyond the three days of events, with initiatives like the WetlandMitras registration program and the Social Impact Filmmaking workshop fostering ongoing engagement and empowerment in wetlands conservation. By honoring individuals like Padmshri Bhalchandra Dattatray Mondhe with the Wetlands Ambassador Award, the festival recognized and celebrated exemplary contributions to environmental stewardship.

As we reflect on the festival's achievements, we are inspired by the collective passion and dedication demonstrated by all involved. Moving forward, we remain committed to building on this momentum, advancing the cause of wetlands conservation, and nurturing a sustainable future for generations to come.