



PHOTO: FOREST-PLUS

PARTNERING TO PLANT MORE TREES

In October 2015, India announced its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), including an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tons of CO₂e through additional forest and tree cover by 2030. This is equivalent to increasing tree cover by 10 million hectares and enhancing forest stocks on a further 10 million hectares (about 1/4 the total area of California). It will be difficult to achieve the target through domestic government funding alone. The domestic private sector is one source of funding. Since 2014, India has made corporate social responsibility mandatory, creating a regulated market for corporate contributions and opening up opportunity for private sector contributions to forestry activities in India.

CONVERGENCE

In 2015, Forest-PLUS identified such an opportunity to plant trees on the banks of a culturally and economically important river, the Narmada, during the time of a larger government-led initiative called *Nadi Bachao, Samridhi Lao* (Save Rivers and Bring Prosperity). Forest-PLUS facilitated the convergence of efforts from the private sector, the government, and civil society to enhance the initiative through a scalable partnership model.

PRIVATE SECTOR

The funds for the plantation program were raised from the private sector by a company named Pangea using the instrument of tree certificates. A year after the plantation, the plantation sites will be audited to verify the planting and then tree certificates will be issued to the donors indicating the number of trees planted on the ground with their support. The plantations are geo-tagged and the donors can see these on a satellite map through the company's website. The donors are provided assurance against misappropriation and misuse of funds through a field survey and plantation audit by a third party.

GOVERNMENT

The district administration financially supported these tree plantation efforts by pit-digging through MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) funds. This convergence successfully allowed the funds raised from the private sector to be used only for procuring seedlings, allowing several-fold expansion of the initiative.

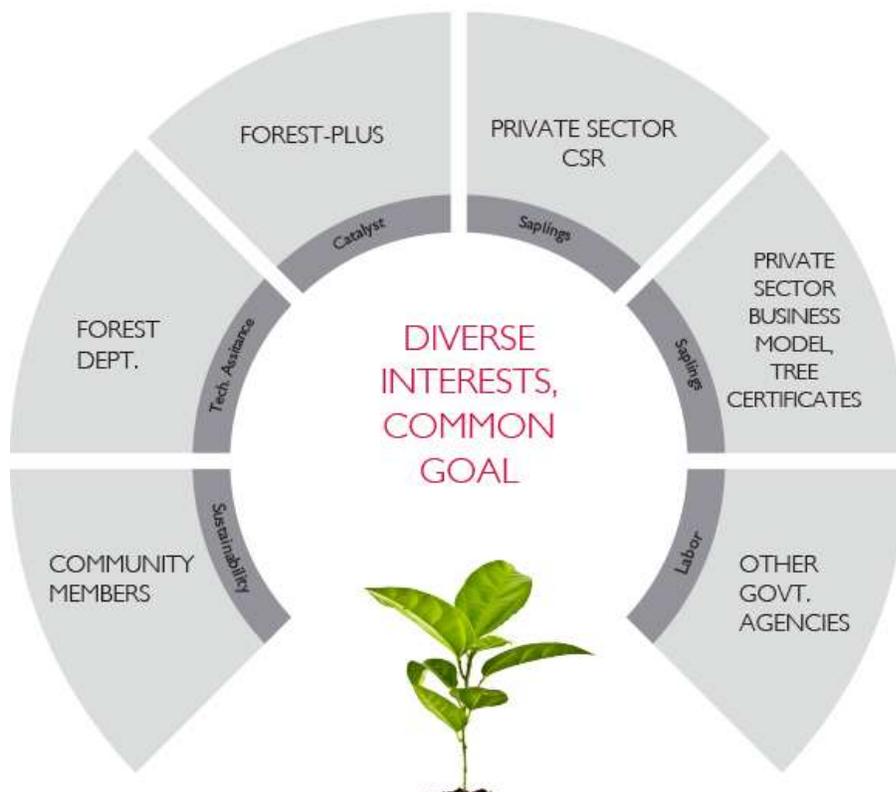
CIVIL SOCIETY

The implementing agency for this initiative was an informal farmers' network (*Subhash Manch*) and an NGO, Intellectual Public Welfare and Training for Art Society (IPTWA), which entered into a formal agreement with Pangea and channeled funds for the implementation of the tree plantation initiative.

A MODEL FOR INDIA

This experience demonstrates that it is possible to raise significant funds from the private sector to supplement the government's efforts to increase forest cover and quality.

It also shows the importance of convergence with ongoing programs and schemes to achieve scale. As wage employment programs under MGNREGA are implemented in all rural areas of the country, this model of obtaining pit-digging support through MGNREGA could be easily replicated. This also fits in nicely with MGNREGA's focus on wage labor provision to the needy rural households, and concomitant restrictions on spending MGNREGA funds for procuring materials. Thus, by using MGNREGA funds for pit-digging labor and using private sector funds for seedlings, a synergistic public-private partnership is developed.



With this success, a further tranche of funds were secured for the 2017 planting season. Forest-PLUS has also expanded the strategy to its Sikkim landscape. This initiative has led to planting of over 700,000 trees of native species. This success is a testimony to the viability, replicability and scalability of the proposed strategy of mobilizing private sector funds for establishing tree plantations for environmental and livelihood purposes.