

CAMPA FUNDS – ENVIRONMENT

NEWS: The Supreme Court-mandated Central Empowered Committee (CEC) assessed India's compensatory afforestation initiatives, finding that while 85% of the target has been met, only 67.5% of the CAMPA funds have been utilized.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

About CAMPA: Structure and Objective

- **Statutory Authority:** CAMPA is a statutory body constituted under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act, 2016, applicable both at the Central and State/UT levels.
- **Primary Objective:** It is mandated to manage, monitor, and utilize the compensatory afforestation funds collected when forest land is diverted for non-forest purposes, ensuring ecological restoration.
- **Dual-Tier System:**
 - National CAMPA under MoEFCC manages the National CAF (NCAF).
 - State CAMPA authorities manage the State CAF (SCAF).

Background and Legal Basis

- **Origin in Judiciary:** CAMPA was originally created by the Supreme Court in 2002 in the *T.N. Godavarman vs Union of India (1995)* case as an ad-hoc advisory body due to poor utilization and mismanagement of afforestation funds.
- **CAF Act, 2016:** Institutionalized fund management with a legal framework. Came into force in 2018, supported by CAF Rules, 2018.
- **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980:** Mandates that user agencies diverting forest land must:
 - Provide alternative non-forest land for afforestation.
 - Bear the entire cost of afforestation, including maintenance.
 - If no suitable non-forest land is available, afforestation must be done on double the area of degraded forest land.

Fund Management Structure

- **Dedicated, Non-Lapsable Funds:**

- Funds are maintained in the Public Account of India (NCAF) and Public Accounts of States/UTs (SCAF).
- Both are interest-bearing and non-lapsable, ensuring long-term financial sustainability.
- Allocation:
 - 90% of CAMPA funds are released to States/UTs for afforestation and related works.
 - 10% is retained by the Centre for national-level monitoring, research, and capacity-building.
- Audit and Oversight:
 - The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audits both national and state CAMPA accounts annually.

Permissible Activities under CAMPA

- Afforestation Types:
 - Compensatory, Additional, and Penal Afforestation projects.
- Ecological and Community Services:
 - Catchment area treatment, wildlife habitat improvement, forest regeneration.
 - Human-wildlife conflict mitigation and relocation of villages from Protected Areas.
 - Capacity building, forest fire prevention, and infrastructure for forest and wildlife protection.

Key Challenges in Implementation of CAF Act, 2016

A. Land Availability Constraints

- The law requires afforestation to occur adjacent to or near diverted forest areas to ensure continuity of forest ecosystems.
- However, availability of suitable land is a persistent issue, particularly in smaller or heavily forested states like Chhattisgarh.

- Often, the land provided is degraded, barren, or unproductive, hampering plantation success.

B. Diversion & Underutilisation of Funds

- Funds collected before 2016 remained largely idle due to lack of proper implementation frameworks.
- Even after operationalization, there are cases of fund diversion to unrelated schemes like the Green India Mission, diluting the core purpose of compensatory afforestation.

C. Ecological Limitations & Monoculture Practices

- Monoculture plantations (e.g., eucalyptus, teak) are common under CAMPA projects, leading to:
 - Reduced biodiversity and poor ecological resilience.
 - Disruption of wildlife corridors, creation of edge effects, and biotic pressures.
 - Inability to replicate the ecosystem services of natural forests.

D. Greenwashing and Rights Violations

- Greenwashing concerns arise when CAMPA replaces rich, biodiverse forests with ecologically poor plantations.
- Forest dwellers and tribals are often excluded from decision-making, violating provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006.
- Top-down fund control by forest officials neglects community participation and indigenous knowledge systems.

E. Policy and Institutional Gaps

- Delays in fund disbursement, plan submission, and lack of dedicated CAMPA offices at the ground level.
- The system suffers from bureaucratic inefficiency, absence of accountability timelines, and fragmented implementation.
- The IPCC 2023 report warned that such afforestation practices can result in net ecological loss, undermining climate and biodiversity targets.

Measures to Strengthen CAMPA

A. Creation of Ecologically Viable Land Bank

- Establish a centralised land bank of non-forest and degraded forest lands near existing forest patches.
- Improves ecological connectivity, reduces edge effects, and enhances plantation survival rates.
- Helps resolve the land availability crisis in many states.

B. Improved Fund Utilisation and Transparency

- Enforce timely fund releases aligned with annual action plans.
- Mandate clear project timelines, ensure third-party evaluations, and enable public access to fund usage data for transparency.
- Strengthen financial monitoring by CAG and independent watchdogs.

C. Promote Biodiverse, Community-Led Afforestation

- Replace monocultures with multi-species, native forest species for greater ecosystem resilience.
- Fully integrate tribal and forest dwellers in afforestation planning and execution, in line with Forest Rights Act, 2006.
- Encourages socio-ecological justice, strengthens forest protection, and improves community livelihoods.

D. Legal and Policy Reforms

- Amend the CAF Act to:
 - Introduce time-bound afforestation goals.
 - Ensure ecological equivalence between diverted and afforested land.
 - Impose penalties for non-compliance or poor-quality afforestation.
- Link forest clearances not just to area but to restoration of ecosystem services.
- Align CAMPA implementation with:
 - IPCC recommendations
 - India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
 - The goals of the Paris Agreement.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/around-178261-ha-of-compensatory-afforestation-raised-85-of-planned-area-achieved-gaps-in-fund-use-cec->

[report/article69864297.ece#:~:text=%E2%80%9CIndia%20raised%20%2C78%2C261%20hectares,has%20said%20in%20a%20report.](https://www.ece.gov.in/report/article69864297.ece#:~:text=%E2%80%9CIndia%20raised%20%2C78%2C261%20hectares,has%20said%20in%20a%20report.)

