Local communities can help curb climate change: Study

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A research paper done by an international group of experts based at the Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad, the University of Manchester (UK), the University of Sheffield (UK), and the University of Michigan (US) has found that nearly 300 million people live in areas with high potential for forest restoration in the tropics.

The paper identified the importance of empowering local communities to manage forest restoration as a just and sustainable mechanism for climate change mitigation.

The paper has been published in the journal Nature Ecology and Evolution.

The paper, was stated to be one of the first comprehensive studies to examine the extent to which opportunities for tropical forest restoration overlap with global populations and levels of economic development.

The research estimates that 294.5 million people live in areas with high potential for forest restoration in the tropics, and over one billion people live within 8 km from such high-potential sites. In low income countries, almost 12 per cent of the population lives in areas considered important for forest restoration.

The study highlighted the high value of partnering with indigenous people and local communities to ensure the success of investments in carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and local jobs and livelihoods.

Providing communities with the right to manage forests and implement forest restoration offers a just and sustainable way to address climate change, the paper said.

Talking specifically about India, Dr Ashwini Chhatre, co-author and professor of public policy at the ISB, said that India has a robust legal framework for empowering local communities living in or near forest areas.

Within the last two years, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha have prioritised expansion of community rights as a mechanism for empowerment and poverty alleviation. Dr Chhatre said that India could learn from its own positive experiences and set up an example for the global community.