

RESTORE, CONSERVE AND PROTECT FOREST AND TREE COVER FOR NDC IMPLEMENTATION IN INDIA (RECAP4NDC)

Situation

India is among the few countries to have achieved a positive trend in forest and tree cover. The forest and tree cover stands at 24.6% against the 33% target of the National Forest Policy 1988. Nevertheless, areas with serious forest and land degradation stress exist. 43% of forests can be considered degraded. Drivers of degradation include increasing urbanisation, overgrazing, fuelwood extraction, extended droughts, and uncertain rainfall.

The Forest Survey of India (FSI) estimates that 76 million ha can be restored. However, gaps exist in adopting landscape restoration approaches: vague conceptual understanding implementation challenges such as availability of quality plant material, improved survival rates of plantations, whole of government approaches and integrating farmers needs and perspectives; accessing available funds and exploring blended finance; monitoring and reporting structures; and knowledge exchange. They can be addressed by enhancing capacities of public and private actors, enhancing frameworks of existing programmes and leveraging the stated interest of stakeholders.

Project Outline

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH will be implementing a six-year project entitled 'Restore, Conserve and Protect Forest and Tree Cover for NDC Implementation in India (RECAP4NDC)' under the Indo-German bilateral cooperation to address the above-mentioned challenges. The project will be implemented by a six-member strong consortium (GIZ - coordination and lead, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) India, Forest Survey of India (FSI), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Indian Council for Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

The project's intended impact is to support India achieve its targets on restoring degraded forests and landscapes inside and outside forests as defined in the National Forest Policy and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), thereby improving livelihoods of forest dependent communities and farmers. It aims to strengthen the resilience of landscapes and keep future management options open. By 2029, RECAP4NDC aims at achieving ecological, socio-economic, governance, and climate change benefits in 0.4 million ha of the forest landscape. Ten million people are expected to be benefitted from improved forest Ecosystem Services (ES).

Project Name	Restore, Conserve and Protect Forest and Tree cover for NDC Implementation in India
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV)
Project regions	Delhi & National Capital Region (NCR), Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand
Lead Executing Agency	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India
Duration	May 2023 – April 2029

Theory of Change

> **If** best practices in Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Trees Outside Forest (TOF) are showcased, their ecological benefits become more robustly verifiable, recognised and monetisable through better Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems; viable business models around FLR, TOF and SFM are created; favourable regulations and standards are developed; and capacities of actors are co-developed.



Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change



➤ **Then** financing from public and private sources can be mobilised; and FLR, SFM and TOF can be mainstreamed into both public and private planning.

➤ **Which** will allow key actors to effectively plan, finance, implement and monitor FLR, SFM and TOF measures and fulfil India's NDC forestry target, enhance biodiversity conservation through increased forest and tree cover, and sustainably improve rural livelihoods.

Project Locations and Stakeholder Groups

The project will be implemented in four states. The selected states have specific starting conditions.

The Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) comprising of Delhi and the neighbouring districts from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan demonstrates the challenges of rapid urban development and encroachment with resulting stresses on green spaces and forests, due to competing development needs on limited land. At the same time, the NCR presents interesting potentials to engage in restoration of urban tree cover and to embed such efforts in cross-agency collaboration. FLR approaches also provide an important avenue to engage various neighbourhood groups and organisations in larger restoration campaigns as well as to foster environmental education and awareness raising.

Gujarat comprises several habitats and agro-climatic zones, such as grasslands, mangroves, and mudflats. It exposes specific challenges such as coastal degradation and pressures by grazing activities in grasslands, requiring specific approaches for landscape restoration and sustainable management.

Maharashtra accommodates nine agro-climatic zones such as the Central Plateau, the Eastern Vidarbha and Coastal Zones. The state government is aware of the different challenges of FLR in these different environments. The state provides potential for the comparative testing of different approaches in up to six potential sites across various agro-climatic zones.

Uttarakhand with its topography along different – mostly hilly and mountainous – elevation zones has already implemented different forms of community forestry via the strengthening of village forest management committees (Van Panchayats), microplanning, fund management, spring-shed management, and promotion of non-timber forest products. There are opportunities to supplement these programmes with targeted interventions around forest fire management and restoration of fire-impacted sites, invasive species management and strengthening existing community forestry structures.

The main target groups of the project include state line departments, other line departments, local communities, local corporations, and boards such as the Joint Forest Management Committees, Forest Development Corporations, *Krishi Vigyan Kendra*, and Biodiversity Management Committees, Civil Society Organisations, farmers, entrepreneurs, forest-based industries, think tanks and research institutions.

Contribution to National and International Commitments

The project will be implemented as part of the Indo-German Partnership for Green and Sustainable Development wherein a recently signed Joint Declaration of Intent (May 2022) includes provisions to deepen cooperation in restoring forest landscapes. This translates into strong national, bilateral, and international visibility as a 'lighthouse project'. It will strive to be an international reference on FLR model approaches and monitoring, national and international leveraged finance for FLR and international scientific and policy networking and cooperation.

The project's goals will contribute to India's forestry NDC, National Forest Policy 1988, Bonn Challenge target, and the National Action Plan for Climate Change by improving degraded lands, livelihoods, and ES. The project also contributes to forest, ES and habitat related National Biodiversity Targets (3,5,6).

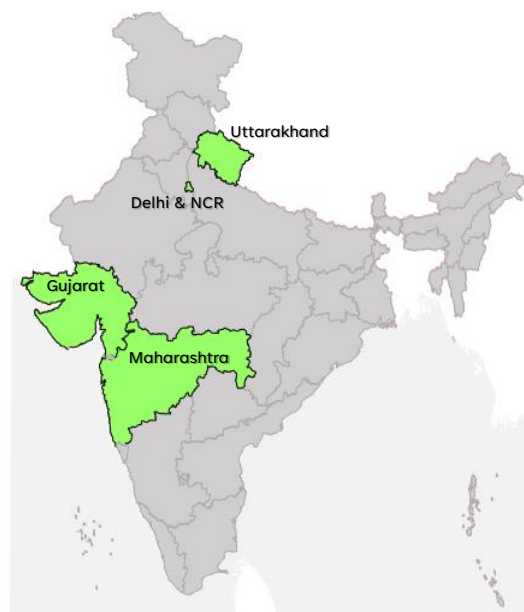


Figure 1: RECAP4NDC project states

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Map

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On behalf of International Climate Initiative of the German Federal Government

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