



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



Newsletter

Issue : 14th | January 2025



On the occasion of Wildlife Week 2024, Chief Project Director Mr. Sameer Rastogi apprised Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu about the project.

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SHG member from Lahaul Mrs. Maan Dasi presenting Sea buckthorn juice to Hon'ble CM.

Our commitment: Environmental Protection and livelihood enhancement

The JICA Forestry Project is empowering rural women by providing them with modern tools and techniques to improve their traditional crafts. This not only helps them preserve their cultural heritage but also increases their income.

Under various Self-Help Groups (SHGs), many women have been traditionally making plates from Tor (a type of tree) leaves for generations. However, the JICA Forestry Project has introduced modern methods to assist these groups. As part of the project, some SHGs have been provided with machines to make plates at the forest division level. Now, the women are using these machines to make plates. The demand for modern-style plates made from Tor leaves is rising in the state. Tor leaf plates are completely biodegradable, causing no harm to the environment.



The JICA Forestry Project is doing outstanding work in the handloom sector. Through various SHGs associated with JICA, handloom and weaving products are receiving new recognition. In Kullu district, there are 106 SHGs associated with the handloom sector, with 72 groups actively working. This project is branding the products made by different SHGs. These products are marketed under the brand name "Him Tradition. Pine needles, which were once considered unused in forests, are now a source of income for people. Self-Help Groups under the JICA Forestry Project are creating various types of household products from pine needles. They have started selling products made from pine needles.

People are being trained to make fuel by creating briquettes from pine needles, and the necessary equipment is being provided free of cost. The utility of pine needles has increased, and this will also reduce the incidence of forest fires caused by dry pine needles. To economically empower rural women in the state, the JICA Forestry Project has taken several steps. With the project's support, Self-Help Groups in the Mandi forest division have been given grinding machines to prepare Badi and Seera. There is considerable demand for these homemade Badis (local name) and Seppu Badis (local name) in local markets. Under the JICA Forestry Project, marketing outlets are being established at each forest division level to sell products made by different Self-Help Groups. This will help in the marketing of these products and allow people to purchase a variety of products from these outlets.

Sameer Rastogi (IFS)
PCCF & Chief Project Director

JICA Forestry Project Support for Millet Farming in Kinnaur

» CPD Sameer Rastogi Agrees to Demand from VFDS Nigulsari

» Medicinal Plants to be Planted in Non-nursery Areas in Bhawanagar Forest Range

RP Negi, Media Specialist

The JICA forestry project will support millet farming in the Nigulsari region of Kinnaur district. This crop has the potential to significantly improve the lives of local farmers and overall sustainability of the region. On November 4, during Chief Project Director (CPD) Sameer Rastogi's visit to Kinnaur, the Village Forest Development Society of Nigulsari submitted a request for assistance in millet cultivation. CPD Rastogi expressed approval for this request and assured full support for millet farming. The Village Forest Development Society has expressed an interest in planting on 10-15 hectares of land in Nigulsari. CPD Rastogi directed the Bhawanagar Forest Range Officer to provide a detailed report on unused nursery areas within one week, so that medicinal plants can be cultivated in these regions. Notably, Rastogi conducts regular field visits to monitor the progress of the JICA forestry project within Kinnaur Forest Division. In addition to this, CPD Rastogi inaugurated an outlet in Bari under the Nichar Forest Range. This outlet will sell



natural products and apparel from the HimTradition brand, part of the JAICA forestry project. He commended the members of Jagriti Self-Help Group Bari for producing uniforms that will promote the HimTradition brand. An outlet was also opened in Paunda for selling products from various self-help groups. The women's self-help group in Bari requested an exposure visit to Kullu, to which Rastogi responded that a decision would be made in accordance with the rules.



Update to Chief Minister Sukhu on Project Activities

On November 2, during the conclusion of the Kinnaur Festival, CPD Sameer Rastogi updated Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on project activities. He stated that the JAICA forestry project is working on ecosystem management and livelihood improvement across 22 forest divisions in the state under the guidance of the state government

Review of Ani Forest Division in Luhri

On November 4, CPD Sameer Rastogi reviewed the Ani Forest Division at the Luhri division office. During the review, he discussed all project activities with Divisional Forest Officer Dr. Chaman Rao and other officials. Rastogi instructed that pending projects be completed on time and urged self-help groups that are lagging behind to improve their efforts.



Farmers Receive Technical Know How on *Picrorhiza Kurroa* (kutki) Plantation

Two workshops of one day each on Jadi Buti (medicinal plants) were successfully conducted in Bagasarahan and Sarga areas of Ani Forest Division, Kullu district, on November 11th and 12th, 2024. About 50 members of the local community participated in workshops. The plants were raised in the month of August, 2024 and it was therefore felt necessary by the JBC that the members of the Common Interest Group (CIG) be trained properly for cultural operations required during winter months so that there is proper development of plants and stolons in the coming summer.

The primary objective of these workshops was to equip farmers with the necessary technical knowledge for effective Kutki plantation management. Dr. Lal Singh, a renowned scientist from the Himalayan Research Group, shared valuable insights on various aspects of Kutki cultivation, including:

- ➔ Earthing Up: Emphasized the importance of this technique to stimulate the growth of new plants.
- ➔ Stolon Protection: Advised farmers to ensure that the stolons are adequately



covered with soil to prevent exposure and frost bite.

- ➔ Post-Harvest Management: Highlighted the significance of drying and removing foreign material to maintain the quality of the harvested Kutki stolons.

Dr. S.K. Kapta, Director of Jadibuti cell, shed light on the JICA assistance program for medicinal plant cultivation. Furthermore, a detailed discussion was held, where Dr. Lal Singh, Dr. S.K. Kapta, and Dr. Rajesh, Manager (Marketing), addressed the queries raised by the participating farmers.

By imparting essential knowledge and practical tips, these workshops aim to empower local farmers to cultivate high-quality Kutki and contribute to their economic growth and the growth of the medicinal plant industry in the region by conducting class room sessions and field visits.



Dr. Rajesh Chauhan
Manager (Marketing)

Transformative Initiative Aimed: Rajesh Sharma

Divisional Forest Officer Wildlife Kullu Mr. Rajesh Sharma said that, JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) Project in Wildlife Division Kullu is a transformative initiative aimed at fostering sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and community livelihood enhancement. This project integrates ecological preservation with socioeconomic development, ensuring active participation of local communities. Through the establishment of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the project empowers rural communities by promoting eco-friendly income-generating activities such as handloom production, medicinal plant cultivation, and ecotourism. These activities not only provide financial stability to community members but also help reduce dependency on forest resources. Significant achievements include

skill-based training programs for SHG members, the development of trekking routes, installation of eco-camping facilities, and restoration of sacred groves. Conservation activities, such as plantation drives and water source improvement, further support environmental sustainability. The project emphasizes the use of modern tools like GIS for effective monitoring and management. Collaboration with various stakeholders and convergence with government schemes have amplified its impact, benefiting both the environment and local communities. The JICA project exemplifies the harmonious coexistence of nature and human development, paving the way for a greener, sustainable future in Kullu.



Rajesh Sharma
DFO, Wildlife Kullu

Wildlife range Manali a model for sustainable practices : Nirmala

Deputy Ranger Wildlife Range Manali Mrs. Nirmala Devi said that, The JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) Project under Wildlife Range Manali has been a pivotal initiative for the past seven years, fostering sustainable development and environmental conservation. With 20 active Biodiversity Management Sub-Committees (BMCs), the project aims to integrate community welfare with biodiversity preservation. These BMCs are engaged in diverse activities, including afforestation, water source rejuvenation, sacred grove conservation, and promoting ecotourism. By empowering local communities through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the project supports livelihood opportunities such as handloom production, medicinal plant cultivation, and guided trekking. These initiatives help reduce dependence on forests while enhancing the socioeconomic well-being of the region. Over the years, significant milestones have been achieved,

including extensive plantation drives, development of trekking routes, installation of eco-friendly camping facilities, and conservation of cultural heritage sites. The project also emphasizes capacity-building through skill-based training programs and the adoption of modern tools like GIS for better management and monitoring. The JICA project exemplifies the balance between nature conservation and community development, making Wildlife Range Manali a model for sustainable practices. The dedication of local stakeholders and the support of the JICA initiative continue to create a lasting positive impact on both biodiversity and livelihoods.



Nirmala Devi
Deputy Ranger

Priya Thakur

(Subject Matter Specialist,
Wildlife Division Kullu)

The Fragrance of Natural Products From Jica at the Lavi Fair



- » Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla inaugurated the stall of the Forestry Project.
- » 17 self-help groups from 3 forest divisions showcased products for sale.
- » Traditional Attire and Organic Products from JICA Shine at the International Lavi Fair
- » Quality products at affordable prices attracted significant buyers.

RP Negi, Media Specialist



The traditional attire and organic products crafted under the JICA Forestry Project gained immense popularity at the International Lavi Fair. The fair, held from November 11 to 14, saw a high volume of sales at the JICA stall, featuring Kinnauri and other traditional garments. The four-day International Lavi Fair in Rampur was a buzz with the aroma of natural products brought by self-help groups associated with the JICA Forestry Project. On Monday, the Governor of Himachal Pradesh, Shiv Pratap Shukla, inaugurated the JICA Forestry Project stall, accompanied by Shimla District Magistrate Anupam Kashyap. The Governor appreciated the variety of natural products displayed by self-help groups and emphasized the importance of promoting millets for better health. He noted that while chemical use

may boost production, it has harmful effects, underscoring the need to encourage the cultivation of natural products. This initiative also improves livelihoods and strengthens the economy. The JICA stall at the Lavi Fair showcased a range of natural products, including Rajma (kidney beans), tulsii flour, ghee, honey, Kinnauri caps, shawls, and stoles, apricot oil, soybeans, walnuts, sattu, kirti, sira, and black gram (mash), among others. This year, 17 self-help groups from forest divisions in Kinnaur, Rampur, and Anii participated in the fair to sell their products. The event was attended by prominent officials, including Divisional Forest Officer Gurharsh Singh, Additional Conservator of Forests Tej Singh, retired HP Forest Service officer C.M. Sharma, Forest Range Officer Sarahan Kundan Lal Negi, and other officers and staff from the JICA Forestry Project.



Him Tradition Brand Products Now Available at 18 Jica Outlets



Nurpur : Deputy Commissioner Kangra, Hemraj Bairwa, inaugurates the outlet.



Kaza : MLA Lahaul & Spiti Anuradha Rana inaugurates the outlet.

The outlets under the JICA Forestry Project are now selling products of the Him Tradition brand. The project aims to establish outlets across 22 forest divisions, of which 18 are already fully operational. These outlets have been strategically set up in key tourist areas and places with significant public movement. As part of this initiative, a multipurpose outlet was inaugurated at the tourist destination of Kaza on October 13, 2024.

The event was graced by Ms. Anuradha Rana, MLA from Lahaul-Spiti. Similarly, another multipurpose outlet was inaugurated at Eco Park Nurpur in the Nurpur Forest Division on October 23, 2024, by Mr. Hemraj Bairwa, Deputy Commissioner of Kangra. These outlets primarily focus on selling products from the Him Tradition brand, aimed at improving the economic conditions of self-help groups (SHGs).

CPD and PD Visited Nurpur Outlet

The Chief Project Director Mr. Sameer Rastogi and Project Director Mr. Shreshtha Nand Sharma visited the multipurpose outlet in Nurpur on December 16, 2024 and appreciated the quality of products available. He highlighted the progress of the JICA Forestry Project, which is close to achieving its target of setting up outlets across 22 forest divisions in Himachal Pradesh. Mr. Rastogi also announced that the remaining two outlets will

soon be dedicated to the public. The Chief Project Director also appreciated the officials and employees of the Forest Division Nurpur. On this occasion, Divisional Forest Officer Nurpur, Amit Sharma, retired Himachal Pradesh Forest Service Officer Yashpal Garneria, along with officers and employees of the JICA forestry project, were present.



Initiatives for Forest Fire Protection



Ecosystems of Forests in the Project Areas are sustainably managed and enhanced by the project interventions. To that effect, the Project for Improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystems Management and Livelihoods (PIHPFEM&L) aims to manage and enhance forest area or green cover ecosystems while contributing to environmental and sustainable socio-economic development in the Project area. It strives to contribute to biodiversity conservation and improvement of ecosystem services with specific focus on water resource conservation, prevention of soil erosion, and necessary support to establish sustainable alternative livelihoods of local community. All envisaged activities will be implemented by the Project in two modes viz. 1) Departmental Mode; 2) Participatory Forest Management (PFM) Mode. Beside all major activities under PIHPFEM&L (JICA, funded), it also focus on forest fire prevention. For avoiding the Forest fire incidences in Himachal Pradesh, many awareness

programmes were organized by all VFDS/BMCs under 22 Divisions of the 'PIHPFEM&L. These awareness programmes were organized in the presence of DFOs, SMS, FTUs coordinators and VFDS members. At each Divisional level, the concerned DFOs with other staff carried out the awareness programs such as training cum awareness programs for different stakeholder groups, rallies, street plays, nukkar natak, meetings at village level involving Panchayat functionaries, training to village communities in safe handling of forest fires, distribution of leaflets, radio talks, use of local TV channels, etc.

Under PIHPFEM&L an amount of Rs. 1386 per ha. has been allocated to each VFDS per year for forest fire protection.



Dr. Kaushalya Kapoor
Programme Manager
(Forestry & Biodiversity)

Chief Project Director Takes Feedback From Nurpur

» Sewing Machines Distributed To Trained Women

» Inspection of Manohara Nursery

Chief Project Director Mr. Sameer Rastogi reviewed the progress of the project in the Nurpur Forest Division. He was on a tour of various forest divisions in Kangra district from December 16 to 21, 2024. As part of this visit the Nurpur Forest Division organized a one-day workshop at the divisional level on December 16. During the workshop, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Nurpur, Mr. Amit Sharma, presented an update on the work completed so far. In his address, Mr. Sameer Rastogi stated that the JICA Forestry Project is performing exceptionally well across 22 forest divisions in the state with the Nurpur Forest Division being a prime example. The project has significantly contributed to improving the livelihoods of local people, and various income-generating activities are underway. The Chief Project Director emphasized that the primary objectives of the project are forest ecosystem management and livelihood enhancement. He also informed the department and project officials about the mid-term review process. As part of the event Mr. Rastogi

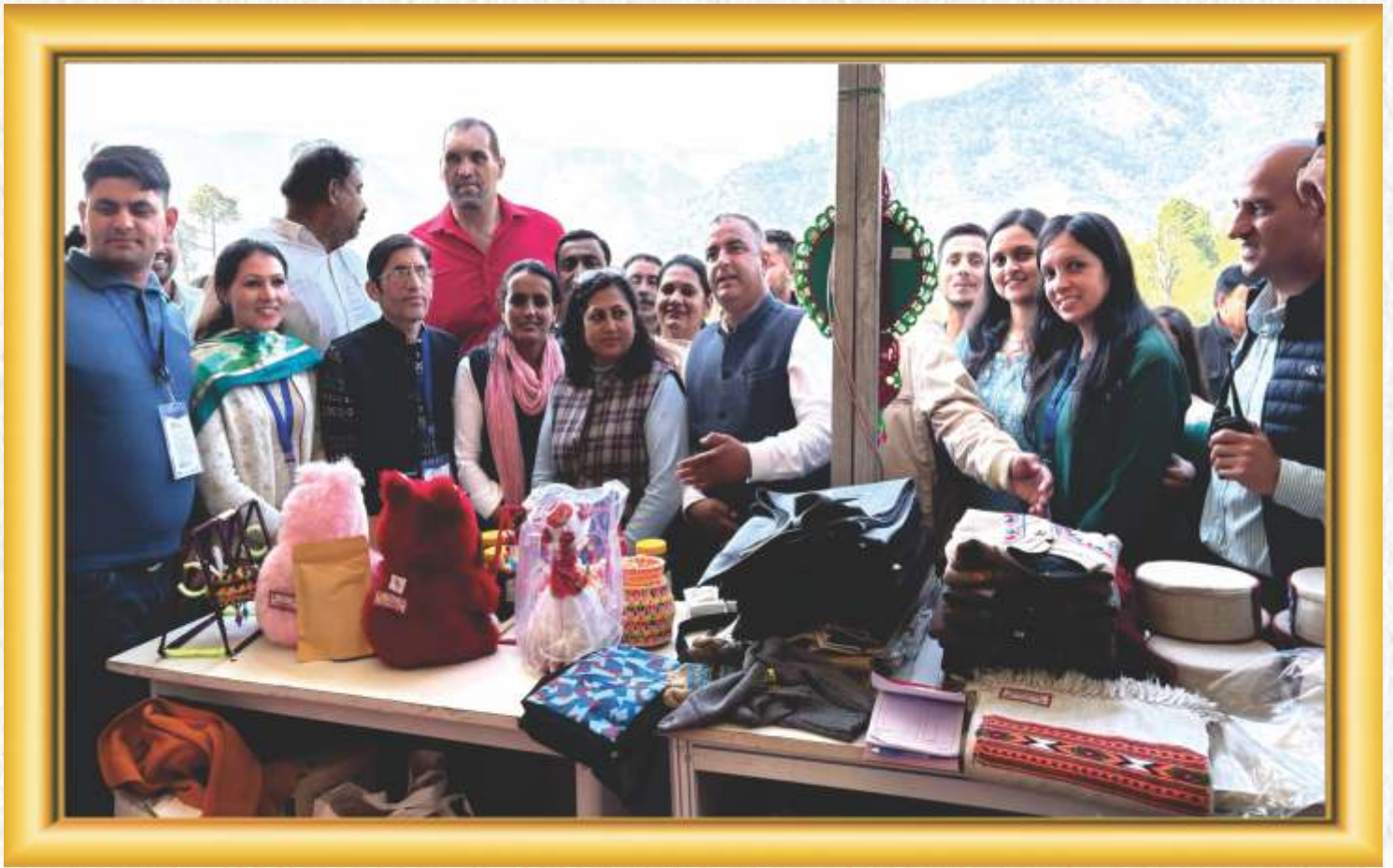


distributed modern sewing machines to women from self-help groups who had completed training programs. Beneficiaries included members of the "Sui-Dhaga Self-Help Group" from Khanni and the "Nari Shakti Self-Help Group" from Badhuhi. Additionally he distributed fire safety equipment to forest guards and sub-division officers. After the workshop Mr. Rastogi inspected the Manohara Nursery. He evaluated the quality and capacity of the plants and praised the efforts of the department and project staff. During the event Project Director Mr. Shreshtha Nand Sharma, Assistant Conservator of Forests Nishant Parashar, retired Himachal Pradesh Forest Service Officer Yashpal Garneria, Subject Matter Specialist of Nurpur Forest Division Sukriti Sharma and Field Technical Unit Coordinator Priyanka Sharma along with other project staff were also present.



Sukriti Sharma

(Subject Matter Specialist) Nurpur



During the Shimla Flying Festival, The Great Khali visited the JICA forestry project stall at Junga (Shimla)

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