



## Modalities for building a community led restoration movement at scale

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### Background

Forests and agriculture are the economic lifelines of over 700 million people living in rural India. This includes about 89 million tribal population who constitute the poorest and most marginalized sections of the country, 117 million small holder farmers cultivating less than 2 ha of land, and 80 to 100 million women involved in agriculture (MoEF, 2010; MoAFW, 2011). Recently published Global Warming of 1.5oCIPCC special report indicates that consequences of the 1oC warming are already being felt through increased extreme weather events, rising sea levels, among others. These changes in climate variability and intensity of extreme events has increased vulnerability of 700 million people in India who are dependent on land and forests for their sustenance. Developing sustainable pathways that can enable avoiding climate change impacts, and limit global warming to 1.5oC to 2oC is critical.

Landscape restoration supports enhancement of national carbon sinks and is an essential climate change strategy. Recognising the consequences of changing climate variability, the Government of India has committed to various international commitments and set domestic targets to restore degraded and deforested lands: the NDC target to reduce 2.5 to 3 billion tons of CO2 equivalent by 2030 through increase in forest and tree cover; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 15 (Life on Land); the Green India Mission, inter alia. Achieving these targets requires supporting a landscape approach and careful attention to the underpinning enabling conditions, as sustainability of interventions is contingent on it.

Globally, there is growing evidence that community forest lands with secure tenure are often linked to low deforestation rates, significant increase in forest cover, and sustainable production of timber and other forest products (Helen, et al., 2016). India has at least 34 million hectares of forest land where community forest rights can be recognised to benefit at least 200 million Scheduled Tribe and other traditional forest dwelling population(CRF-LA, 2016). While the pathway for achieving the forest related NDC and the SDGs in India is developed, considerations around social safeguards related to secure tenure and resource rights emerge centre stage. More so, given Government of India through its legislations like the Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA), Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas)Act, 1996 (PESA) has recognised tenurial rights over forestlands that communities were historically dependent upon. With enactment of these legislations, the forest dependent population has emerged as a major stakeholder in maintaining and managing the forestland. Given this additional emphasis and recognition of ownership rights within the law, the modalities for forest management and restoration need to be rethought of, with communities emerging as a crucial stakeholder along with the state institutions.

India has a rich history of landscape restoration interventions that have been implemented as part of various forest and wildlife management, watershed development and rural development programs. These projects have been implemented by multiple actors including government, civil society, private sector, communities and other institutions and have had varying impact on environment, communities and economy. Despite this long history, restoration in India is characterized by small scale, site-level successes that have not been scaled up. With forest dependent population emerging as a major stakeholder, this could be one pathway for achieving





restoration at scale. This session would discuss the emerging experience from the local level on opportunities and constraints faced post rights recognition for resource management. What are the financial mechanisms, knowledge and capacity building measures that could be key for developing a network of community led restoration and management in India at scale. What are the potential pathway for strengthening the institutional mechanism for community led restoration?

### Season plan

13-Mar-19

**Panel 20: Modalities for building a community led restoration movement at scale**

15.30 - 17.00 Hrs



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**Chair**

**Ms Rita Sinha**, *Ex-Secretary, Department of Land Resources, Govt of India*

*Dr Ruchika Singh, WRI-India*

*Dr. Jyotsna Krishnakumar – Keystone Foundation*

*Dr. Geetanjoy Sahu – Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)*

*Tuliram Ronghang – Chief Executive Member, Karbi Anglong district council, Assam*

*Ambrish Mehta – Action Research in Community Health (ARCH)*

