

DownToEarth

Odisha announces state forest rights scheme to benefit over 7 lakh people

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The Odisha government, on July 3, 2023, announced the launch of a scheme to strengthen forest rights among tribals and forest dwellers across the state's districts.

The scheme, christened as *Mo Jungle Jami Yojana*, is aimed to function parallelly with The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 or FRA.

If implemented, Odisha would become the first in India to recognise community forest rights along with individual rights offered by the Centre. The scheme is conceived to bridge the gaps and address critical issues not targeted in the central scheme (FRA) for the past 15 years since its implementation.

Barna Baibhaba Panda, senior program manager at Foundation for Ecological Security, a national level non-profit working on nature conservation and restoration of degraded landscapes in 11 states of India, told *Down To Earth (DTE)*:

At present, the central scheme recognises individual forest rights, but the state scheme delivers the same benefits for community rights and community forest rights (CFR) that is lagging in the existing scheme.

According to government records, Odisha has 32,562 FRA potential villages and 7.35 potential Scheduled Tribe families covering an area of 35,739 sq km which are targeted to be benefitted.

The state is home to 62 different tribes of which 13 are recognised as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). The tribal population is estimated at 9,590,756 which amounts to 22.85 per cent of the overall population.

According to the notification issued by the Odisha government on July 3, the scheme aims to ensure livelihood and food security for the Scheduled Tribe and forest dwelling population.

The implementation of the scheme will provide ownership of land and access to forest resources to the beneficiaries according to their entitlement and join them with mainstream development programmes of the government.

According to the notification, all eligible claimants — mainly single women and PVTGs — will receive land titles and record corrections will be made for all title holders.

Panda said the rights would be distributed across all Gram Sabhas and villages. "It would also require concerted efforts for revenue, forest and tribal department to coordinate and work in tandem for efficient functioning of the scheme," he said.

Under the scheme, all unsurveyed, forest and zero area villages will be converted into revenue villages thus enabling all households access to water supplies, road connectivity, schools and healthcare.

Panda added that the scheme would also include digitising records of title holders who can then [access them online](#). "The state will thereby have data of all the claimants and the number of benefits received by the title holders under the different programmes of the scheme," Panda said.

He said the scheme would be entirely funded by the state government for which an allocation of Rs 26 crore was made during the finance budget of 2023-24.

The state would also establish Forest Rights Cells across the districts for periodic assessment, monitoring and review of the scheme.

Nayagarh Jungle Suraksha Mahasangha, Boudh Zilla Jungle Manch and Balangir District Forestry Forum have welcomed state government's decision and called for implementation of FRA in its true spirit in their respective districts.

Bedabyasa Majhi, convener of Kalahandi Gram Sabha Mahasangha, urged the expeditious clearance of CFR titles in the district. He said more than 1,400 CFR claims are pending at different levels in the district.

Hiralal Majhi, convener of Nuapada District Jungle Jami Aandolan Committee, said only one CFR has been recognised in the district after 16 years of FRA. He hoped that the scheme will be implemented in letter and spirit.

Source: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/forests/odisha-announces-state-forest-rights-scheme-to-benefit-over-7-lakh-people-90397#:~:text=Under%20the%20scheme%2C%20all%20unsurveyed,can%20then%20access%20them%20online.>