

**NOTE ON STATE LEVEL WORKSHOP ON RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY
FOREST RESOURCES RIGHTS; LEARNING FROM MAPPING PROCESS IN
ODISHA**

Forest Rights Act 2006 recognizes and vests forest rights to the scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded. The procedure for recognition of the forest rights include delineation and mapping of forest land/community forest resources while filing claims at the Gram Sabha level and after issuing of titles to the forest right holders for the creation of Record of Rights for the rights vested under the law. Since implementation of the FRA and especially after the amendment rules (which make specific provision for final mapping of the forest land recognized and vested under the Act) communities, gram sabhas, civil society organizations and government agencies are engaged in mapping exercises. In 2015 the ministry of tribal affairs has issued specific instructions and guideline on mapping which include i) letter on use of technology for creating geo-referenced database and maps of potential areas and for using of geo-referencing for identification of community forest resources¹, ii) guidelines with regard to use of Geo-referencing for identification of potential areas for individual and community forest resource rights², iii) letter on recognition of community rights and community forest resource rights reiterating assessment of the potential areas under CFRs³. The mapping process has thrown varying experiences and learning. In some cases the mapping process has served the core purpose of enabling and empowering local communities and gram sabhas to assert rights over land and community forest resources. But large numbers of cases have come up where the mapping process has led to widespread confusion, undermining of the decisions and authorities of the gram sabhas. There is lack of understanding among the various organizations and groups working on this. Linked to the demarcation and mapping process the state governments are now asked to prepare Record of Rights (RoRs) for the forest rights recognized and vested. While the ministry of tribal affairs has issued number of instructions to ensure recording of the forest rights but there is a lack of understanding at the state and district level on the process of RoR creation.

Ongoing initiatives mostly by civil society organizations for CFR claim facilitation and mapping of CFR (using GPS/GIS technology) face number of problems and difficulties some of which are mentioned below.

¹ <http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201504290209092880920Doc1.pdf> and http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201504300314089604344TrainingFRA_Hindi.pdf

² <http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201507301057476589279Fullpagefaxprint.pdf>

³ <http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201510270348092991795FRA.pdf>

State Level Workshop

- There is an overall lack of understanding on the process of mapping in the CFR claims and recognition process.
- Lack of understanding on process of delineation and mapping particularly on using mapping technologies (Use of Toposheets, Google Earth, GPS/GIS)
- Interested organizations at the local level are unable to access and use mapping technologies.
- Operational and technical difficulties in using GPS/GIS technology for generation of CFR maps.

As per a preliminary assessment in Odisha at least 32,711 villages can get CFR rights over 23,00,000 hectares of forests. Compared to this figure the current status of CFR rights recognition in the state as per official report stands at just about two percent. There is a need therefore to make collective efforts to upscale the CFR initiatives.

In this context we are planning to organize a workshop on “Community Forest Resource Rights; Mapping Process under the Forest Rights Act” on 11th and 12th Jan. 2016 at CYSD, Bhubaneswar. The purpose of the workshop is to build common understanding on the CFR claim and process of mapping as well as to discuss collective strategies to scale up the process. The workshop will have sharing of experience and learning on CFR claim making and mapping initiatives by organizations, discussion on key issues and challenges, response from the government and possible ways to scale up collective efforts. One of the prime focus of the workshop would be to share a new methodology for mapping of community forest resources through mobile device loaded with android application. The mobile based application has been piloted by Vasundhara for mapping of community forest resources which simplify the ongoing mapping process by GPS and makes it more participatory and interactive for the community members.

We are pleased to invite you to participate in the workshop. Participants for the workshop will include civil society organizations, individual activists, & resource organizations. The agenda and other venue details of the workshop will be shared very soon for further discussion. We will be happy to provide accommodation and travel support. Please confirm your participation at the earliest possible before 3rd January 2016.

For further information,

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