

# INDIA'S FORESTS AND REDD+

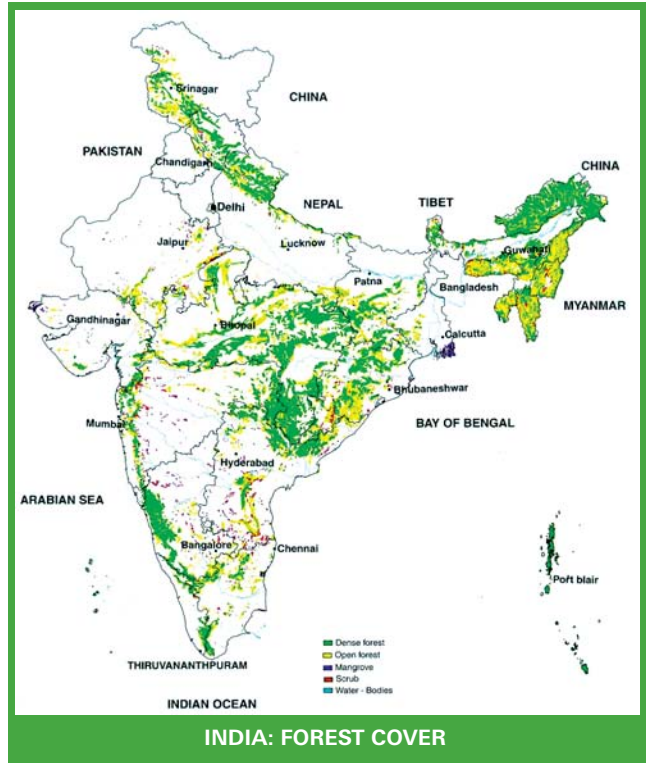


**Ministry of Environment and Forests**  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

# INDIA'S FORESTS: A RICH NATURAL HERITAGE

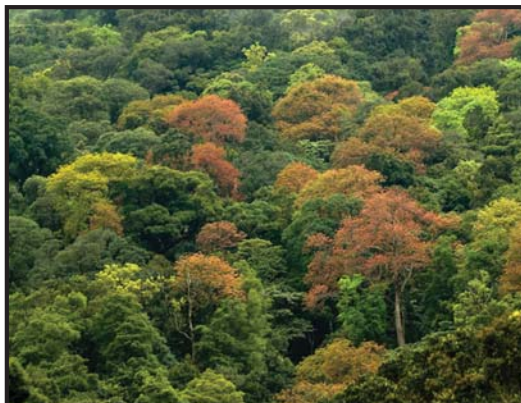
India's forests have long been an important part of her culture and a defining feature of her landscape:

- India has more than **70 million hectares** under Forest Cover, which is more than twice the entire geographical area of Finland.
- While most developing countries lost forest cover, **India added around 3mn hectares** of forest and tree cover over the last decade. Forests neutralize ~11% of India's GHG emissions.
- India is one of the 17 **mega-diverse countries** with 4 global biodiversity hotspots.
- **200 million people** are dependent on forests for livelihood in India. Concerted programmes are making them partners in conservation. India enacted a Forest Rights Act, 2006 to vest forest rights and titles on traditional forest dwelling communities.



- India has one of the most **advanced forest mapping** programmes in the world, with the Forest Survey of India conducting a biennial cycle of forest and tree cover assessment.

India recognizes that conserving, expanding and improving the quality of our forests is a major national priority. This has enormous domestic and transnational mitigating benefits. Not only is it a cost-effective and efficient way to mitigate the effects of climate change but it also improves India's water security, safeguards rich biodiversity and provides livelihood security for millions of Indians.





## WHAT ARE REDD AND REDD+?

REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) is the global endeavour to create an incentive for developing countries to protect, better manage and save their forest resources, thus contributing to the global fight against climate change.



- REDD+ goes beyond merely checking deforestation and forest degradation, and includes incentives for positive elements of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.
- REDD+ conceptualizes flow of positive incentives for demonstrated reduction in deforestation or for enhancing quality and expanse of forest cover.
- It works on the basis of creating a financial value for the carbon stored and enhanced in biomass and soil of standing forests. Countries that reduce emissions and undertake sustainable management of forests will be entitled to receive funds and resources as incentives.
- REDD+ approach incorporates important benefits of livelihoods improvement, biodiversity conservation and food security services.

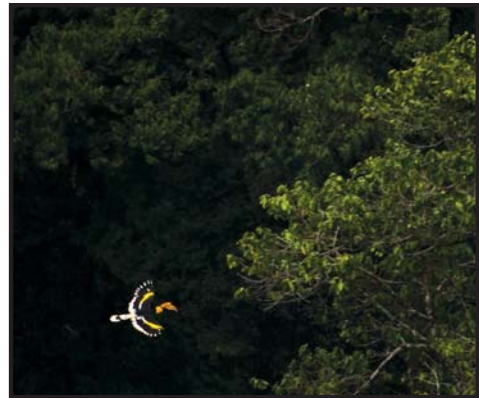


# How Will India Benefit from REDD+?

India stands to gain a lot from a global REDD+ mechanism. It has specifically opened the possibilities for the country to expect compensation for its pro-conservation approach and sustainable management of forests resulting in even further increase of forest cover and thereby its forest carbon stocks.

Simply put:

- Our sustained efforts for conserving and expanding our forest and tree resources have the possibility of being rewarded for providing carbon service to the international community in addition to providing traditional goods and services to the local communities.
- The incentives so received from REDD+ would be passed to the local communities involved in protection and management of the forests. This will ensure sustained protection of our forests against deforestation.
- It is estimated that a REDD+ programme for India could provide capture of more than 1 billion tonnes of additional CO<sub>2</sub> over the next 3 decades and provide more than USD 3 billion as carbon service incentives under REDD+.



# How will the **REDD+** programme impact local communities, tribal communities and forest dwellers?

REDD+ will benefit local communities as it explicitly safeguards their rights and those of indigenous peoples. India is committed that monetary benefits from REDD+ will flow to local, forest dependent, forest dwelling and tribal communities. This is ensured for three reasons:

- First, in the Indian context, the REDD+ is intended to be an additional co-benefit to the goods and services already accruing to and being enjoyed by the local community, and, therefore, it comes as a bonus without compromising on the existing benefits.
- Second, India's own acts, guidelines, executive instructions and orders at central and state level additionally ensure that REDD+ will not adversely impact on the traditional and legal rights of the local communities over forests, but on the other hand will ensure more monetary benefits flowing to them.
- Third, all international REDD+ deliberations and negotiations recognize and respect national legislations relating to safeguards for the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and aim to promote their participation in implementation and monitoring of REDD+.

## What is India's Position on **REDD** and **REDD+** in the ongoing global negotiations?



India believes REDD needs to be seen in the broader context of REDD+, not in isolation or in a truncated form since reduction of deforestation, and conservation and improvement of forests are two sides of the same coin, and so should be treated at par.

- Fairness requires that a unit of carbon saved by checking deforestation should be treated the same as a unit of carbon added due to conservation and afforestation measures. In essence, India has been insisting on following a comprehensive and holistic approach in realizing the full potential of mitigation in forestry sector.
- India's stand was finally accepted in 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) at Bali when elements of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks were added to the then existing text of reducing deforestation and forest degradation as part of Bali Action Plan.



## WHAT IS INDIA CURRENTLY DOING AS PART OF ITS **REDD+** STRATEGY?

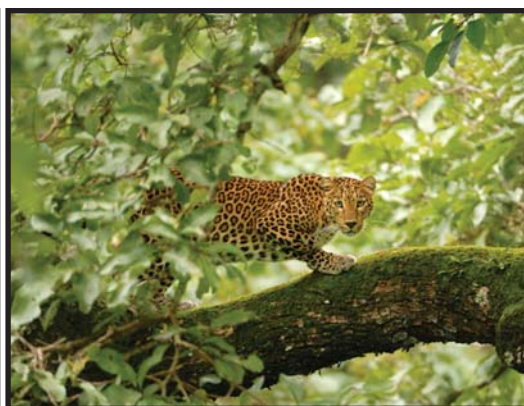
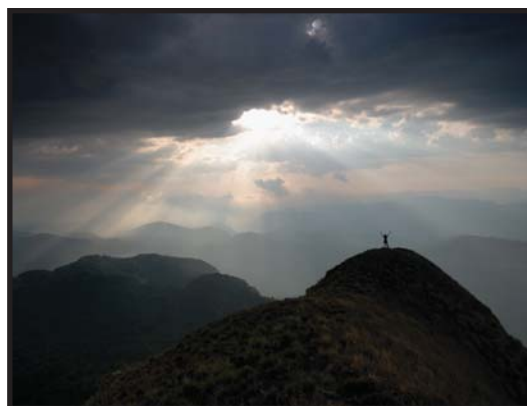
India is playing a positive role and has taken a firm stance in favour of a comprehensive REDD+ approach. It has presented an ambitious Green India Mission programme under its National Action Plan on Climate Change. India is underlying the following initiatives related to REDD+.

- India has made a submission to UNFCCC on “REDD, Sustainable Management of Forest (SMF) and Afforestation and Reforestation (A&R)” in December 2008
- A Technical Group has been set up to develop methodologies and procedures to assess and monitor contribution of REDD+ actions
- A National REDD+ Coordinating Agency is being established
- A National Forest Carbon Accounting Programme is being institutionalized
- India is hosting the Conference of Parties (COP-11) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2012, to coincide with twenty years of Rio
- Study on the impact of climate change on India’s forests assigned to the Indian Network for Climate Change Assessment (INCCA), has been released in November 2010. In the year 2030, 8 - 56% of the forests are likely to experience a change in vegetation type with respect to those observed in 1970s. There is likely to be an increase in Net Primary Productivity (NPP) ranging from 20 – 57 %.

# GREEN INDIA MISSION – INDIA’S NEW FLAGSHIP FORESTRY PROGRAMME

The government has put in place a National Mission for a Green India as part of the country’s National Action Plan for Climate Change with a budget of Rs 46,000 crores (approx. USD 10 billion) over a period of 10 years. The overarching objective of the Mission is to **increase forest and tree cover in 5 m ha and improve quality of forest cover in another 5 million ha**. Thus, the Mission will help in improving ecosystem services in 10 million ha of land, and increase flow of forest based livelihood services to, and income of about 3 million forest dependent households. The Mission is innovative in several respects:

- First, it proposes a fundamental shift from our traditional focus of merely increasing the quantity of our forest cover, towards **increasing its quality and improving provision of ecosystem goods and services**.
- Second, the Mission proposes to take a **holistic view of greening**, not merely focus on plantations to meet carbon sequestration targets. There is a clear and more important focus on enhancing biodiversity, restoring ecosystems and habitat diversity.
- Third, there is a deliberate and **major focus on autonomy and decentralization**. The Mission will be implemented through an autonomous organisational structure with a view to reducing delays and rigidity, while ensuring accountability.
  - ~ Local communities will be at the heart of implementation, with the Gram Sabha as the overarching institution overseeing Mission implementation at the village-level. The Joint Forest Management Committee would be revamped as Committees of the Gram Sabha. This is in consonance with the fact that forests are a source of livelihood for over 200 million people in the country, and hence centrality of their participation is critical.
  - ~ A key innovation is the idea of engaging a cadre of young ‘**Community Foresters**’, most of whom will be from scheduled tribes and other forest dwelling communities, to facilitate planning, implementation and monitoring of Mission activities at local level.







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