



Support the Pangolin Cup – ‘United for Football, Stand for Pangolins’

Help Us Raise fund to Empower Communities and Protect Pangolins in Manipur, North East India

The Pangolin Cup is an innovative, conservation-themed football tournament that brings together communities, youth, civil society, and government partners to protect one of the world’s most trafficked wild mammals: the pangolin. In 2025, the first-of-its-kind tournament in Senapati, Manipur, drew 16 football clubs, engaged over 900 students, and reached nearly 5,000 community members, all while spreading a powerful message: “Save Pangolins.”

This unique event combines sport, culture, and conservation to tackle the root threats facing pangolins, illegal hunting and trafficking - by building awareness, pride, and community stewardship across the Indo-Myanmar border region.

The Pangolin Cup was first organised in March 2025 in Senapati District, Manipur, in collaboration with the Forest Department, Government of Manipur, the Senapati Forest Division, and the Senapati District Olympic Association (SDOAM). This inaugural tournament demonstrated strong partnerships with government and local institutions, establishing a credible foundation for the initiative.

Approximately one-third of the total budget was allocated to prize money and awards, with INR 1,00,000 awarded to the winning team and INR 45,000 to the runner-up, along with trophies and certificates. The remaining funds were primarily invested in community sensitization and cultural programs that integrated conservation messaging into the event, as well as in essential logistical arrangements to ensure the smooth implementation and documentation of the sport event.

1. Challenge: Critically Endangered Species at the Frontline of Illegal Wildlife Trade

Pangolins are the most trafficked wild mammals in the world. In India’s northeast, particularly Manipur along the Indo-Myanmar border, pangolins face intense pressure from illegal hunting and transnational wildlife trafficking. This region functions as a major corridor linking India to wildlife markets in Myanmar and Southeast Asia, where pangolin scales and meat are in high demand. While pangolins are protected under Indian law and international conventions, enforcement alone is not enough. Deep-rooted hunting traditions, economic vulnerability, youth disengagement, and limited conservation awareness continue to fuel local-level hunting, which feeds larger trafficking networks. Cultural diversity and socio-economic challenges further weaken direct conservation outreach efforts among the communities.

One of the most critical gaps is meaningful engagement with young people, apex indigenous bodies, and communities. Without positive, inclusive platforms that resonate locally,

conservation messages struggle to compete with the economic incentives of wildlife trade. This makes pangolins especially vulnerable in border landscapes where governance systems rely heavily on community participation.

2. Solution: The Pangolin Cup – Conservation Through Sport and Community Pride

The Pangolin Cup is a conservation-themed and community-driven football tournament that utilizes sport as a powerful entry point for conservation. Building on the success of the Pangolin Cup 2025, which engaged over 5,000 community members and more than 900+ students, 10 civil society organisations in Senapati, Manipur. This year, the Pangolin Cup will scale this proven model in Ukhrul District, Manipur, and continue to scale up in other districts of the state each year.

The Pangolin Cup uses football as a unifying platform to bring together youth, village councils, church groups, civil society organisations, and enforcement agencies in a neutral and celebratory setting. Conservation messages are seamlessly woven into the tournament through team identities, banners, public announcements, community dialogues, outreach materials, and the integration of traditional cultural expressions. Youth players emerge as pangolin ambassadors, carrying conservation messages back to their schools, villages, and peer networks. Village elders and community leaders use the platform to publicly affirm their commitment to pangolin protection, often translating this support into customary resolutions and community-led policies. Media engagement further amplifies these messages, extending the impact well beyond the tournament grounds and reinforcing conservation narratives at regional and national levels.

The Pangolin Cup will serve as a powerful catalyst for sustained community engagement, fostering widespread awareness and collective responsibility for pangolin conservation. It will reinforce social norms against hunting, consumption, and trafficking by anchoring conservation commitments within local governance systems. By nurturing youth leadership and creating visible community champions for wildlife protection, the campaign will help shift attitudes and behaviours over time. Most importantly, it will strengthen long-term community stewardship of pangolins, embedding conservation values into everyday life and ensuring that protection efforts continue well beyond the tournament itself.

An annual investment of USD 10,000 is essential to successfully organise the Pangolin Cup each year, covering tournament delivery, conservation outreach materials, community mobilisation, logistics, and impact documentation. Timely funding for the 2026 edition is critical to sustain this momentum. Without adequate and early support, a vital engagement window with youth, community leaders, and local institutions will be lost—weakening one of the most effective platforms for building long-term stewardship and preventing pangolin hunting and trafficking at its source.

3. Long-Term Impact: Institutionalising Conservation Through Sport

The Pangolin Cup is not a one-time event; it is envisioned as a long-term conservation platform that harnesses the unifying power of sport to drive lasting behavioural change. With sustained support, the tournament will be held annually and rotated across districts in Manipur, Nagaland, and other states along the Indo-Myanmar border, ensuring broad and inclusive community participation. Over time, the Pangolin Cup will be institutionalised as a regional, conservation-themed football tournament, fully integrated into community-based pangolin protection efforts and aligned with indigenous governance systems and youth networks.

In the long term, the Pangolin Cup strengthens community norms that discourage hunting and trafficking, nurtures youth-led conservation leadership across the Indo-Myanmar border, and deepens collaboration between indigenous communities and enforcement agencies. By embedding conservation messages within a culturally resonant and celebratory platform, the initiative creates a replicable model for using sport as a tool to protect endangered species.

By transforming football into a symbol of conservation pride, the Pangolin Cup helps replace hunting with stewardship and silence with collective action. Over time, this approach contributes to near-zero pangolin hunting and trafficking, with protection embedded within community identity and local governance structures, ensuring sustainability that extends well beyond the campaign's lifespan.

Why the Pangolin Cup Matters

- ❖ Addresses trafficking and hunting at the community level: Pangolins are critically endangered and widely trafficked; engaging local youth and leaders helps shift behaviour and reduce demand.
- ❖ Strengthens social fencing: Bringing diverse stakeholders together builds local support systems that discourage poaching and reinforce protection.
- ❖ Creates a lasting conservation culture: When communities celebrate wildlife protection through familiar and famous mediums like sports, conservation becomes part of their local identity and practice.
- ❖ Mobilises youth and institutions: Students, community groups, and government officials are inspired to champion long-term pangolin conservation.

How Your Support Will Be Used

We are raising fund to make our annual Pangolin Cup a success. Funds will support:

- ❖ Event coordination and logistics: Venue, match equipment, and team arrangements
- ❖ Outreach & awareness materials: banners, flyers, informative posters, and social media campaigns
- ❖ Travel and accommodation support for community teams and partners

- ❖ Certificates, trophies, and recognition to motivate participants
- ❖ Local engagement: Traditional programs and sensitisation events tied to the Cup

These activities will help deepen the conservation impact in the targeted district of Ukhrul, Manipur state, reaching thousands of people and fostering sustained community stewardship for pangolins.

Join Us in Safeguarding Pangolins!

Your support for the Pangolin Cup will do more than fund an event—it will:

- ❖ Build community pride in wildlife protection
- ❖ Promote behavioural change among youth
- ❖ Strengthen local capacity to counter illegal trade
- ❖ Inspire ongoing conservation action in Manipur and beyond

Donate today and be part of a movement where sport empowers conservation, and communities take the lead in protecting wildlife.