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IN THE LOOP



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First Habitat Rights to Paudibhuyan Community

In a landmark development, members of the Paudi Bhuyan tribe in Deogarh district, Odisha, were given habitat rights titles under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. The ceremony, presided over by chief secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena at Lok Seva Bhawan on March 15, 2024, marked a significant milestone for the indigenous community.

Paudi Bhuyan, classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), became the first indigenous community in the state to be bestowed

with habitat rights. Spanning across 32 villages under the Barkote block of Deogarh, this historic moment positions Paudi Bhuyan as the fourth community in the country to receive such recognition, following Bharia PVTG in Madhya Pradesh and Kamar and Baiga PVTGs in Chhattisgarh.

Following the allocation of habitat rights titles, thirty members of the Paudi Bhuyan

OVERVIEW :

- First Habitat Rights to Paudibhuyan Community.
- 62 Gram sabha received CFR & CFMR titles.
- Vasundhara hosts CSO consultation workshops .
- Review meeting shows ray to fellows.
- Refresher Training for FRA implementation.
- Tamilnadu forest officials visit Odisha.



community convened at the Vasundhara head office in Bhubaneswar for an informal gathering with officials. During this interaction, they shared their journey and aspirations for their habitation post-title acquisition, emphasizing the significance of habitat rights.

Recalling the collaborative efforts of Vasundhara and STSCRTI, the community highlighted both organizations' significant role in facilitating the habitat rights process. In 2021, numerous meetings were organised

with traditional institutions, orientation and training programmes based on STSCRTI guidelines. Vasundhara's support extended to documenting the community's traditions, practices, and belief systems.

Moreover, Vasundhara liaised with the Paudi Bhuyan Development Agency of Rugudakudar, district administration (DLC), Deogarh, and forest department officials to streamline and facilitate the entire process.

62 Gram sabha received CFR & CFMR titles



62 Gram Sabhas from Rairakhol and Naktideul Tehsil received Community Rights and Community Forest Resource Rights titles for over 32,813 acres of forest land. It results from the coordinated efforts of Gram Sabhas, District Administration, and various frontline staff from departments such as Revenue, Forest, Panchayati Raj, ST & SC Development, FRA Cell, Patang and Vasundhara.

Most importantly, the support provided under the Mo Jungle Jami Yojna has a pivotal role in ensuring the rights of Gram Sabhas.

The Title distribution event was attended by officials, including the Collector cum District Magistrate of Sambalpur, DFO of Rairakhol, DWO of Sambalpur, BDO of Rairakhol, Tehsildar of Rairakhol, ACF of Rairakhol & members of FRA Cell. Recognition of Forest Rights is necessary to address the issues of climate change, forest degradation, habitat loss of wild animals, and food insecurity among forest dwellers.



Vasundhara hosts CSO consultation workshops across four districts.



Vasundhara spearheaded a series of CSO (Civil Society Organization) consultation workshops across four districts in Odisha, namely Deogarh, Kandhamal, Nayagarh, Mayurbhanj, and Sambalpur.

These workshops convened a total of 200 participants, including NGO representatives, community leaders, and government officials. The one-day district-level NGO workshop aimed to tackle challenges and identify opportunities for enhancing the lives and livelihoods of primary gatherers. Key areas of focus included initiatives, issues, challenges, and potential pathways forward.

The overarching goal was to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange, and strategic planning to promote sustainable forest management practices and uplift the socio-economic status of primary gatherers.

Through these workshops, stakeholders were provided with a comprehensive platform to engage in meaningful dialogue, share insights, and collectively chart a course of action towards holistic development and conservation efforts in the region.

Meetings and Trainings

- A monthly review and planning meeting for the Forest Rights Act (FRA) took place at Sahid Smruti Bhawan in Baripada. The meeting saw the participation of 14 field assistants, two district coordinators, the secretary and president of Mayurbhanj, Jungle Manch, along with the district coordinator of the FRA cell and the Vasundhara team from Mayurbhanj.
- FRA kit distribution programs were successfully conducted in Barkote Tahasil, with the presence of Chandrakanta Naik, WEO (Welfare Extension Officer) of Barkote, and Hiradhar Sahu, Secretary of Zilla Jangle Manch Deogarh.
- Additionally, FRA kit distribution was also completed in Deogarh Tahasil (Tileibani Block), graced by the presence of Ram Chandra Soren, WEO of Tileibani, and Hiradhar Sahu, Secretary of Zilla Jangle Manch Deogarh.
- Throughout this month, a series of six awareness and claim filing meetings were convened across three districts.
- With the objective of spreading awareness and facilitating the implementation of the Mo Jungle Jami Yojana, three block-level meetings were organized in Bhadrak. Simultaneously, two district-level meetings were conducted within the same district, amplifying the campaign's reach and engagement. Additionally, one grassroots-level meeting was held at the Gram Panchayat level in Nayagarh.

Review meeting shows ray to fellows



Vasundhara organized the Annual Review and Planning Meeting of WHH (Welthungerhilfe) with the district fellows at CYSD in Bhubaneswar. The gathering saw the participation of 7 fellows representing two districts.

During the meeting, Team Leader Ranjita Pattanik provided a comprehensive overview of the current work responsibilities of the fellows for the year 2024, emphasizing how each fellow could effectively implement these tasks in their respective field areas.

Over the course of two days, intensive brainstorming sessions took place, allowing the fellows to collectively devise a draft micro plan tailored to their operational areas. Through rigorous discussions and collaborative efforts, the fellows crafted strategies and action plans aimed at maximizing impact and addressing key challenges in their respective districts.



Leaf plate pressing machine installed in Bana Bahini, PG Bamabdarh.

Refresher Training for FRA implementation

Field assistants and district coordinators of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) project recently underwent a refresher training session organized by Vasundhara. The training, conducted in two batches, took place on March 27th–28th and April 2nd–3rd and aimed to deepen comprehension of the FRA, facilitate implementation, address grassroots challenges, and propose effective solutions. A total of 80 participants took part in this training programme.

Hosted at the CYSD conference hall by an internal expert team led by Vasundhara, the training comprised two sessions. The first session gives importance to various aspects,



including the claim-making process, FRA rules, and the Mo Jungle Jami Yojana. The second session included a field visit, providing invaluable hands-on experience in mapping and MIS (Management Information System).

By enhancing the knowledge and skills of field assistants and coordinators, this refresher training empowers stakeholders at the grassroots level, ensuring more effective and efficient implementation of the Forest Rights Act.

Tamilnadu Forest Academy Officers visit Odisha to learn FRA



To enhance their understanding of the successful implementation of the Forest Rights Act, of 2006, a group of 16 officers from the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy came on an exposure visit to Odisha.

Facilitated by Vasundhara, the visit was organized on behalf of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Director of the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

Over three days, the delegation delved into various aspects of forest management in Odisha, particularly focusing on community involvement and the Forest Rights Act. Their itinerary included an exploration of Nayagarh district, where they engaged with villagers from Sinduria-Kodalpali to learn about the community forest management system.

During their stay, the delegation had the

opportunity to interact with key stakeholders, including the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests in Odisha, the Director of SCSTRTI, the Coordinator of SPMU, the Tehsildar of Ranpur, and other officials involved in forest governance.

Notable individuals who met during the visit included Dr. A. B. Ota, former Special Secretary to the Government; Sweta Mishra; and subject matter expert Dr. Premanda Panda, former Director of SCSTRTI.

The visit aimed at fostering cross-learning between Tamil Nadu and Odisha in the realm of forest management and governance, providing valuable insights for both parties involved.

