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Lives of 6,000 villagers set to change for better in Odisha

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BHUBANESWAR

Over 6000 villagers who lived devoid of essential government welfare schemes and developmental benefits for decades deep inside forests in Odisha's Ganjam district are set to embrace a new life with the recognition of their villages as revenue villages under the Forest Right Act.

These people were part of 38 villages which were unsurveyed forest villages and for every small developmental activity they were requiring permissions of forest department. In Census report these villages are identified as 'Zero' villages, but inhabited by people.

Ganjam district magis-



Malabheruabadi, an unsurveyed village in Ganjam district, was recently recognised as a revenue village. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

trate recently notified the conversion of 38 unsurveyed villages into revenue villages after approval from Board of Revenue, Odisha. The notification says 13 villages each are in Sorada and Polasara tahsils, 7 villages in Dharakote tahsil and five villages in Kodala

tahsil in Ganjam district from now will be identified as revenue villages.

What it means to be living in an unsurveyed forest village? "The life is tough in unsurveyed villages. Most of these villages do not have basic facilities such as water supply projects,

schools, anganwadi centres and more importantly all-weather road," said Barna Baibhaba Panda, Senior Programme Manager, Foundation for Ecological Security, which facilitated the process of conversion under FRA.

Mr. Panda said, "the villagers face difficulties in obtaining caste, resident and income certificates as they do not have valid land record in their names. Without valid land records, revenue officials show reluctance in accepting them as normal citizens and issuing necessary certificates which are required for pursuing education and availing government welfare benefits. They were dependent on permissions of Forest Department."

The process of recognizing these unsurveyed villagers was not easy. "In a process spanning over three months, all the common lands in the villages like Gochar, burial grounds, ponds, orchards, places of worship, playgrounds and other community lands were identified, mapped and demarcated," Mr. Panda narrated.

Key role played

District Welfare Office Parikshit Dash played a key role in clearing government huddles. All guidelines of Ministry of Tribal Affairs were complied with in cooperation from all line departments. Individual Forest Rights and Community Forest Rights of

these unsurveyed villages were first recognised.

Transfer of funds

"From now on, Agriculture and Panchayati Raj departments can seamlessly transfer funds for taking up Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act works, crop planning and diversification. Similarly, caste, residential and income certificates can be issued to the villagers easily against individual land titles," said FES programme officer.

"The FRA 2006 provides a legal framework for converting all forest, unsurveyed villages or habitation on forestland into revenue villages," said Y. Giri Rao, a leading expert on FRA implementation.

FRA enacted in 2006 recognises the rights of forest-dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers to forest resources on which these communities were dependent for a variety of needs, including livelihood, habitation and other sociocultural needs.

It recognizes and vest the forest rights and occupation in Forest land in Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD) who have been residing in such forests for generations.

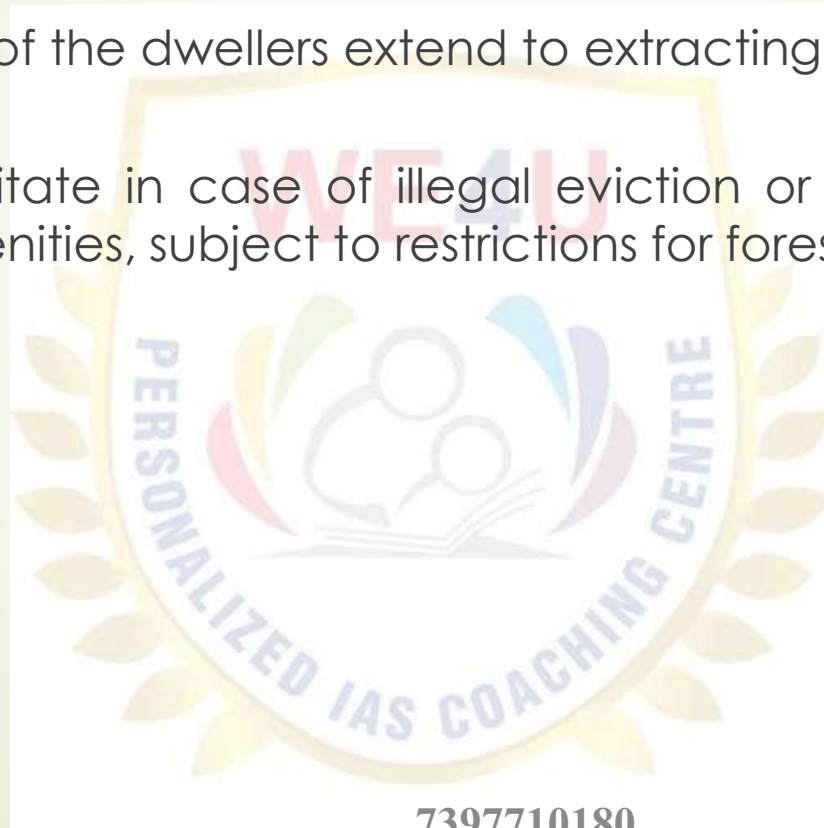
It strengthens the conservation regime of the forests while ensuring livelihood and food security of the FDST and OTFD.

The Gram Sabha is the authority to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of Individual Forest Rights (IFR) or Community Forest Rights (CFR) or both that may be given to FDST and OTFD.

Ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family and no new lands will be granted.

The rights of the dwellers extend to extracting Minor Forest Produce, grazing areas etc

To rehabilitate in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.



Copper plates bring into focus Shilabhattarika and her poetry

was a 9th-century Sanskrit poet from present-day India. Her verses appear in most major Sanskrit anthologies, and her poetic skills have been praised by the medieval Sanskrit literary critics.

Literary Contribution of Shila Bhattarika:

Shilabhattarika was the daughter of the Chalukya ruler Pulakeshin II and a poetess.

None of her siblings was inclined towards literature.

The recently discovered copper plate contains historical evidence that establishes Shilabhattarika's literary contributions.

Will increase
pay for ASHA
workers: Cong.

1. Village – Married/Widow/...
2. 10th Standard if no one then
3. Work based Incentiveness
4. Awareness



THANK YOU

