



Project for Improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystems Management and Livelihoods (JICA Funded)



Newsletter

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JICA Nepal team visited Himachal on Dated 19th to 22nd Feb 2025

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Women of Himachal: Shining Example of Empowerment

The rural women of Himachal Pradesh associated with the JICA Forestry Project have become a shining example of empowerment. These women are making remarkable efforts not only in preserving traditional occupations and culture but also in improving livelihoods through self-reliance. This project has initiated a new era of livelihood enhancement through self-sufficiency in the state. The total cost of the project is 800 crore, spanning a duration of 10 years, from 2018-19 to 2027-28. The primary objective of the JICA Forestry Project is to improve ecosystem services in forest areas and to ensure sustainable socio-economic development in Himachal Pradesh. In 2022, Kangra district was also included in this project. Currently, the project is being implemented in seven districts—Kinnaur, Shimla, Bilaspur, Mandi, Kullu, Lahaul-Spiti, and Kangra—covering 9 forest circles, 22 forest divisions, and 72 forest ranges. The project aims to establish 920 self-help groups (SHGs), out of which 910 have already been formed, with 755 of them being exclusively for women. The active participation of rural women in the project clearly demonstrates that they have become a true symbol of empowerment. Women associated with the JICA project are strengthening their economy through activities such as mushroom cultivation, making leaf plates, bag-making, preparing pickles and chutneys, turmeric production, crafting woolen products, pine needle products and carpet weaving. Additionally, they have played a commendable role in plantation drives and Aloe vera farming. Whether it is Kullu Dussehra, Mandi Shivratri, Rampur Lavi, Kinnaur Mahotsav, Shimla Winter Carnival, or the Aadi Mahotsav held in Delhi, the products of women's self-help groups sell exceptionally well. In the verdant landscapes of Himachal Pradesh, a transformative initiative is underway, blending environmental stewardship with economic upliftment. The "Project for Improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystems Management and Livelihoods," funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is reforming the region's forest management and community livelihoods



Sameer Rastogi (IFS)
PCCF & Chief Project Director



SHIMLA WINTER CARNIVAL: SOLED TRADITIONAL AND CHEMICAL-FREE PRODUCTS

RP Negi, Media Specialist

The 10-day Winter Carnival was held in Queen of Hill's Shimla from 25th December 2024, to 2nd January, 2025. Among the highlights of the event were pine needle products and chemical-free goods from the JICA Forestry Project, which became the top choice of visitors. At the Ridge Ground, two stalls from the JICA Forestry Project offered these affordable and chemical-free products, attracting a significant number of buyers. Products from two self-help groups associated with the project were brought for sale. The Radhe Krishna Self-Help Group from Ghanahatti, operating under the Taradevi Forest Division, Shimla, recorded high sales of its pine needle products. Tourists visiting Shimla for the Winter Carnival were drawn towards these unique offerings. Additionally, the Jagat Janani Self-Help Group from Taranda (Nichar Forest Division, Kinnaur) presented a wide variety of products based on customer's demand, which included Chulli oil,



Lingad pickle, Koda flour, walnuts, salted tea, apple jam, woolen caps, stoles and more. One of the major crowd-pullers was the Upper Shimla's special dish, Siddu for which tourists eagerly queued up. Despite harsh weather and extreme cold, all self-help groups displayed remarkable dedication. Their efforts were highly appreciated by Chief Project Director of JICA Forestry Project Mr. Sameer Rastogi.

JICA Nepal Team Visited Himachal to Observe Outstanding Work



The Team of 11-member from JICA Nepal has arrived in Himachal Pradesh for four days visit to learn the outstanding work being carried out under the JICA Forestry Project. On dated 19th February, the team reached the Project Management Unit (PMU) in Shimla, where they received a grand welcome. Chief Project Director and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. Sameer Rastogi, along with Project Director Mr. Shresthanand, warmly welcomed the representatives by presenting them with traditional Himachali caps and shawls. The officials briefed the JICA Nepal team on the ongoing activities of the project in Himachal Pradesh. Following this, the delegation visited the Radhe Krishna Self-Help Group in Ghanahatti, where they appreciated the pine needle products made by the group. The JICA Nepal representatives also toured

the Hydroponic Pilot Project site in Nalhatti, the Monkey Sterilization Center in Tutikandi, and the Himalayan Forest Research Institute in Panthaghati. The JICA Nepal team includes Under Secretary Meghraj Poudel, Forest Officer Nirmala Singh Bhandari, Conservation Officer Shailendra Chaudhary, Senior Forest Officer Safalta Shrestha, Senior Forest Officer Rajesh Pokharel, Senior Forest Officer Hari Bahadur Thapa, Senior Forest Officer Sagar Khanal, Research Officer Prateek Pandeya, Assistant Engineer Laxmi Subedi, Project Coordinator Mayuko Akutagawa, and Associate Project Manager Bidya Pokharel. On 20th February, the team visited the Catchment Area in Dhalli, the Himalayan Nature Park in Kufri, and the Eco Park in Craignano. On 21st and 22nd February, they inspected the exceptional project work in the forest divisions of Bilaspur and Sundernagar.



SHG of Spiti Wildlife Division focuses on income generation through handloom and traditional carpet making



The Self-Help Group (SHG) of Spiti Wildlife Division focuses on income generation through handloom and traditional carpet making. With skill-based training provided to the group, members have honed their craft, leading to high-quality outputs. This training has not only enhanced their skills but also boosted their marketability. As a result, the SHG has experienced substantial profits, contributing significantly to their livelihoods. This success aligns with the objectives of the JICA-PIHPFEM&L project, which aims to improve skill development and enhance the economic stability of local communities.

The handloom activity is a seasonal activity, i.e. the preparation/making of a traditional carpet takes around 30-40 days. The Palze SHG (Demul BMC) has achieved a sale of Rs 45,000/- and Manerang SHG has generated a sale of around Rs 59,000 in last six months. Wildlife Division Spiti, has been instrumental in driving significant progress under the JICA Forestry Project under the visionary guidance and proactive initiatives of The Chief Project Director have created a transformative impact on the region, balancing both livelihood enhancement and conservation efforts.



Through his leadership, there has been a remarkable increase in opportunities for the local communities of Spiti, particularly in sustainable income generation and skill development. Simultaneously, his commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of Spiti's forest ecosystems has ensured long-term environmental health, benefiting both people and nature. His efforts have truly been a game-changer in the region.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) initiated the PIHPFEM&L (Project for improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystem Management & Livelihood) project in the Spiti Wildlife Division in 2021. Since its inception, the project has made significant strides in promoting sustainable forest management and enhancing livelihoods for local communities.

Key activities carried out under the project

include:

1. Livelihood Support:

- A provision of 5 lakh rupees each to all 24 **BMC (Biodiversity Management Committee) Sub-Committees** for supporting various local initiatives.
- Provision of **revolving funds** to 47 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the Kaza and Tabo ranges, fostering local entrepreneurship and economic independence.

2. Satoyama Activities:

- Provision of a **diesel-operated thresher** to the **Demul BMC**, improving agricultural productivity.
- Delivery of **predator-proof corrals** to 17 BMC Sub-Committees (five units for each committee) to protect livestock from predators.
- Implementation of a **feral dog sterilization** program to manage the local wildlife population sustainably.
- Supply of **solar hamams** to BMCs, promoting the use of renewable energy for heating and improving living conditions.

3. Forest and Ecosystem Management:

- **Drainage line treatment activities** carried out across 17 BMC Sub-Committees, focusing on soil conservation and water management in a departmental mode.

4. Capacity Building and Exposure:

- Organized **exposure visits to Ladakh** for the best SHG members, promoting knowledge exchange and skill development.
- Arrangement of **exhibition stalls** at various events to showcase the products of SHGs, increasing market visibility.

5. Infrastructure Development:

- Construction of the **JICA multipurpose outlet** in Kaza to facilitate the sale of SHG products, contributing to the local economy.

These efforts demonstrate the ongoing commitment to improving both the livelihoods of local communities and the sustainable management of forest ecosystems in the Spiti region. The collaboration with JICA has been pivotal in empowering local communities, fostering eco-friendly practices, and promoting long-term environmental sustainability.



A SOIL-LESS FARMING TO GROW NUTRITIOUS FODDER TO FEED CATTLE

The JICA assisted Project for improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest ecosystem management & livelihoods is working in 7 districts under 22 Forest Divisions of Himachal Pradesh. Nestled in the serene hills of Himachal Pradesh, the rural communities have long relied on forests to meet their fodder needs. But with increasing livestock demands and diminishing forest resources, a sustainable solution has become essential. Under Shimla Forest Division the 'Hydroponic Fodder Pilot Project' is a revolutionary step towards addressing fodder scarcity and improving

rural livelihoods which showcases how technology can transform traditional practices. The unit has been installed in May 2022 in Himdhenu Sanrakshan Kendra Chauri, Nalhatti where it could be utilized for feeding large number of stray cattle thus contributing to a social cause.

Here's how it works: seeds like maize, barley, and wheat are soaked, treated, and placed in trays under controlled environment. The seeds then begin to germinate after 3 to 4 days and within just 10 days these seeds grows into lush green fodder, rich in nutrients essential for livestock health. With each kilogram of maize seed yielding up to 5 kilograms of fodder, the process is efficient and sustainable. It is currently being used by the Sanrakshan Kendra to feed around 50 number of cattle. The project aims to develop it as a centre of study and research. A team from JICA Nepal also visited the Hydroponic fodder unit site and cow shelter on February 19, 2025 and appreciated the project efforts in reducing the dependence on forests and conserving our precious ecosystem while enhancing the livelihood of rural communities. The Hydroponic Fodder Project is a shining example of innovation meeting sustainability. Together, let's build a future where technology and tradition work hand in hand for the betterment of the people and the planet.



Yosha Solanki
(Subject Matter Specialist)
DMU Shimla

JICA Dedicates a Paved Road to the People of Fatehpur

Under the Forest Range Jawali, the VFDS of Fatehpur has received a newly constructed paved road, dedicated to the local community. Previously, the 48-meter stretch was entirely unpaved, causing significant inconvenience to the residents. However, with the initiation of the JICA Forestry Project, the construction of the paved road brought a wave of happiness among the



Before



After

people. The construction began in November 2024 and was successfully completed by January 2025. This development will benefit 15 families in Fatehpur. The President of VFDS Ranjit Singh expressed his gratitude towards the JICA Forestry Project, acknowledging its commendable efforts in promoting community development. He highlighted that the region has witnessed numerous developmental works, thanks to the dedication of the project officials. Through their association with the JICA Forestry Project, the people of Fatehpur are advancing towards self-reliance. The residents extended their appreciation to the Chief Project Director, Divisional Forest Officer of Nurpur, and the Range Forest Officer for their contributions.

Priyanka Sharma
(FTU Co-Ordinator, Fatehpur)

PROGRESS OF MEDICINAL PLANT CULTIVATION IN NACHAN FOREST DIVISION

A JICA aided project based on commercial cultivation of *Picrorhiza kurrooa* (Kutki) and *Swertia cordata* (chirayita) in organized community cluster for livelihood and commercial production through organized women groups in Nachan Forest Division was awarded to Himalayan Research Group (HRG) for the year 2021-2024. On completion of this project, Dr. Rajesh Chauhan, Manager (Marketing) JICA conducted an inspection tour from February 21-24, 2025, in Chen Meghal, Ruhal, and Bukhras villages of Nachan Forest Division to assess the progress made by HRG in implementing the above said project. Meetings with farmers revealed their satisfaction with HRG's contribution in providing planting material/seeds and technical know-how for its cultivation. Farmers have begun selling Chirayita biomass/stock to the "Mountain Farmer's Producer Company Limited

(JMFPCL)," established by HRG. JMFPCL is in the process of obtaining a license for Chirayita tea under the name "JMFPCL Mountain Grains," facilitating a direct link for these farmers. The company possesses licensed processing equipment for grinding, packaging, and sachet making under suitable conditions. Farmers also reported that they are selling Chirayita seed @ 15/g and Panchang @ 300/Kg. Kutki cultivation is also progressing, with some farmers selling stolons to others.



The Aroma of Sepu-Badi Fills Nalwari Fair



- » **Technical Education Minister Mr. Rajesh Dharmani Appreciates JICA Products.**
- » **Self-Help Group Products Under JICA Forestry Project Become the Center of Attraction.**

The aroma of Sepu-Badi has filled the State-Level Bilaspur Nalwari Fair. During the seven-day fair, natural and chemical-free products prepared by various self-help groups associated with the JICA Forestry Project attracted long queues of customers. On Monday, March 17, during the inaugural ceremony of the fair, the State's Technical Education Minister, Mr. Rajesh Dharmani, visited the JICA Forestry Project Stall and praised the products crafted by the self-help groups. He emphasized that the Congress government of the state has initiated numerous schemes to empower and uplift women. Mr. Dharmani stated that the Nalwari Fair is not only a tradition but also a symbol of Himachal Pradesh's rich cultural heritage, folk traditions, and social unity. It serves as a significant platform to promote local trade, livestock rearing, tourism, and handicrafts while preserving the identity of

Bilaspur, also known as Kahlur. He further noted that the fair enhances not only agriculture and livestock activities but also strengthens the local economy. The minister highlighted that the products made by self-help groups are generating substantial income for their members. It is noteworthy that various self-help groups associated with the JICA Forestry Project exhibited and sold products like Sepu-Badi, Sira-Badi, pickles, mushrooms, bags, and more at the fair. The inaugural event was also attended by Conservator of Forests Bilaspur, Mr. Mrityunjay Madhav; Divisional Forest Officer of Bilaspur Headquarters Mr. Ashwani Sharma, General Manager of the Resin and Turpentine Factory Mr. Suklap Sharma, Bilaspur Sadar Range Officer Mr. Narendra Singh, Subject Matter Specialist Dr. Ulsheeda and FTU Co-ordinators.

Dr. Ulsheeda
(Subject Matter Specialist)
Bilaspur

JICA Forestry Project in Media





Officers and employees welcomed the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Project Director, Mr. Sameer Rastogi, at the Forest Department Headquarters in Talland.

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