

Uttarakhand set to begin Rs 807 cr forest mgt project

Seema Sharma,TNN | Sep 30, 2015

DEHRADUN: Uttarakhand Forest Resource Management Project, funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the tune of Rs 807 crore over an eight-year period, is now all set to be executed. This project aims at the restoration of degraded forests in fringe areas of the state and will be implemented by van panchayats (VP), local elected bodies, which will use this as an opportunity for capacity-building too.

Restoration of 37,500 hectares of forest land in 750 selected VPs and generation of livelihood opportunities are part of this project. Forest minister Dinesh Aggarwal said, "Eco-restoration of degraded forest, developing strong village-level van panchayats, building their capacity and making them self-reliant by enhancing livelihood potential will be achieved through this JICA scheme. VPs have been selected on the basis of the extent of degraded forests and the possibility of cluster formation. This project will also address landslides and reconstruct damaged roads in disaster-affected forest areas. That will be done by the forest department. The project is being implemented in 17 forest divisions, 13 for forestry and livelihood components and six for disaster-affected forest areas."

What are planned are Community Development Activities (CDAs) and Income Generation Activities (IGAs) that would mobilize

local communities and create infrastructure to enhance incomes of people dependent on forests. Two small help-groups will be supported at each village. During the project period, a total of 1,500 such groups are expected to be formed. Chief project director Anup Malik said, "A total of 150 VPs have been selected for the first phase of this four-phase programme. Under the first phase, the focus will be on restoring 50 hectares of forests in each VP area. Water conservation, including development of water bodies and fodder development, will be undertaken. The first plantation will be taken up in the next monsoon.

Priority will be given to the walnut, which provides green cover as well as a means of livelihood to local people. Dairy, honey collection and other activities will also be encouraged through the self-help groups, some 300 of which will be formed in these VPs so dependency on forests can be decreased."

Source:

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/dehradun/Uttarakhand-set-to-begin-Rs-807-cr-forest-mgt-project/articleshow/49172531.cms>