

# IFR<sup>1</sup> TITLE HOLDERS IN TELANGANA STATE: WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR

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## INTRODUCTION

Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers have always faced the tragedy of poverty, hunger, and lack of livelihoods. To end this state of misery, Government of India passed the Forest Rights Act in 2006 which envisages providing legal land rights to forest dwellers who hitherto were considered to be encroachers. It vests land rights with the forest-dwelling tribal communities or other bona fide traditional forest dwellers by granting title on forest land people who have been cultivating it – whether for generations or more recently – since before the cut-off date of 13th December 2005.

Although tribals are entitled to bona fide forest lands by this Act, land alone cannot produce crops unless it is provided with sufficient nutrients, water, or treated properly. Previously, the forest dwellers cultivated these lands by their own means, and were not eligible for any government support schemes (irrigation facilities, seeds, and land development) that were available to revenue land, as cultivation in forest land was considered illegal. Now, under the FRA,<sup>3</sup> the forest title lands are eligible for all governmental support.

As per the recommendation from the National Advisory Council on the Forest Rights Act 2006, there was a discussion in New Delhi, 2010. It was decided that it is essential to provide post-implementation support to title holders and to ensure that they are integrated into all government schemes. The panelists and the representatives of the Ministry reiterated that title holders should receive support from all government schemes after the process of recognition of rights is complete. There are many State Action Plans in place that cover aspects like linking forest title holders to other schemes, such as Kisan Credit Cards (in the case of Madhya Pradesh), horticultural schemes, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), etc. but they are not in common practice.

CPF and many other NGOs in the state worked hard to advocate and liaison with government officials for providing land to landless forest dwellers.

### Important Postulates of the National Advisory Council (NAC) on FRA

- The overall development of the forest dwelling communities is contingent on their enjoying a higher “Happiness Index”. This can be achieved through the convergence of various developmental schemes operating in the areas of education, training, health, employment, etc.
- Develop the forest lands granted under FRA so that such lands are utilized to the optimum level of production on a sustained basis, and also create basic infrastructure.
- Make it a priority to provide vocational training for the title holders and their family members. Emphasis should be given to such trades which can get them better employment opportunities in and around their habitation.
- Put in place such monitoring systems both at the district as well as state level and deliver all proposed services to the title holders speedily and smoothly.

With hundreds of thousands of forest dwellers now having legal rights over land, the time has come to gauge the efficacy of the Forest Rights Act in ameliorating the livelihood conditions of forest land title holders.

A study was conducted in this context in Adilabad and Mahabubnagar districts of Telangana state, where 35,221 and 932 individual forest right titles (IFR) had been distributed respectively. (Figures as on 31.1.14. Source: Tribal Welfare Department.) The study used a sample size of 140 covering both districts, i.e. 70 titleholders from each. In order to observe the role and impact of civil society’s involvement in the entire process, 50 percent of data was collected from CPF<sup>4</sup> project locations and another 50 percent of data from areas where there is no support of any kind from civil societies.

<sup>1</sup> IFR – Individual Forest Rights, recognized under the Forest Rights Act 2006

<sup>2</sup> This brief is based on the study report “Status of Individual Forest Rights Land in Adilabad and Mahabubnagar Districts in Telangana” and “Status of lands for which individual titles are given to Chenchu community under FRA in NSTR area” by Nitish Bhardwaj (Program Officer at CPF) and Swati Jaiswal (student intern from IIFM Bhopal).

<sup>3</sup> FRA: Forest Rights Act

<sup>4</sup> CPF: Centre for People’s Forestry







**Table 1: List of sample villages.**

| Adilabad      | Mahabubnagar      |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Dostnagar     | Ghemianayak Tanda |
| Kasugudem     | Yellur            |
| Maisampet     | Budhharempenta    |
| Gandigopalpur | Sarlapally        |
| Kannapur      | Appapuram         |
| Umapatikunta  | Bapanpahad        |
|               | Yerrapenta        |
|               | Kudichinthabailu  |
| 70            | 70                |

The data was collected through questionnaires and direct interviews with the IFR title holders. To avoid any bias in the research study, various interviews were also held with government officials, which helped in getting a ringside view of the situation

## OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the status of land of IFR title holders under Forest Rights Act 2006.
2. To identify the constraints facing the IFR title land holders in cultivating on their lands

## RESULTS

Although titles have been handed over, post-title facilities are not in compliance with the recommendations from the National Advisory Council on FRA. Merely getting titles to land will not be enough to address the problems faced by tribals and forest dwellers. Their most crucial need is to converting their physical asset to a profitable one. The FRA seeks to help tribals become empowered and self-sufficient and thus undo the historic wrongs done to them. The challenge remains to make this a reality; this was the assessment from the field study. It was found that while 94 percent of the IFR land is under cultivation, there are many impediments to cultivation. Eight title holders (six percent of the sample) were not practicing agriculture on their IFR lands at all. The reasons cited by them were lack of agricultural implements and finance, and that the land was undeveloped for agriculture.

**Table 2: The status of IFR lands of sample households in Adilabad and Mahabubnagar districts.**

| IFR land status in study area   | Adilabad | Mahabubnagar |
|---|----------|--------------|
| Number of sample households taken for the study   | 70       | 70           |
| Extent of land received ( in acres)   | 324      | 234.5        |
| Percentage of IFR land under cultivation  | 100      | 88.5         |
| Percentage of IFR land under development  | 25.7     | 20           |
| Percentage of land with irrigation facilities   | 92.8     | 32           |
| Land with fencing   | 0        | 0            |
| IFR title holders (in percentage), accessing banking facilities                                   | 54       | 37           |
| Handholding support to IFR land holders by voluntary organizations. <sup>1</sup> (In percentage.) | 68       | 57           |







