The need for a Forest Restoration Alliance in India

Media brief





BACKGROUND

Given the magnitude of the task of restoring India's forests, some degree of collaboration among the many different initiatives that already exist is needed, if real progress in restoring the nation's forests is to be made. An '**Alliance**' or **Consortium** will provide a platform for the wide variety of issues to be highlighted and exchanged; for different organizations and initiatives to establish meaningful partnerships; and for data to be collected and shared. If there is a broad enough consensus for the need for such an alliance, the time to start a '**Forest Restoration Alliance**' has arrived, as a basis for working together to create a mass movement and deliver real progress in regenerating the forest cover of the country.

RESTORING INDIA'S FORESTS

The term '**forest cover**' refers to lands more than one hectare in area, with a tree canopy density of more than 10 percent, irrespective of ownership and legal status. Such lands may not necessarily be a recorded forest area. It includes orchards, bamboo and palm. **The national target of 33% forest area is still a long way to go, as the current coverage is only ~9-16%**.

Korea, China, Ethiopia and Colombia, amongst others, have shown that it is possible to restore large-scale damaged eco systems. *So! Why not in india?* Perhaps, we need systems thinking to analyse the situation and to develop coherent and enabling policies, first.

ECONOMIC VALUE OF FORESTS

Rain falls on the forest, trickles through humus, garners nutrients and percolates through rock and soil, picking up minerals which our bodies need. Forests, trees and agro-forestry systems also contribute to food and nutrition security, which is poorly reflected in national development and FNS strategies. Forests contribute hugely to local livelihoods and the national economy, but are largely unrecorded and thus unrecognized.

The benefits of forests, in the narrower sense, include all the products and services that come from forests, including: (a) preserving the ecosystem; (b) controlling the floods; (c) cleaning up the atmosphere, and (d) reducing carbon emissions.

However, in the broader sense, they include the multiple benefits of REDD+ for:



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- Climate change mitigation
- Economic development, especially poverty alleviation
- Conservation of biodiversity

The externalities in the present economy for forests include: (a) fresh water and air; (b) habitat for species; (c) climate balance; (d) natural hazard regulation; (e) carbon sequestration; and (f) recreation/tourism, aesthetic values, cultural and spiritual heritage.

We need to assess the basic Issues for planning and mobilizing a national movement to regain the forest cover of at least 33% needed for a sustainable future.

The marketable goods of forests include:

- (a) Raw products for MSMEs;
- (b) Forest produce;
- (c) Timber;
- (d) Fuel charcoal; and
- (e) Oil.

The global estimates of the value of ecosystem services (2007 Rs/Ha/Year) are shown on the right, which indicates that the valuation of woodlands, temperate and tropical forests weighs in at about Rs.3 Lakhs/ha/year.



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REFORESTATION TOOLS

The **Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology** (**ROAM**), produced by IUCN and the World Resources Institute, provides a flexible and affordable framework approach for countries to rapidly identify and analyse **forest landscape restoration** (**FLR**) potential and locate specific areas of opportunity at a national or sub-national level.

The **ROAM** tools include:

- Stakeholder prioritization of restoration Interventions (pages 58 to 63)
- Restoration opportunities mapping (pages 68 to 83)
- Restoration economic modelling and valuation (pages 83 to 90)
- Restoration Cost-Benefit-Carbon Modelling (pp 90-94) & Resourcing Analysis (pp 98-105)
- Restoration diagnostic of presence of key success Factors (pages 94 98)
- Restoration finance

We need a nationwide people's movement to bring back our FORESTS.

A '**People's Movement**' that brings together foresters, forest dwellers, government agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), media, religious and faith groups, business and the youth ... encouraged and motivated by a **Consortium** or **Alliance** of leading groups from each sector.

The Vision and Mission of the consortium are as follows:

Vision:

- To increase the forest cover of India in order to meet the national target of 33% of the area by 2030;
- To enable economic growth in harmony with nature.



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Mission:

- The consortium will work towards scaling up good forestation practices
- The ground work will enable forestation in the area intervened.



RESPONSIBILITIES AND THRUST AREAS





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PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM LAS GAVIOTAS, COLOMBIA

If you can sell 1 cu m of water per day or 1,000 one-litre bottles at the same price as Bisleri, then you secure the financing of reforestation of 8,000 ha over the next 25 years. If you plant 1,100 trees on one hectare (ha), you have to remove 500 trees between Y6 and Y10, which provides about 200,000 tons of wood, while securing biodiversity, drinking water, biodiesel and lush forest growth. If you plant 100 palm trees per ha, then you can start generating biodiesel after 36 months, 1 tonne per ha per year! 8,000 ha provides 4 million liters of biodiesel per year, while promoting bio-diversity and water security, trees for paper and a sustainable forest growth program.

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IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS LEARNT FROM KOREA

In Korea, through the *Saemaeul* Movement - *We build our own villages* - the Korean Forest Services, which was made a part of the Home Ministry, were able to mobilize support systems for protection of the Forests, crucial to the success of Korea's Reforestation program. They built a national consensus on importance of forestation and viewed planting trees as an act of patriotism. The public value of the forests amounts to \$103 Billion, almost 10% of GDP. The message: *Reforestation leads to GDP growth*!

Every tree planted in the first 10-year plan period was reviewed. First was the rooting, to evaluate whether the tree has rooted safe and sound. Second, continuous checking of the growth and development of the reforestation program, tree-wise. The Korean government was able to eliminate poverty with seedling planting and earning. When the peasants did not have cash in hand, they would buy things on credit, promising to pay back when they got paid from forest stations. That is how they managed to survive.

The greatest challenge in Korea's erosion control history was at Yeongil District, Gyeonbuk Province. The amount of soil used was 2.1 million tonnes and 3.5 million manpower per year was used to rehabilitate the denuded lands opposite Japan's lush green forests. No one gave up. The level of degradation was assessed. Then a restoration blueprint reflecting the geographical features of the area was made. Site preparation included terracing mountain slopes to prevent soil and sand being washed away. Soil composition was changed by digging wide and deep holes and filling them with fertile soil and compost. It was a massive project. During the drought, every tree was hand watered. After 5 years, the \$4 million project transformed and reforested an area of 4,538 ha.



CONCLUSION

We conclude that the proposed **Forest Restoration Alliance** should be strong enough in all aspects, so that Government can be convinced of its value and existence. To do this, **systems thinking**, **logic** and **subject knowledge** are required. Contentious matters should be cleared among the members. *Above all, land should not be put to wrong use*.