
**Ensuring Sustainable
Tenorial and
Livelihood Security of
Tribal and Marginal
Communities of
Odisha through
effective
implementation of the
Forest Rights Act, 2006**

**Interim Progress
Report [December 2015
to May 2016]**

VASUNDHARA

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Summary of the Project

The proposed project goal is to ensure tenurial, ecological and livelihood security of the forest dependent communities using provisions under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. The project envisages the development of an integrated framework of resource conservation and management to ensure the livelihood security of the forest dependent communities in selected vulnerable clusters of Kandhamal, Sambalpur, and Deogarh districts of Odisha. The project aims to build up the capacity of local resource dependent communities and institutions to effectively engage them to protect, conserve and manage the forest resources for sustainable livelihood. This would facilitate the development of sustainable marketing models of Minor Forest Produces through collective institutional mechanism and effective market linkages for strengthening forest based livelihood in tribal areas of Western and South-Western Odisha.

Project Area:

The project covers 127 villages from 5 districts, i.e. Sambalpur, Deogarh, Angul, Sundergarh and Kandhamal district. The learning from this project intervention area would be replicated in the State of Odisha.

Project Period:

The project commenced from 1st December 2014 and would end on 31st December 2017.

Focus of Year II

The focus of 2nd year of the project is as follow:

- Facilitation of claim submission on right over land under cultivation, community right over their forests and forest resources on which they have been depending for their survival.
- Development of Community based plans and protocols for sustainable management of community forest resources claimed under the Forest Rights Act;
- Livelihood security of forest rights holders by converting rights into gainful livelihoods.
- Ensuring fair and better price of forest products by linking with the Minimum Support Price scheme of the government and by linking with agencies/traders dealing with forest products.

Major Activities planned:

- Capacity building of Gram Sabha members, youths, women groups, PRI members and frontline government officers for effective implementation of the Act to generate claims on community forest rights.
- Preparation of reference book & IEC materials for process facilitators, community representatives and PRI members on process of submission and recognition of forest rights as provided under the Act and Rules
- Regional Consultations and interface in between Gram Sabha members and government authorities;
- Facilitation of development of community based plans for better implementation of various programs and schemes of State and Central Government
- Preparation of reference book & IEC materials for process facilitators, community representatives and PRI members on various programs and schemes
- Training cum orientation programs for Gram Sabha members, with special focus to women and forest dependent communities for devising community based protocols for sustainable management and conservation of forests and forest resources
- Facilitation and strengthening of women MFP Collectives and their federations and establishing proper linkage with market for better price on the products polled by the MFP Collectives and their federation
- Awareness campaign on Minimum Support Price Mechanism on minor forest produce in project area and also in other parts of the State

Key Achievements during December 2015 to May 2016:

- 247 families got title over 196.68 acres of forest land:** During the reporting period a total of 702 families submitted their claim to the Gram Sabha for recognition and creation of record of rights over their land under their occupation. Of them 247 families got titles over 196.68 acres of forest land and rest claims are pending with Sub-Divisional Level Committee for their consideration. As of now, a total of 2527 families have filed their claims of which claims of 1330 families have been approved by the District Level Committee for title. **Till end of May 2016, a total of 1257 families have got right over an area of 1738.164 acres of forest land securing access of each of the over 1.38 acres of land on an average in a context where majority of the families are landless.** As per the law all titles are issued in the name of both spouses.
- Community Rights to 11 villages:** During the reporting period we have been able to facilitate approval of community rights and community resource rights for 11 villages (in Deogarh). The claims of these 11 villages have been approved at the DLC level, although the title distribution is pending. The rights of these villages to protect, conserve, manage and regenerate the community forest resources within their traditional and customary boundaries. The 11 villages together have obtained approval for approximately 5,000 acres of forest land. These villages have also obtained approval for usufruct rights over such forest land as well as neighbouring forest areas beyond their customary boundaries.
- Apart from these villages we have also continued to facilitate the claim process for another 64 villages whose claims are currently being scrutinised at the DLC Level after the claims of all of them were approved at the SDLC Level.

Name of the District	(Dec 2014 - Nov 2015)	(Dec 2015 - May 2016)			No. of Titles Distributed during the period
	No. of new Claims Submitted at SDLC	No. of new Claims Submitted at SDLC	No. of Claims Approved by SDLC	No. of Claims approved by DLC during the period	
Kandhamal	17	5	22	0	0
Kuchinda	17	13	30	0	0
Deogarh	28	10	38	11	0
Total	62	28	90	11	0

- **16 villages developed protocols for sustainable management of Forest Resources:** The law mentions that the right holders/Gram Sabha shall prepare conservation and management plan for sustainable management of community forest resources vested to the Gram Sabha. Accordingly, in 16 villages plans are prepared by the Gram Sabhas during the reporting period. Till end of May 2016, a total of 25 plans are prepared, which includes 9 plans prepared in last project year. The plan documents focuses on following components:
 - *Institutional Framework for Governance of Resources*[Constitution of Committee, Election/Selection Criteria, Role of Committee, Role and Authority of Gram Sabha (General Body) and etc.]
 - *Protocols for management of Forest Resources* [Profile of plant and wildlife species, Type of Interaction with forest resources (livelihood & cultural interaction), Status of Resources, Traditional knowledge related to Biodiversity, Threats & Opportunities, Rules and Regulation pertaining to Protection & Conservation, Harvesting Protocols, Ecological and livelihood improvement actions and etc.]
- **7 Forest Villages have submitted application for conversion to Revenue Village:**The denial of basic rights and facilities to Forest Villages has been recognised as a key challenge under the FRA. The timely conversion of such villages to revenue villages has thus been adopted as a prime focus of the FRA. Under this provision, 43 villages have been identified as forest villages/habitations requiring change in legal status. These are in addition to 17 habitations identified during the first year of the project.

7 forest villages (in Kandhamal) have adopted resolutions for conversion to status of revenue village and submitted their applications through the Gram Panchayat to the SDLC. These are in addition to the 8 villages (all in Deogarh) which had adopted such resolutions and submitted applications during the first year of the project. Out of 7 resolutions, the SDLC of Kandhamal has already approved 5 resolutions adopted by the forest villages in Kandhamal.

	Dec 2014 - Nov 2015		Dec 2015 - May 2016	
	Deogarh	Kandhamal	Deogarh	Kandhamal
No. of Forest habitations Identified	12	5	0	43
No. of habitations adopted resolution	8	0	0	7
No. of adopted resolutions approved by SDLC	0	0	0	5

- 22 Community based Livelihood Plan prepared:**The Forest Rights Rules, 2012 stresses on livelihood and food security of the forest dwelling and dependent communities, whose rights have been recognised and vested under the Act. During 1st year of the project Vasundhara carried out a rapid assessment of approach of convergence programs and their impact for livelihoods development of right holders in Kandhamal district. It was found that the benefit of convergence programs is restricted due to the absence of a proper institutional mechanism, lack of awareness at community level on government programs and schemes, lack of participation of right holders, especially women in planning process as a result of which the objective has not properly realised at grassroot level. Keeping this as backdrop a process was initiated in Madikhol village under Jamujhari Gram Panchayat in Kandhamal district to develop a Gram Sabha based participatory planning, which was appreciated by the District Administration of Kandhamal. The learning and experience from this process has been up-scaled in 30 villages of which 15 are from Kandhamal, 7 from Deogarh and rest 8 from Kuchinda region. Till end of May 2016, out 30 villages, community based plans are completed in 22 villages of which 8 plans are approved by the District Administration of Kandhamal.
- District Level Convergence Committee Constituted:** In order to increase effectiveness of implementation of various programs and schemes meant for the right holders, Kandhamal District administration has constituted a “District Level Convergence Committee” under chairmanship of PD, DRDA and PA, ITDA is the member convener of the committee. The Committee consists of representatives from Soil and Conservation, Panchayati Raj Horticulture and Agriculture Department.
- Up-Scaling of Convergence initiatives with other civil society organizations:** An initiative has been initiated for up-scaling of learning from Kandhamal in various part of the State. Vasundhara has collaborated with partners of Action-Aid, which has been working in 10 districts of the State.
- Business turnover increased from 34.47 to 47.83 lakhs:** During the reporting period the business turnover is exponential over the previous year reporting period and the total sales of the MFP Collectives have achieved an increase of 38% from the project area¹ as shown in the table below table.

Name of the Federation	Region	Turnover (Dec - May)	
		2015	2016

¹ Kuchinda, deogarh and kandhamal

BanajaBanijya Sangha	Kuchinda	14,35,378.00	23,05,166.00
Banani Mahila Samabaya Sangha	Deogarh	20,12,022.00	22,51,186.00
MFP Collectives of Jamujhari	Kandhamal		2,27,125.00
Total Turnover		34,47,400.00	47,83,477.00

- **Better price than the Last Year Price:** There is not only an exponential increase in the total sales but during this reporting period the members of MFP collectives also got better price over the last year primarily because of maintaining the post-harvest quality of the MFPs and the trading has also being regulated by dealing with multiple traders which prevents the abuses of monopoly power.

For example during last year the average price of Mohua Flower was Rs.1736.00 per quintal while this year the price increased to Rs.3500.00 per quintal, which also increases the average income per member from Mohua Sales and recorded an increased from Rs.1560.00 to Rs.2375.00.

Unions	Commodity	Selling Price (2015)	Selling Price (2016)	Additional Price in compared to last crop Year
BanajaBanijya Sangha, Kuchinda	Mohua Flower	1736.00	3500.00	1764.00
	Season Siali leaf	1358.00	1400.00	42.00
	Sal seed	850.00	1000.00	150.00
	Tamarind	1300.00	2200.00	900.00
	Char seed	10000.00	10000.00	0.00
Banani Samabaya Mahila Sangha, Deogarh	Mohua Flower	2200.00	3800.00	1600.00
	Season siali	1375.00	1400.00	25.00
	Tamarind	0.00	2200.00	2200.00
	Char Seed	10000.00	10000.00	0.00

- **Increased Price helped the members of MFP Collectives to cope from the decrease in production of MFP:** This crop year it was found that the production of major forest products like Mohua, Sal Seed, Char Seed, which contributes 40% of their annual income, have been affected due to unfavourable weather condition. For example, in Deogarh District, last crop year the Banani Mahila Samabaya Sangha had polled a total of 490 quintals of

Mohua, while this year the production was 294.96 quintal which is roughly 40% less than the last crop year. But the price of Mohua has increased from Rs.2200.00 to Rs.3500.00 per quintal. The increased price of Mohua and addition of Tamarind Business by Banani Mahila Samabaya Sangha has helped the members in coping of the situation aroused due to the unfavourable weather condition.

Unions	Commodity	Total Procurement (in quintal)	Selling Price (Per quintal)	Total Sale Proceed (in Rs.)	Local Market Price (in Rs.)	Additional Profit earned per quintal (in Rs.)	Remark
BanajaBanijya Sangha, Kuchinda	Mohua Flower	294.96	3500.00	1032360.00	2300.00	1200.00	
	Season Siali leaf	425.6	1400.00	595840.00	1200.00	200.00	
	Salseed	330.13	1000.00	330130.00	700.00	300.00	
	Tamarind	105.38	2200.00	231836.00	1700.00	500.00	
	Charseed	11.5	10000.00	115000.00	6000.00	4000.00	
Sub Total				2305166.00			
Banani Samabaya Mahila Sangha, Deogarh	Mohua Flower	350.4	3800.00	1331520.00	2300.00	1500.00	
	Season siali	289.33	1400.00	405062.00	1200.00	200.00	
	Tamarind	94.82	2200.00	208604.00	1500.00	700.00	Newly added
	Char Seed	30.6	10000.00	306000.00	6000.00	4000.00	
Sub Total				2251186.00			
MFP Collectives, Kandhamal	Bhalia seed	10.5	1250.00	13125.00	500.00	750.00	Newly
	Mahua Flower	2.5	4000.00	10000.00	2000.00	2000.00	Newly
	Tamarind	80	2550.00	204000.00	500.00	2050.00	Newly
Sub Total				227125.00			

Some of the key factors contributed towards creating favourable conditions is as follow:

- MFP Collectives from Jamujhari GP of Kandhamal District newly joined
- Constant follow up and better co-ordination in between MFP Collectives and their federation;
- linkage with outside trader;

- Banani Mahila Samabaya Sangha of Deogarh newly added Tamarind into their business portfolio;
 - Regularization of Meetings of members;
 - Orientation to newly elected members;
 - Intervention of Government Agency, especially Tribal Development Corporation Co-operative Ltd., Govt. of Odisha and
 - Effort of the volunteers appointed under the project.
- **Caravan on Minimum Support Price:** To provide Minimum Support Price (MSP) to forest dwellers for minor forest produce (MFP) on lines of support price for agricultural products, the Central government has planned to spend Rs 967.28 crores while the respective State would contribute Rs 249.50 crore (25%) of the total amount to ensure fair and remunerative price to MFP gatherers. The Scheme has been operational in Odisha since 1st of July 2014. But due to bureaucratic hassles, the Scheme is yet to be known, it is meant for. To create widespread awareness on the Scheme, Vasundhara has initiated a “CARAVAN on MSP” in the most potential MFP pockets of different districts in collaboration with TRIFED, TDCCOL, ORMAS, OLM, District Administration and Civil Society Organisations working on this aspect. Till end of May 2016, the CARAVAN has covered more than 850 villages from 5 districts. As a part of process, the team of CARAVAN has been interacting with members of Gram Sabha, Primary Procurement Agencies, Self-help Groups, Primary Gatherers and identifying various issues related to implementation of Minimum Support Price Mechanism and also documenting positive impacts in respective Gram Panchayats. The process was covered by different Media groups. The media clippings and issues identified during the CARAVAN were shared with dist. Administration, Trifed and TDCCOL.
 - **Publication and dissemination of FRA KIT and reference materials:** During the reporting period following materials are printed and distributed.

Sl. No.	Name of the Publication	No. of Publication Printed	No. of Materials distributed in the Training programme		
			Field Areas	Govt. programmes	Other NGOs / CSOs
1	FRA Kit	1000	127	30	150
2.	FRA Odiya Book	1500	300	700	400
3.	MSP Leaflets	50000	6000	20000	4000
4.	Flex on MSP	32	10	18	

5.	Banabarata	2000	500	500	1000
6.	MSP Book	2500	500	1500	
Total		57032	7437	22748	5550

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS:

The interventions on Forest Rights Act and livelihoods under the project have influenced key interventions from the state government and nodal agency. Some of the key outputs at policy level are as follows:

- **Review of 1.55 lakh Rejected Claims:** In Odisha, a total of 1.55 lakh claims have been arbitrarily rejected by different empowered authorities without following the stipulated process as mandated under the Forest Rights Act and Rules including in project districts. As a part of ensuring natural justice to the tribal and other marginal communities, this issue was put forth before the State Level Monitoring Committee (SLMC) meeting, which was held in July 2015. In the SLMC it was decided to review all the rejected claims in a time bound manner. As a part of follow up to this decision, a format was developed and circulated to all the districts for filling monthly progress report in this regard. By end of May 2016, a total of 46,511 rejected claims have been communicated to the claimant explaining the cause of rejection and a time period has given for filling of appeal against the decision of authority.
- **Conversion of all forest and un-surveyed habitations into Revenue Villages:** In Odisha there are more than 613 habitations with a population of 74,047 located in 22 districts of the State. The inhabitants of these habitations never been benefited from any government programs and schemes as they have been seen as “encroachers” under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The Forest Rights Act, 2006 made a special provision under the law to convert all such habitations into revenue villages, so that the inhabitants can lead a dignified live and get benefit from various government programs meant for the poor people. After continuous follow up with the State Government and Nodal department, they have issued order to all the district collectors to identify and convert all such habitations into revenue village by end of September 2016.
- **Guideline for Convergence of various poverty alleviation programs and schemes:** Vasundhara in collaboration with Kandhamal District administration, Jamujhari Gram Panchayat and members of Madikhol Gram Sabha, has developed an institutional as well as process framework for effective implementation of various government programs and schemes meant for poverty alleviation. The framework has stressed on community based landscape planning process and better co-ordination in between line

departments. On 12th of April 2016, the ST & SC Development Department, Government of Odisha has issued a comprehensive guideline on “effective implementation of convergence program and schemes for the right holders under Forest rights Act” based on the experience of the Kandhamal work. This is first such detailed guideline issued by the Government of Odisha. Based on this guideline now the up-scaling process is going on in different parts of Odisha and Vasundhara also giving technical support to them.