

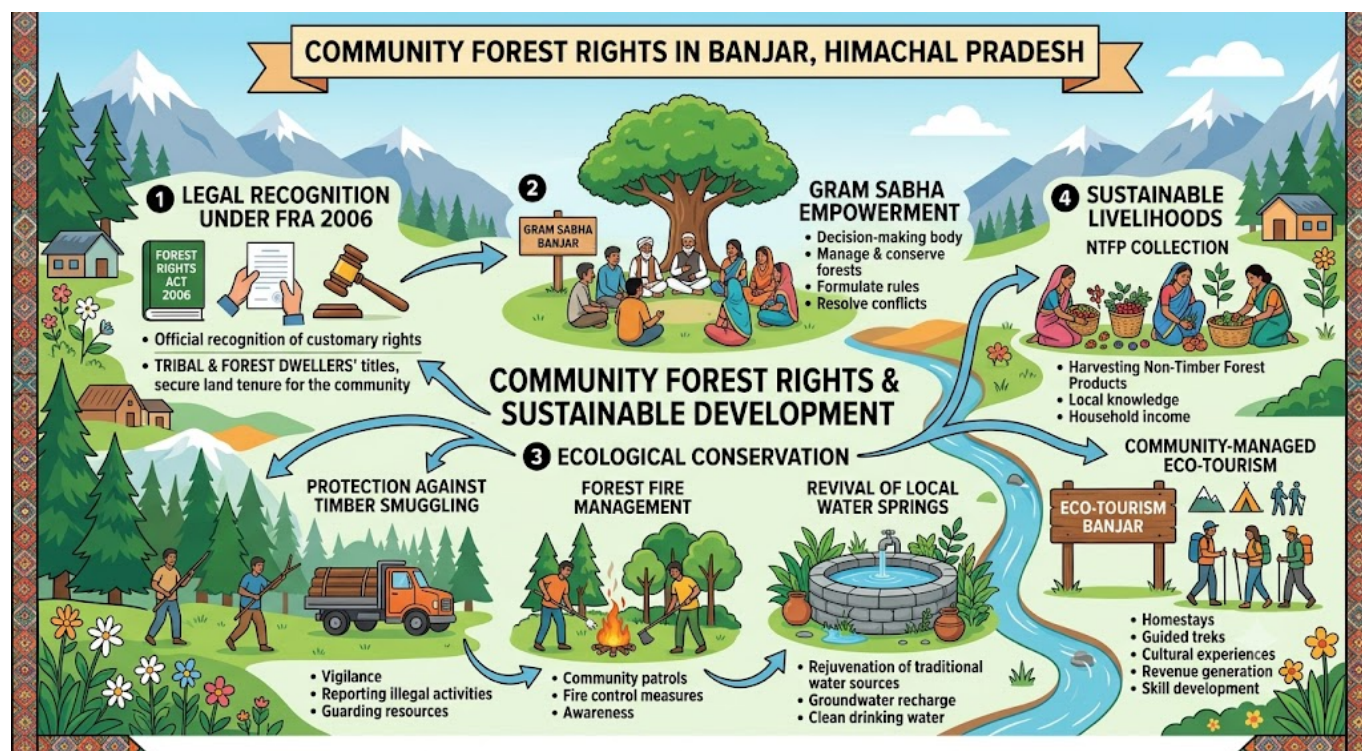
## Banjar's Forest Rights

*Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | International Relations*

### Why in News?

Recently, the successful implementation of Community Forest Rights (CFR) in the Banjar subdivision of Kullu district, Himachal Pradesh, has emerged as a replicable model for community-led forest governance.

### Key Highlights



### The Banjar Experiment

- For decades, forest management in Himachal Pradesh remained heavily **top-down**, governed by colonial-era legislations and state forest department controls that restricted local access.
- In Banjar, local **Gram Sabhas** actively asserted their legal mandate under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, securing formal titles over community forest resources.

### Key Achievements

- Empowered Gram Sabhas**- Local communities transitioned from passive observers to active stewards, taking charge of forest fire prevention, regulating grazing pressures, and curbing illegal timber extraction.

- **Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Management** - Sustainable harvesting and value addition of traditional forest produce (such as wild mushrooms like *guchhi*, medicinal herbs, and forest honey) directly augmented household incomes.
- **Ecological Protection** - Protection of sacred groves (*bans*) and high-altitude water catchments led to the rejuvenation of natural springs (*baolis*), securing local water and agricultural resilience.

### Significance for Himachal Pradesh

- Himachal Pradesh has historically lagged behind states like Odisha and Maharashtra in recognizing Community Forest Rights. Banjar demonstrates that political will and active civil society mobilization can overcome administrative inertia.
- By utilizing CFR provisions, local youth and women's self-help groups (SHGs) have initiated community-run homestays and nature trails, ensuring that tourism revenue directly benefits the village economy rather than external operators.
- Decentralized forest management helps combat shifting micro-climates, soil erosion, and invasive weed proliferation, serving as a localized buffer against climate change impacts in fragile mountain ecosystems.

### Reference

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