

# Himalayan Restoration Project: Ecologically restoring species, livelihoods, and landscape



## Background

The Himalayan Restoration Project seeks to ecologically restore the long-neglected and largely unfamiliar, deteriorated broad-leaf oak and pine forest habitat nestled in the mid-elevations of the Himalaya, in Himachal Pradesh. The Chamba Valley is currently reduced to having one small wildlife sanctuary (Khajjiar-Kalatop) and several isolated small fragments of the lesser-known forests interspersed with ever-increasing terraced agriculture that occupies more than 90% of the landscape. The HRP collaborates with the communities and educates them on the importance of forests and the need to protect it. We have established a community-led nursery in 2022 and are currently growing 21 species of native Himalayan species.

In 2022, with an extensive outreach program during the pilot studies, the Rathiyar Village Panchayat, Chamba head has issued an undertaking on behalf of seven wards of the panchayat (including 28 villages with a population of 2,282 in 503 families owning nearly 860 hectares of farmland) to be our partners in the restoration program. We partner with local farming communities, empowering them with ecology-based adaptations & sustainable livelihood options, and collaboratively rewilding this degraded landscape using native plant species grown in a community

managed nursery. By actively involving the local communities as integral members of our team and fostering partnerships with key stakeholders such as the forest department and other NGOs, we holistically bring decision-making, ensuring scientific and ecological restoration of this precious ecosystem.

Active conservation is the need of the hour, and the Himalayan Restoration Project aims to do just that through stakeholder-run restoration and conflict mitigation programmes. The area of focus is around the Khajjiar-Kalatop Wildlife Sanctuary, western Himalaya and lies within the recently demarcated eco-sensitive zone of



the sanctuary. The project is trying to work towards conserving the fragile landscapes of western Himalaya, through an interconnected multi-pronged approach using science and traditional knowledge for holistic wellbeing of communities, livelihood, and species.

### Activities conducted during the reporting period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

- Germination of native saplings of western Himalaya in the nursery.
- Restoration of degraded patches of land across the project landscape.
- Education outreach, upskilling, and training workshops for students, teachers, women, youth, and community members.
- Roadkill surveys across the landscape area over 8+ months.
- Perception and knowledge surveys with community members and other stakeholders.
- Representation of the project at national and international conferences.



Shanti deweeding the saplings before they are transported to the restoration plots. © Sanjay Molur

### Key achievements and outcomes

- The community nursery germinated 20,000+ saplings of 21 native species.
- 3 ha of degraded land restored with 3,000+ native saplings. Additional 2 ha of land conserved.
- 500+ students and youth educated, 200+ women trained and upskilled, and 500+ community members sensitized in conservation, restoration, coexistence, and climate change.
- Provided 25 livelihoods for local community members (5 permanent and 20 seasonal).
- 35+ days of roadkill surveys across a 35-km stretch since June 2025 to document the threats to wildlife species over seasons from vehicle movement.
- 50+ knowledge and perception surveys with the local stakeholders on their understanding of climate change, crop raiding, restoration, and eco-based livelihood opportunities.
- Representation through posters, talks, and films in ERA India, 2025 GLF



The team transporting saplings from nursery to the restoration plot. © Sanjay Molur



The team stocks up nursery supplies to germinate saplings before winter sets in. © Amrin Ansari

functions.

### Key partnerships and collaborations

The HRP is part of the Global Landscape Forum chapters and is called GLFx Himachal. HRP is a member of the Global Alliance for Rights of the Nature and Youth in Landscape initiative. In the past year the project has strengthened its existing relations with the Rathiyar Gram panchayat,

Asia Community & Action Week, and Tropentag 2025.

- Collaborated with Green Hub India to produce a film on the Himalayan Restoration Project.

### Challenges faced

The climate crisis remains one of Chamba's biggest challenges. This year, heavy rains and landslides left the team stranded at the field station without electricity, food supplies, or network connectivity. The situation became extremely challenging and even posed a serious risk to one of the community members working with the team. At the same time, shifting climate patterns are becoming visible through altered flowering and fruiting cycles, which are beginning to influence the success of the flora in the region.

### Team members and locations

The project presently has 13 members working. Ten team members are based in Chamba of which six belong to the local and indigenous communities, while three members are based in Coimbatore coordinating the technical and administrative

Arpana Trust, and Himachal Pradesh Forest Department to collaborate and work in the area towards a climate positive future.

### Acknowledgments

The team is thankful towards the partners, the community, students, women, and youth in the landscape for their support and encouragement. Thanks are to: Randoh Higher Secondary School for collaboration; the forest department and panchayat officials for the administrative support and help during on-field action; the Arpana Trust for providing the facilities for the field station; Mr. Shakthi for the nursery space; and Salesforce for funding the project.



The HRP teams signs MoU with Rathiyar Panchayat pradhan. © Lakshya Rathore



Students from Randoh Higher Secondary School join HRP team in the restoration efforts. © Amrin Ansari



HRP team conducting education outreach session with government school students in the landscape. © Lakshya Rathore



HRP team conducting wildlife film screening for government schools as part of outreach activities. (Lakshya Rathore)



HRP team invites villagers from across the landscape, interested in restoration to sign MoUs for future conservation & restoration efforts. © Amrin Ansari



HRP team conduct a hand-on training program on native species restoration as part of the NSS program with Randoh Higher Secondary School. © Lakshya Rathore

### Future plans/next steps

The Himalayan Restoration Project is a long term programme to restore the 800+ ha of degraded landscape with the communities. As part of the vision the 2026–27 target is to restore 10 ha of degraded land and reach out to many more schools and communities for a climate positive future.



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**Citation:** Bhattacharjee, T., S. Verma, A. Ansari, L. Tyagi, L. Rathore, P. Chaman, V. Ahuja & S. Molur (2026). Himalayan Restoration Project: Ecologically restoring species, livelihoods, and landscape. Zooreach Annual Report 2025–26. In: *Zoo's Print* 41(3): 01–04.