

Restore, Conserve and Protect Forest and Tree Cover for NDC Implementation in India (RECAP4NDC) Newsletter

Restore to Prosper



News on Forest Landscape
Restoration (FLR)

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New Delhi, March 2025

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List of Abbreviations

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

Delhi NCR: Delhi National Capital Region

DPR: Detailed Project Report

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

FLR: Forest Landscape Restoration

FSI: Forest Survey of India

GEER Foundation: Gujarat Ecological Education and Research (GEER) Foundation

GIS: Geographic Information Systems

GSDP: Green and Sustainable Development Partnership

HoFF: Head of Forest Force

ICFRE: Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education

ICIMOD: International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

IELO: Indian Environment Law Organization

IKI: International Climate Initiative

INTACH: Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

ISRO: Indian Space Research Organisation

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

LULC: Land Use Land Cover

MoEFCC: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

NABARD: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

NIC: Nature Interpretation Centre

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

PCCF: Principal Chief Conservator of Forests

SFD: State Forest Departments

TNA: Training Needs Assessment

TERI: The Energy and Resources Institute

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

From the Editor's Desk



Ms. Archana Chatterjee

Programme Manager,
International Union for
Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The Indo-German development cooperation project 'Restore, Conserve and Protect Forest and Tree Cover for NDC Implementation in India (RECAP4NDC)' continues to make significant progress in its mission to restore, conserve, and protect forest and tree cover in India. This initiative, commissioned under the roof of the International Climate Initiative (IKI), contributes to the Green and Sustainable Development Partnership (GSDP) signed between India and Germany in May 2022.

It focuses on Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) across four Indian states, namely: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, and Delhi NCR. In this edition, we are excited to share the progress we have made in this journey. In recent months, our teams have worked tirelessly to identify, assess, and prioritise landscapes for restoration, while engaging with key stakeholders at the state and local levels. Through field visits, stakeholder consultations, and the application of evaluation matrices, we have successfully identified model sites in each of the project regions. These landscapes are central to the overall vision of FLR, which balances ecosystem restoration with improving the livelihoods of local communities.

IUCN's role in this project is crucial to ensuring the restoration efforts are grounded in sound scientific methodologies and best practices. As a key partner, IUCN is responsible for planning, designing, and implementing FLR measures in the selected landscapes, ensuring that ecological, socio-economic, governance, and climate change-related benefits are maximised for local stakeholders. IUCN's technical expertise is pivotal in conducting thorough assessments and providing guidance on restoration strategies, ensuring that our efforts are effective and aligned with global restoration goals.

This project plays a crucial role in contributing to India's commitment to the Bonn Challenge, which aims to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. Beyond the environmental goals, the project aims to foster resilience in both ecosystems and local communities, ensuring that the restoration efforts deliver long-term benefits, including enhanced biodiversity, water security, and climate change mitigation. The collaboration between GIZ India, IUCN, and other consortium partners is key to ensuring that these restoration activities are successful, sustainable, and inclusive.

As we step into 2025, RECAP4NDC teams will be moving with full force for FLR action on the ground.

Landscape Selection

for Forest Landscape Restoration under RECAP4NDC

The implementation of Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) initiatives is one of the key objectives of the Indo-German development cooperation project 'Restore, Conserve and Protect Forest and Tree Cover for NDC Implementation in India (RECAP4NDC)'. Currently, the project is undertaking a geospatial analysis using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) coupled with ground verification and application of a multi parameter assessment matrix to map out and select the appropriate intervention landscapes wherein FLR would be implemented. A detailed methodology

for this has been developed within each of the project regions of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and the Delhi National Capital Region (Delhi NCR), jointly with each of the respective State Forest Departments (SFDs).

Case example: Landscape selection process followed in Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, ten districts have been proposed by the SFD across the

nine agro-climactic zones. To identify potential intervention landscapes within these districts, the first step is to develop the Land Use Land Cover (LULC) map for each given district. An LULC map is a detailed representation of land showing how different areas are being used (e.g., use of land for socio-economic activities) and what type of natural or man-made features (e.g., forests, grasslands, agricultural land, built-up land etc.) are physically present on it.



Unprotected plantation (LHS) vs Protected Plantation (RHS), Grassland developed and Protected from Grazing (RHS), Wadoda Village, Wadoda Forest Range, Jalgaon District, Maharashtra

With the project's identification of ten priority districts and recommended landscapes, the organisation IDCG Bhugol conducted geospatial analysis across these landscapes which involved rapid spatial assessment using remote sensing and GIS tools. During the process IDCG-Bhugol GIS identified the degraded landscapes within these districts and presented them as maps with supporting GIS files, creating a long list of potential intervention sites. Additionally, through stakeholder consultations, the IDCG-Bhugol GIS identified prioritised landscapes from this list using the project's evaluation matrix, which considered factors such as socio-political interest and competing development projects.

The methodology for landscape selection broadly involved the following steps:

- **Spatial data preparation:** Utilise thematic layers such as LULC, topography, slope, water bodies, land degradation categories, and other GIS data obtained from the Maharashtra State Forest Department.
- **Spatial data analysis:** Integrate the thematic layers to develop land degradation maps, categorising areas within and outside forest boundaries.
- **Identification of sites for proposed intervention:** Using GIS and remote

sensing analysis, the sites to be prioritised for intervention

- **Stakeholder Consultation:** Engage with stakeholders, including district-level forest departments, civil society organisations, and relevant line departments, to apply evaluation criteria and gather practical ground-level information for a comprehensive understanding of the selected landscapes.
- **Finalising Landscapes:** Develop detailed maps, attribute village-wise information, and highlight proposed intervention polygons based on the consultations and analyses.



Scrub and Shrub land with Rocky patches in Mahindale Village, Compartment No. 361, Parola Range Forest, Jalgaon District, Maharashtra

Preparing an LULC map involves a number of steps:

- **Get satellite snapshots:** We collect satellite images of each district, showing details such as slope and elevation
- **Process the data:** We sort the images by season (e.g., crop seasons in India are rabi, kharif, zaid) and remove clouds to get clear pictures
- **Classify the land:** We categorise the land into different types such as barren land, shrub/grassland, plantations, built-up area and various types of forest cover
- **Obtain high-resolution images:** We obtain high-resolution images from sources like Google Earth and other satellite datasets to get a detailed view of the mapped areas

We then overlay these maps with land degradation insights from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), identifying where the land needs our

help the most. Further, we add data from the Forest Survey of India (FSI) and forest boundaries identified by the SFD to see which areas fall inside and outside forest areas.

To increase the accuracy of the obtained maps, a ground-verification exercise is carried out. This involves checking whether the maps developed match the local conditions on ground. For example, if a map has identified a forest patch or a waterbody, does a forest patch or waterbody exist in that location on-ground? For this, the project team validates the maps by physically visiting landscapes identified in them, on a sampling basis. Any additional findings from the field are used to update the maps, if needed.

Once the maps are validated, the degraded landscapes identified in these maps are discussed in detail with multiple stakeholders, such as government officials, local communities living within these landscapes, other development/

research organisations working in the region, and evaluated on certain practical parameters. A multi-parameter assessment matrix, based on parameters such as willingness to implement FLR, the existing and additional sources of finance, major infrastructure works in the landscape, other existing development projects planned in the landscape, has been developed for this. Based on the application of this matrix, the landscapes are ranked in order and presented to the SFDs for final selection.

Similar processes are being followed in all RECAP4NDC project regions to arrive at the FLR intervention landscapes.

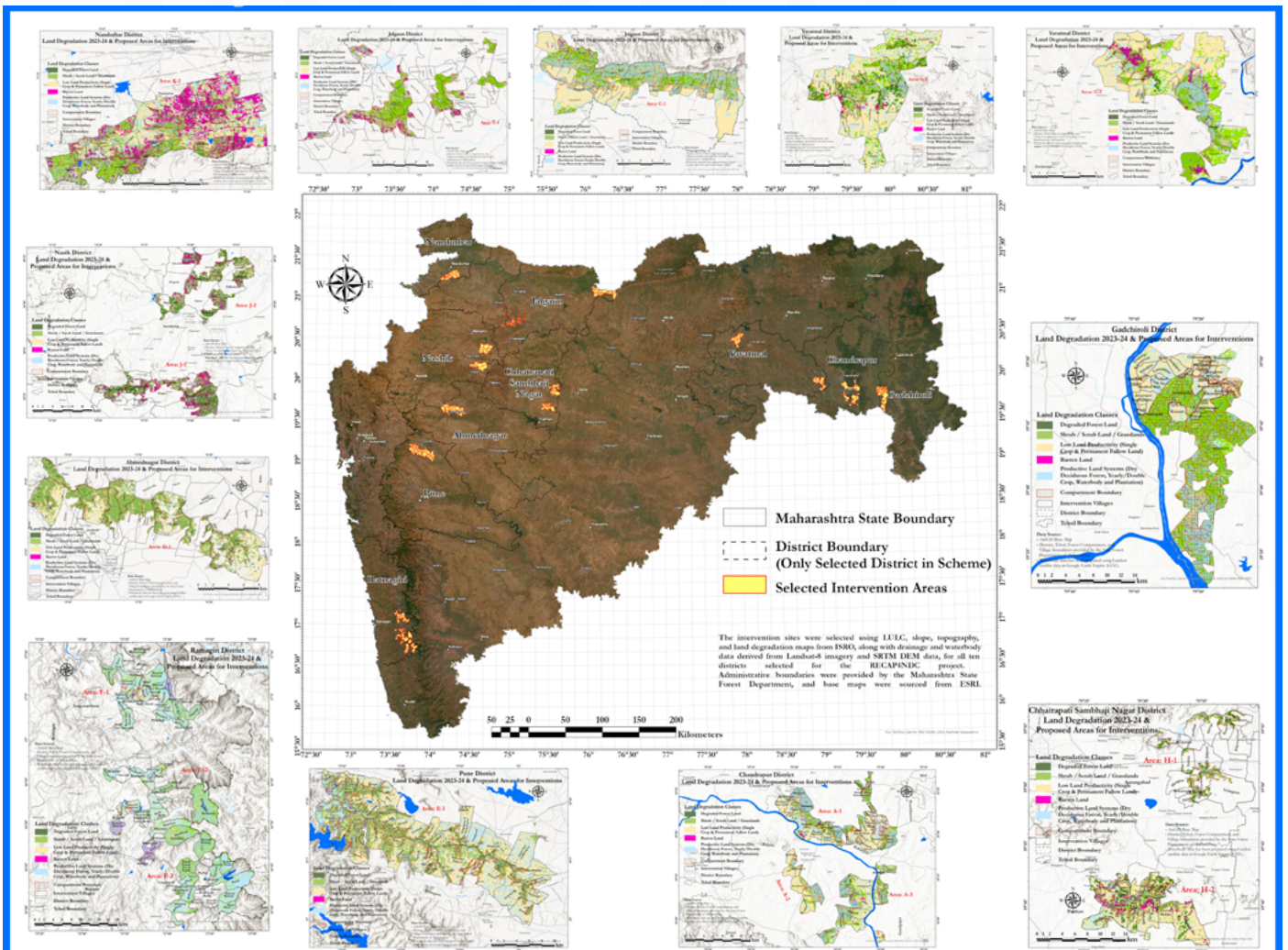
Grazing activity in Pokhari Haveli village's Reserved Forest Area at Sangamner-2 Range Forest, Ahilya Nagar District, Maharashtra



Forest patches (Rocky hill tops) interspersed with productive agriculture land, Sawargaon village, Junnar Range Forest, Junnar Division, Pune, Maharashtra

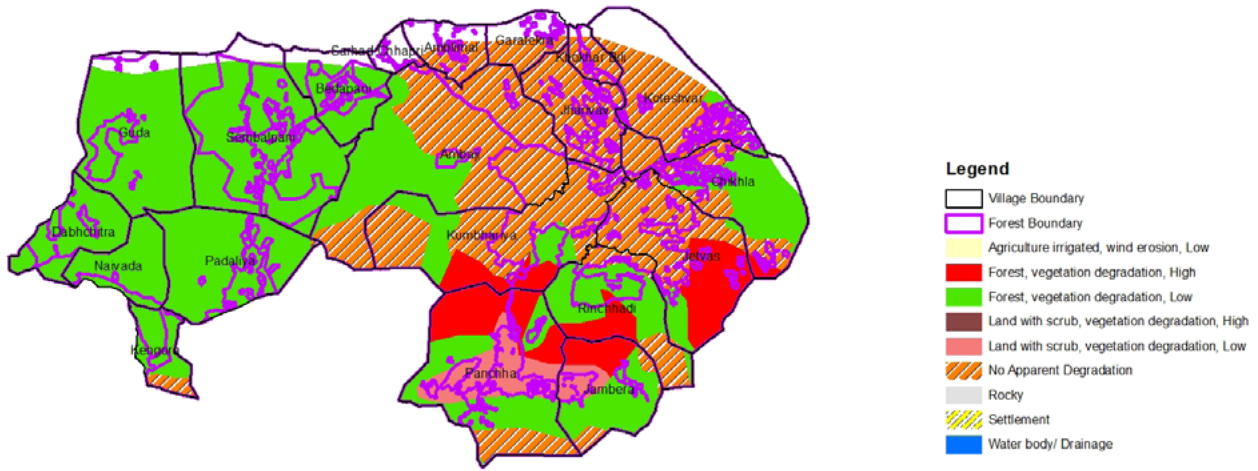


Selected Land Degradation Locations for Interventions across ten districts of the state of Maharashtra, 2023-24

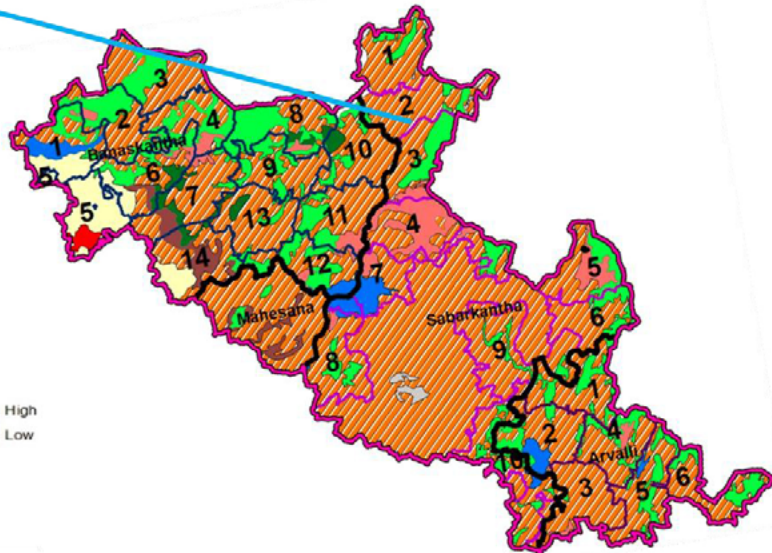


Prepared under RECAP4NDC project, September 2024 for Maharashtra

Gujarat



Landscape-SK3
 Range: RDF Khedbrahma and RDF Poshina
 Total Landscape Area (Ha): 12970
 Ha (Forest 53.38% and Outside Forest 46.62%)
 Total Degraded area (Ha) within the Landscape: 6828 ha (Forest 21.02% and Outside Forest 78.98%)
 % of Degradation: 52.64%



Prepared under REC4P4NDC project, August 2024 for Gujarat

Mangrove, Bhavnagar



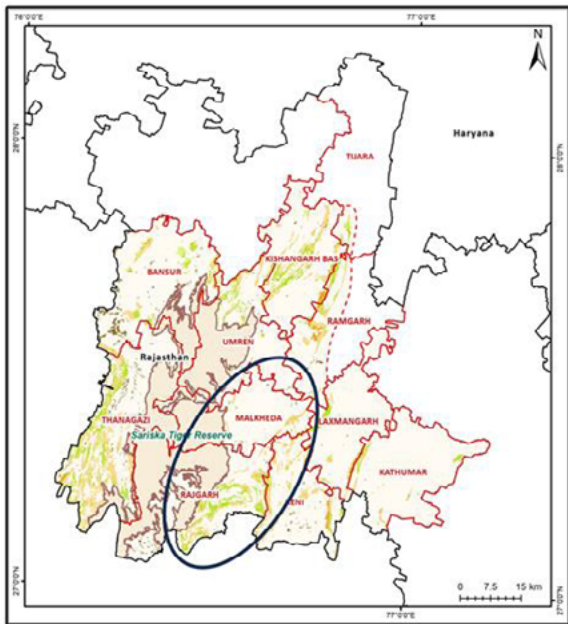
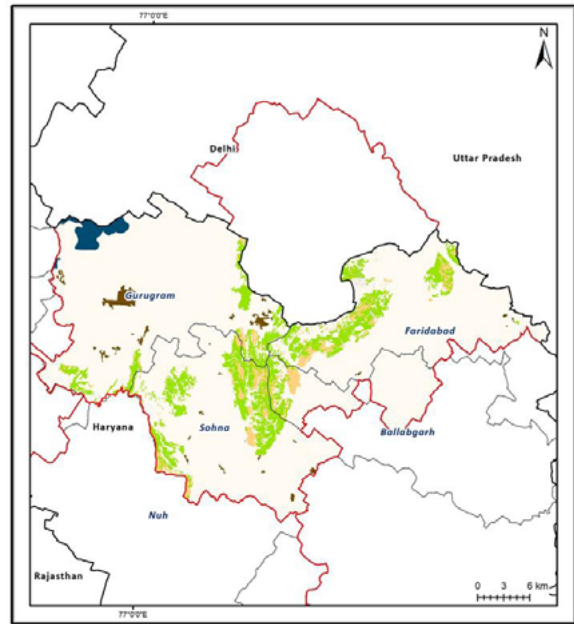
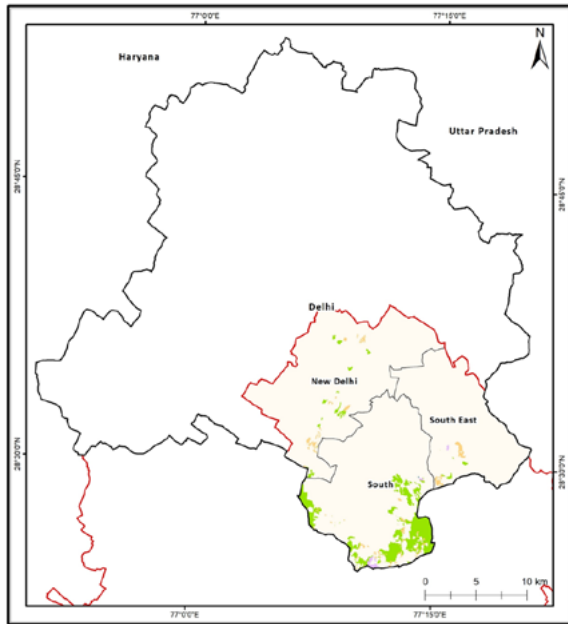
Aravalli Mountain Range Banaskantha



Grassland, Bhavnagar



Delhi NCR



Legend

- Mod. Dense Forest in Badland Topography
- Open Forest
- Open Forest in Badland Topography
- Tree Outside Forest (Open)
- Forest Blank
- Scrub
- Scrub in Badland Topography
- Scrub/Grazing Land
- Agriculture-Wind Erosion- Severe
- Agriculture-Wind Erosion-Moderate
- Barren/ Mining
- Waterlogged

Prepared under REC4P4NDC project, September 2024 for Delhi NCR

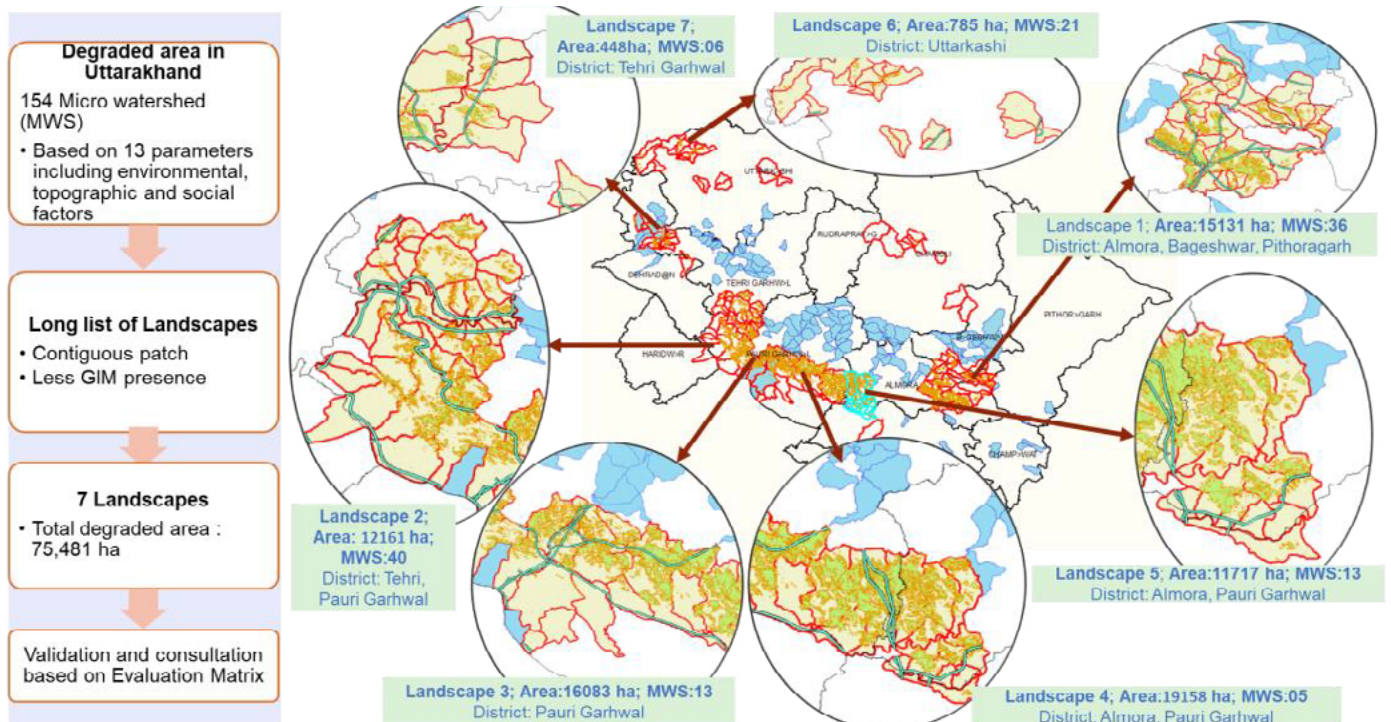
Scrub land in Aravallis



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Uttarakhand

Selection of Intervention Landscapes in Uttarakhand under REC4P4NDC





Almora,
Kumaon

© GIZ India

Pauri Garhwal



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State	Landscape	Inside RFA (ha)	Outside RFA (ha)	Total (ha)
Maharashtra	Chandrapur*	5,051	6,109	
	Jalgaon*	14,959	-	
	Nundurbar	6,798	7,342	
	Nasik	11,964	-	
	Pune*	5,339	9,626	
	Ratnagiri	24	14,094	
	Yavatmal	3,103	6,933	
	Ahilyanagar*	4,585	5,691	
	Sambhajinagar	4,282	6,986	
State Total		56,105	62,076	112,886
Gujarat	Banaskhata	9,964	-	
	Sabarkhata	1,435	5,393	
	Bhavnagar (Mangrove site)	470	8,601	
	Bhavnagar (Grassland site)	2,522	11,917	
	State Total	14,391	25,911	40,302
Delhi NCR	Alwar	7,034	3,434	
	Delhi	1,978	223	
	Gurgaon, Faridabad	7,668	9,230	
State Total	16,680	12,887	29,567	
Uttarakhand	Almora, Bhaveshwar, Pittoragarh	649	14,482	
	Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal	1,017	14,098	
	State Total	16,680	28,580	30,246
	Total Area (RECAP4NDC model sites)			213,001

*These landscapes in Maharashtra will be covered initially under the project's target area of 150,000 ha. The planning for the remaining landscapes will be implemented subsequently.

Project Updates

National Level



Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India (GoI)

RECAP4NDC is providing technical support to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India, for preparing the detailed action plan on the restoration of the Aravalli landscape. This initiative takes a comprehensive approach to preserving the ecological health of the Aravallis through a range of eco-restoration efforts. It ultimately aims to contribute to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality and fostering sustainable development.

Landscape Level

Delhi NCR



Meetings with the Forest Departments in NCR

- Meetings with the Rajasthan Forest Department and Haryana Forest Departments were held in July and August 2024 to explain the context of the projects to the stakeholders. Nodal officers were identified for further coordination with the departments in the Aravallis of Haryana and Alwar.
- An introductory meeting between the nodal officer of Delhi and IUCN and TERI counterparts for NCR was also conducted to introduce the consortium to the forest department. Similar meetings with the nodal officers of Haryana and Rajasthan are to be scheduled.
- A meeting with the newly appointed PCCF of Delhi Forest Department was held to explain the project and its focus.



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- Meetings with the nodal officers were also held to discuss the landscapes identified for the project's interventions.

Scrub land in Aravallis

Training Needs Assessment on FLR with Line Departments

- A training Needs Assessment (TNA) was conducted by ICFRE in the NCR. The TNA was successfully completed across the three forest departments and other line departments of Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan.
- The preliminary analysis of the questionnaire responses has informed us of priority topics like biodiversity conservation, eco-tourism, carbon markets among others, based on which the training curriculum for NCR officials will be developed.

Developing a Nature Interpretation Centre at the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary

Terms of References for hiring an architectural firm and a content agency for designing and establishing the Nature Interpretation Centre (NIC) in the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary were floated. The project is awaiting confirmation from the Forest Department before formalising contracts with the selected agencies.

Selection of landscape for FLR interventions

Landscapes for the project's intervention in NCR were demarcated, and have been discussed with the stakeholders for their buy-in. Approximately 25,000 ha have been identified across two landscapes (i.e. model sites) in NCR.

Landscape 1 extends across Delhi and Haryana and will be a one-of-a-kind attempt of landscape restoration spanning across federal boundaries in India.

Landscape 2 in Alwar, Rajasthan, focuses on showcasing landscape restoration in forest and non-forest

areas with key benefits to livelihood improvement. Landscape 2 is part of the iDPPP public-private partnership between RECAP4NDC and the Lupin Foundation, demonstrating the role of public-private partnerships in FLR. The modalities of this partnership are under finalisation between GIZ India and the Lupin Foundation.

A visit to meet the Lupin Foundation's team in Alwar was conducted early December 2024 to fine-tune activities to be carried out within RECAP4NDC and how it will compliment with the activities within Lupin's responsibility in this partnership.

Gujarat

State Executive Committee Meeting

The exercise of selection of intervention landscape was concluded with prioritising four sites for implementation of Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) measures. The Gujarat Ecological Education and Research (GEER) Foundation was engaged for prioritising areas for FLR

intervention in Gujarat. GEER analysed the data of forest cover change, land degradation and identified potential sites for intervention. Subsequently, they utilised an evaluation matrix to narrow down and select the sites for project's intervention.

The evaluation matrix considers several pragmatic criteria to prioritise landscapes and shortlist them for the project's future interventions. These include priorities of the key government stakeholders in the state, implementation perspectives like the likelihood of other developmental projects in the landscape, community participation and willingness, and opportunities for convergence and collaboration. The entire process was presented to the Forest Department during the meeting of the executive committee on 24 October 2024, and their remarks were incorporated.



Out of the four sites selected, two are from the Aravalli Mountain Range and one each from the Mangrove and Grasslands. The sites from the Aravalli Mountain Range includes the Ambaji North Forest Range of the Banaskantha Division and the Poshina

and the Khedbrahma Forest Ranges from the Sabarkantha Division. The Mangrove and Grassland sites are from the Bhavnagar division and are from the Talaja Round of Mahuva Forest Range and the Jesar Forest Range respectively.

The first meeting of the State Executive Committee for the implementation of the RECAP4NDC project in Gujarat, held on 24 October 2024 at Aranya Bhavan, Gandhinagar.

Legal and Policy Review

A stakeholder consultation with various Government line departments was held for Legal and Policy Review in respect of Forest Landscape Restoration. The consultation was held in Gandhinagar on 24 October 2024 with representatives of Forest and Environment Department, Panchayat

and Rural Development Department, Tribal Development Department. Different aspects of joint forest management, Forest Rights Act, provisions for social forestry, agro-forestry and ecological balance of common lands were discussed.



Stakeholder consultation with officers of the Forest Department and other government departments for legal and policy review of FLR.



Stakeholder consultation with officers of the Forest Department and other government departments for legal and policy review of FLR.



Mapping and review of legal and policy instruments supporting FLR in Gujarat

A stakeholder consultation was held for reviewing legal and policy instruments contributing to Forest Landscape Restoration. The consultation took place in Gandhinagar on 24 October 2024, with representatives from the Forest and Environment Department, Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Tribal Development Department, and others in attendance. The discussion covered various aspects of FLR and its legal and

policy provisions, including joint forest management, the Forest Rights Act, social forestry, agroforestry, and common lands. The consultation contributed to the extensive and detailed desk review conducted by GIZ India and the Indian Environment Law Organisation to arrive at strategic entry points for enabling FLR within the state's legal and policy frameworks.

Maharashtra

Under the project scope, in collaboration with the consortium partners, several significant activities were undertaken, including meetings, workshops, and field studies. Among these, the

following key events are critical in laying the groundwork for effective project execution in the coming years within the state of Maharashtra.

Stakeholder Consultation on 'State of Public Funding in Maharashtra for Forest Landscape Restoration, Pune' – 18 July 2024

Participation of Stakeholder Consultation 'State of Public Funding for FLR in Maharashtra' on 18 July 2024, at Van Bhawan Pune



The consultation was jointly organised by TERI and the Maharashtra Forest Department, focused on the theme, 'State of Public Funding in Maharashtra for Forest Landscape Restoration'.

The objective of the consultation was to understand the availability, expenditure and convergence of available public finance for the aforementioned project in the state and to gain valuable insights from the participants.

The workshop was attended by representatives from multiple line departments, namely State Forest Department, State Water Resources Department, State Tribal Department.

Other participants included the State Agriculture Department, State Horticulture Department, State Water Conservation Department, State Planning Department, NABARD, IUCN and GIZ India, civil society and NGOs, BAIF, AERF, TNC, OPML, Prakruti Organics, INTACH, Ecosatva Solutions, The Grasslands Trust and Lupin Foundation.

Key takeaways from the consultation were:

- Effective Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) requires district-level consultations, inclusive planning, and collaboration among stakeholders, including line departments and NGOs.
- Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) must reflect regional characteristics, balancing ecosystem restoration, livelihoods, and agro-climatic conditions. NABARD grants, CSR funds, and schemes like PESA and Van Dhan Yojna can support FLR, alongside innovative approaches like agroforestry-based carbon projects.
- Emphasising interdepartmental coordination, community engagement, and integration with micro-plans for CFR areas ensures efficient implementation and scaling of FLR activities.

Smt. Somita Biswas, PCCF, HoFF,
Forest Department of Maharashtra



Ms. Jui Pethe, Programme Lead, Research in
Environment Education Development Society (REEDS)



Speaker - Mr Shankar Totawar, Divisional
Joint Director, Agriculture Department



Stakeholder Consultation with community organised under Legal & Policy Review for FLR in the state of Maharashtra

On 12 September 2024, a multi-stakeholder consultation with local communities was organised to gather specific guidance and inputs for advancing FLR initiatives.

to integrate FLR into state level planning, policies, and institutional mechanisms.

The event brought together representatives from the State Forest Department, other state-level line departments, Van Vyasthapan Samitis (Village Forest Management Committees), Biodiversity Management Committees, and non-government stakeholders, including village communities in Scheduled Areas with recognised individual and community forest rights.

Discussions focused on identifying challenges in implementing policy and legal frameworks, leveraging their strengths, and exploring opportunities

Community interaction on 'Legal and policy consultation on
FLR in Maharashtra' at Bhimashankar, Pune





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Planning Committee Meeting (Executive Committee Meeting) at Van Bhawan, Nagpur

On 19 November 2024, the project planning meeting was organised at Van Bhawan, Nagpur with the senior officials from the Maharashtra State Forest Department, GIZ India, and IUCN to strategise on FLR initiatives.

Discussions included avoiding overlaps with GEF-UNDP projects and formalising a Memorandum of Understanding post-election. A Project Steering and Executive Committee will be formed to ensure smooth implementation, with the Forest Department endorsing the project to facilitate coordination with line departments and data collection in selected landscapes.

Key outcomes included finalising ten target districts for FLR activities, with Jalgaon replacing Gadchiroli for its higher restoration potential. The Green Credit Programme will be supported through baseline research and capacity building, and model sites will focus on integrating livelihoods, gender equality, and addressing drivers of degradation.

Stakeholders emphasised revising the evaluation matrix and ensuring community willingness for FLR. Plans were also made to engage the private sector via philanthropy budgets and carbon credits, while national and international good practices will inform capacity-building workshops and exposure visits for knowledge sharing. The meeting highlighted collaborative approaches to achieving Maharashtra's restoration and sustainability goals under the RECAP4NDC project.

The State Project Steering Committee will mainly be responsible for undertaking state-level policy decisions and issuance of important guidelines for effective implementation of the project. The Executive Committee will mainly guide in preparing the department level implementation strategy and annual action plan for effective implementation of the project in the state.



Project Planning Meet for Maharashtra, at Van Bhawan, Nagpur

Uttarakhand



Meeting with Forest Panchayat and Focus Group Discussion with Key Stakeholders

A key objective of RECAP4NDC is to mainstream FLR into the existing policy and planning processes at the national, subnational and local level. Keeping that in mind, the project is carrying out an assessment termed 'Mapping of Legal and Policy Preparedness on Forest Landscape Restoration in the State of Uttarakhand' with technical support from the Indian Environment Law Organization (IELO).

An interactive meeting was organised with a Van Panchayat (Forest Panchayat) in the Chaldgaon village of Chamba in the Tehri district. Van Panchayats are a unique community institution provisioned in Uttarakhand, considered as a very useful instrument to implement Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) in the state.

This was followed by a half-day focus group discussion (FGD) to bring various stakeholders in the state on one common platform. The first meeting

of the Executive Committee (EC) under RECAP4NDC was convened on 8 August 2024 under the chairmanship of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force (PCCF & HoFF), Uttarakhand.

The committee has given concurrence on two out of the seven landscapes identified based on geospatial analysis coupled with ground verification of highly degraded areas in and around the Recorded Forest Areas. Moreover, the chair of the meeting suggested to conduct another round of ground verification in a few selected ranges to verify the status of certain drivers of degradation. He also highlighted the pattern of forest density and multiple land uses along with the importance of including other state departments to move ahead for preparing the Detailed Project Reports.



Focus Group Discussion on Mapping the Policy and Legal Preparedness on Forest Landscape Restoration in Uttarakhand

Selection of landscapes for FLR interventions

The project team has followed a robust methodology that includes Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), spatial data analysis, and stakeholder consultations to identify, validate, and finalise intervention landscapes for FLR.

Field validation surveys and stakeholder consultations with forest officials and local communities were conducted to refine the selection of landscapes. As a result, two key intervention landscapes were finalised, covering a total of 30,246 hectares:

A detailed spatial analysis was carried out using 13 critical data layers that include land degradation, soil erosion risk, forest fire risk, LULC, human-wildlife conflict, forest administrative boundaries, elevation, slope, aspect, poverty pressure, population pressure, livestock pressure, and LPG connections. This analysis helped to identify seven potential landscapes covering approximately 75,480 hectares across six districts namely Almora, Pithoragarh, Bageshwar, Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal, and Uttarkashi.

- **Landscape 1:** 15,131 hectares in Almora, Pithoragarh, and Bageshwar districts.
- **Landscape 2:** 15,115 hectares in Pauri Garhwal and Tehri Garhwal districts.

The finalised landscapes represent high-priority areas for restoration, and their selection has been made with careful consideration of both ecological and socio-economic factors to ensure the success of FLR interventions.

Stakeholder Workshop: Unveiling the Methodology for Selecting Intervention Landscapes in Uttarakhand

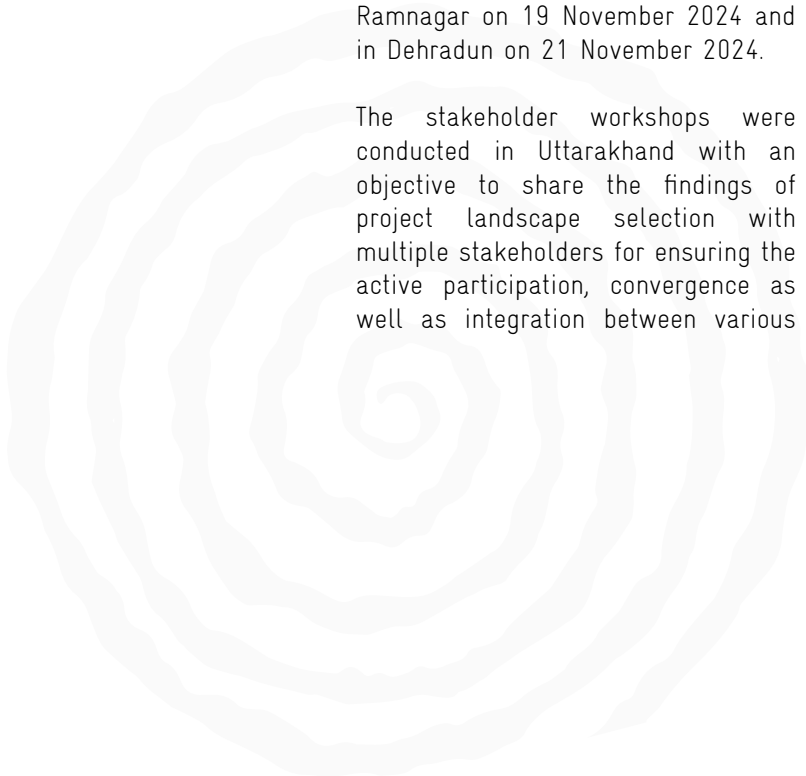


 **Two Stakeholder Workshops – Ramnagar and Dehradun**

Unveiling the Methodology for Selecting Intervention Landscapes in Uttarakhand under RECAP4NDC, in Ramnagar on 19 November 2024 and in Dehradun on 21 November 2024.

The stakeholder workshops were conducted in Uttarakhand with an objective to share the findings of project landscape selection with multiple stakeholders for ensuring the active participation, convergence as well as integration between various

line departments and agencies for the future interventions under the selected landscapes. The workshops were conducted in an inclusive manner, allowing participants the opportunity to share their perspectives and contribute valuable insights during the project planning process. The workshop methodology included expert inputs, moderated discussions and technical presentations. Total participation was 107.



Activities by Consortium Partners

GIZ India

Responsible:
Policy and Planning

Consortium Lead

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

As the leading consortium partner, GIZ India has been actively coordinating numerous activities with other partners and overseeing its implementation together with all the Consortium Partners. The landscape selection process has culminated with the application of a novel methodology combining remote sensing and field work analysis based on a multiple criteria resulting in the identification of a total area of 213,001 ha spread across 23 districts in the three states and the Delhi NCR (within the NCR, the focus has been on territories within Delhi, Rajasthan and Haryana). It is in these landscapes that the project's restoration, conservation and environmental monitoring activities will unfold.

A comprehensive review of the legal, regulatory and policy environment was conducted with the help of the renowned Indian Environment Law Organization (IELO). This resulted in concrete recommendations for policy mainstreaming of FLR both nationally and in the partner states.

This will serve the basis to promote policy uptake of forest restoration, sustainable forestry and landscape-level planning approaches.

In the state of Uttarakhand, GIZ India is about to embark on the development of an integrated monitoring and reporting online platform that will enable forest officers to consult and update information relevant for forest management and restoration, thereby improving decision-making at the local and state levels.

Together with the global IKI funded project "Support for the design and implementation of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (DEER)", the Restoration Academy India training event was organised for consortium partners and state forest departments officials in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in August 2024. All consortium partners and several forest officers interacted with national and international expert practitioners in the fields of ecological restoration, sustainable livelihoods, monitoring and communication.

GIZ India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the states of Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Gujarat which is paving the way for smooth and comprehensive execution of the project.

One of the key priorities of the Indian Government is the greening and restoration of the Aravalli Ridge, a vast mountain range which starts near Delhi, passes through southern Haryana, Rajasthan and ends in Gujarat. This range is a key geological feature of the Indian subcontinent, which serves as a buffer between the western desert areas from the more fertile central portions of the Gangetic plains. GIZ India supported the MoEF&CC in preparing the restoration plan for Aravalli which will be launched in 2025.

TERI

Responsible: Financing FLR



Financing mechanisms (public, private and others) available for FLR and allied activities in the four states are being detailed to the level of district and intervention landscapes in addition to the state-level analysis. Value chain analysis of different forest and non-forest produce for the identified landscapes is also underway to identify the opportunities in the NTFP and TFP sector. The work is at an advanced stage for Uttarakhand, where potential NTFPs and TFPs have been shortlisted. For

Maharashtra and Gujarat, this work is in its early stages. Work has also begun to analyse CSR finance in the project districts/landscape areas which will further provide us with the current intervention activity patterns, challenges, opportunities and gaps. TERI is working closely with IUCN so that the financial analysis complements the DPR preparation. TERI is also in discussion with a few organisations for exploring PPP investment opportunities in the project states.

TERI in collaboration with the Maharashtra Forest Department organised a one-day workshop on 18 July 2024 in Pune. It focused on the theme 'State of Public Funding in Maharashtra for Forest Landscape Restoration'. It showcased a path towards understanding the availability, expenditure and convergence of available public finance in Maharashtra. A similar workshop is also planned for Uttarakhand and Gujarat in the first quarter of 2025.



Restoration Academy held in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in August 2024.

TERI along with other consortium members participated in, and contributed to several events during these months – FGD on Mapping the Policy and Legal Preparedness on FLR in Uttarakhand in July; an in-depth capacity building at the **Restoration Academy in Gujarat in August**; workshops on Landscape finalisation for Uttarakhand in November.

TERI and GIZ India are curating a thematic track event at the 24th edition of the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) which is set to be held from 5-7 March 2025, under the broad theme of Partnerships for Accelerating Sustainable Development and Climate Solutions. WSDS is the annual flagship Track II initiative organised by TERI.



Restoration Academy



IUCN

Responsible:
FLR Model Implementation



In July, the GIZ India and IUCN teams convened in Delhi NCR for a review meeting to discuss project updates and collaboratively outline the way forward. Significant progress was achieved across multiple states:

Delhi

Six sub-landscapes were selected from an extensive list of degraded areas ranging across three states (Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi). Two potential landscapes were identified for further consideration: one encompassing Delhi and Faridabad, and another in Alwar, Rajasthan. The teams of IUCN and GIZ India conducted a joint visit to

the Alwar, Rajasthan site to study the key stakeholders, major drivers of degradation and existing FLR initiatives.

Gujarat

Field visits to the Sabarkantha and Aravalli divisions enabled the identification and re-evaluation of potential landscapes along with inputs from the state forest officials. Landscapes in Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, and Aravalli districts were prioritised through the application of an evaluation matrix. Additionally, mangrove and grassland ecosystems in Bhavnagar were identified for restoration, with

landscape data synthesised from working plans. The four model sites, Banaskantha (BK-8), Sabarkantha (SK-3), and Bhavnagar (BN-1 and BN-3), were finalised in the Executing Committee meeting.

Maharashtra

Field visits in Pune, Ahmednagar, Chandrapur, and the Gadchiroli districts were undertaken for Evaluation Matrix application. Data synthesis from field visits, discussions with forest officials, and literature reviews culminated in the identification of four Model Sites in Pune, Ahmednagar, Chandrapur, and Jalgaon districts. A list of potential

organisations for undertaking baseline assessments was prepared, and maps with KML files were finalised. Key activities also included state-level stakeholder mapping and a Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threat (SWOT) analysis for Model Sites. A brainstorming session co-organised by IUCN and GIZ India helped in finalising the baseline methodology for socio-economic, ecosystem services, and biophysical assessments.

Uttarakhand

Multiple field visits were conducted in Garhwal and the Kumaon regions to apply the Evaluation Matrix and arrive at two model sites of approximately 30,000 ha for Uttarakhand. The two model sites identified are spread across five districts of Uttarakhand – three in Kumaon (Almora, Bageshwar, and

Pithoragarh) and two in Garhwal (Pauri and Tehri Garhwal). The SWOT analysis was conducted for the two landscapes towards the preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPR). A stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken, and schemes relevant to restoration were identified through consultations with line departments.

Field visit to Nal Sarovar which is a Bird Sanctuary, Gujarat, a known Ramsar Site for migratory and local water-avifauna and rich biodiversity. Also famous for the conservation and protection efforts with the help of the local community.



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ICFRE

Responsible:
Building Capacities, Knowledge and Communication



ICFRE was actively engaged in conducting the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) for the State Forest Department (SFD) and other line departments in the states of Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi NCR. Responses from all the states were collected during field visits with the help of a questionnaire and group discussions. The preliminary analysis was performed to understand the training needs in respective states. Furthermore,

stakeholder consultations will be conducted in all the states, share the analysis and seek their responses.

The draft training needs assessment report is under progress and will be finalised after the stakeholder consultations. In addition, ICFRE is also actively engaged in analysing the existing course curriculum of forest training institutes, for example for forest officers, foresters and forest guards. The scope of

enhancing the curriculum is being explored and exercised by the partner. ICFRE also participated in the workshop on the Knowledge Exchange Platform organised by GIZ India. ICFRE and ICIMOD actively participated in discussions to understand the purpose, component/elements, and associated roles and responsibilities pertaining to the knowledge exchange platform.

FSI

Responsible:
Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting



The grant agreement for the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER) with the Forest Survey of India (FSI) has been signed and the grant disbursement process is over. By next year, the key activities begin with assessing existing FLR monitoring frameworks through literature reviews, expert interviews, and stakeholder

consultations, emphasising emerging technologies like remote sensing, Internet of Things (IoT), and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Insights from this review will inform the design of MER frameworks tailored to India's diverse landscapes, involving collaboration with state forest departments and other partners. Standard operating procedures

(SOPs), data collection formats, and digital tools will be developed and pilot-tested to ensure usability and effectiveness in real-world conditions. Institutional integration efforts will include IT infrastructure assessments, procurement planning, and training for seamless system adoption.

ICIMOD

Responsible:
Building Capacities, Knowledge and Communication, South-South Exchange




GIZ India and ICIMOD signed the grant agreement for RECAP4NDC, and funds have been disbursed to ICIMOD. A detailed activity plan for 2025 and 2026 has been finalised, with ICIMOD fully onboard and ready to initiate activities in 2025. Currently, ICIMOD is preparing a concept note to participate in the IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC), which will provide a platform for consortium partners to share

insights and learn from global experts on Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR). ICIMOD plans to develop a gender-responsive guideline to effectively address gender-related challenges in FLR efforts. Additionally, ICIMOD will conduct a feasibility study on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECM) in Uttarakhand. To enhance capacity-building, online training modules will be created, customised

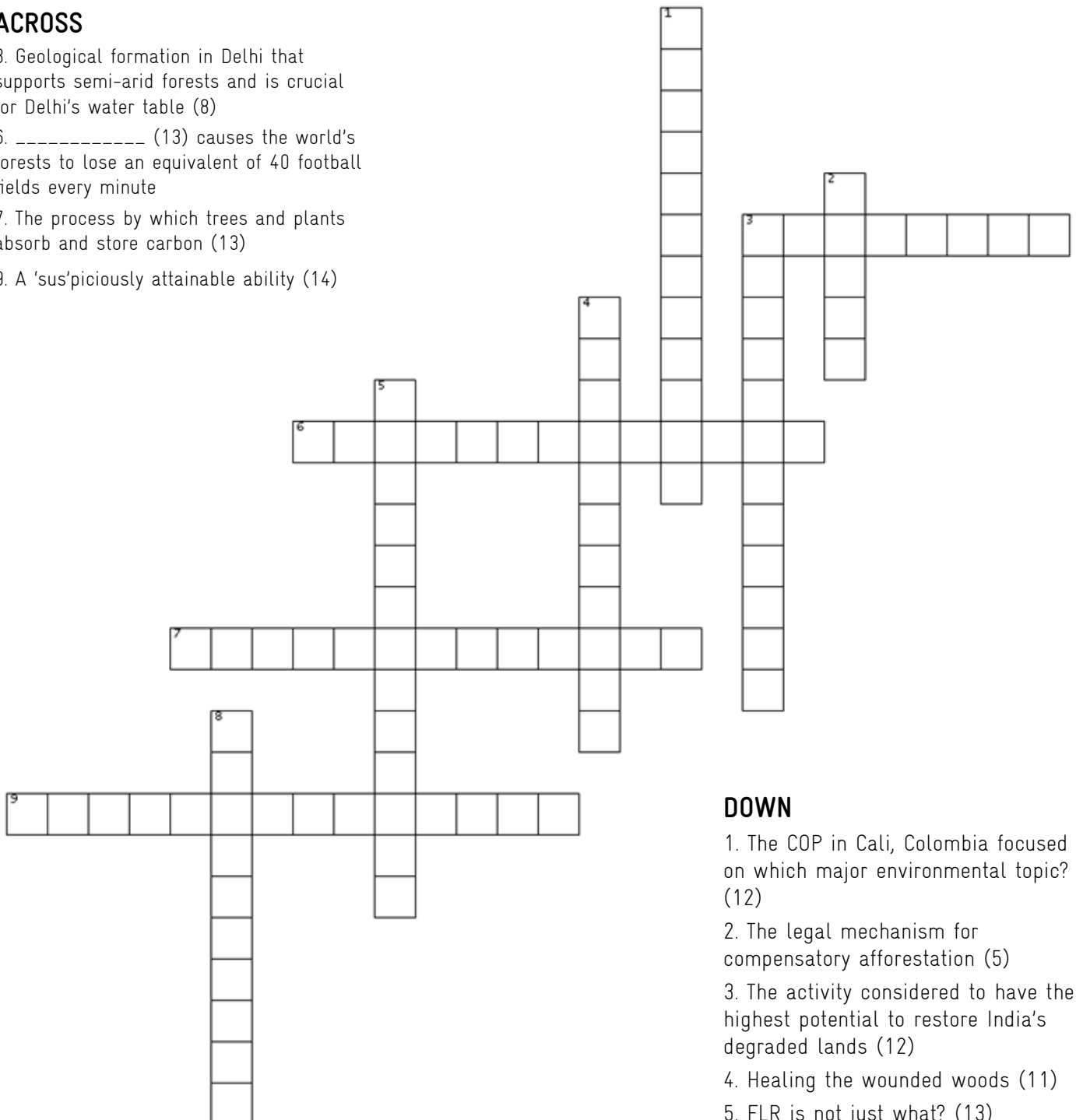
to the needs of various target groups based on a comprehensive training needs assessment. Furthermore, ICIMOD will organise a South-South learning meeting to foster collaboration among consortium partners, facilitating the exchange of progress and strategic plans under the RECAP4NDC initiative.

The RECAP4NDC Crossword



ACROSS

3. Geological formation in Delhi that supports semi-arid forests and is crucial for Delhi's water table (8)
6. _____ (13) causes the world's forests to lose an equivalent of 40 football fields every minute
7. The process by which trees and plants absorb and store carbon (13)
9. A 'sus'piciously attainable ability (14)



DOWN

1. The COP in Cali, Colombia focused on which major environmental topic? (12)
2. The legal mechanism for compensatory afforestation (5)
3. The activity considered to have the highest potential to restore India's degraded lands (12)
4. Healing the wounded woods (11)
5. FLR is not just what? (13)
8. Western Ghats host this type of forest ecosystem (10)

Answers to the Crossword:

- 8. RAINFOREST
- 5. AFFORESTATION
- 4. RESTORATION
- 3. AGROFORESTRY
- 2. CAMPA
- 1. BIODIVERSITY

Down

- 9. SUSTAINABILITY
- 7. SEQUESTRATION
- 6. DEFORESTATION
- 3. ARAVALLI

Across







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